

Practicing Righteousness
1John 3:1-7
April 14, 2024

Children of God is how John writes it. Think about it. Children of the most powerful, the most knowledgeable, the most righteous of anyone and we get to call Him our Father, our Dad.

You have all heard the stories of young boys getting into an argument over whose Dad was the greatest. Yes, a son wants to look up to a Dad and wants to be like him in many ways. Kids look up to those they respect and want to be like them in one way or another.

You may have seen the picture of the two old guys dressed in striped coveralls standing near each other and the one says to the other, "We've been farming too long." The other is a picture of two little guys who are dressed up like the old guys and the caption is one where one little boy says to the other, "You been farming long?" Don't know which picture came first but together they bring a smile to our faces as we can imagine it happening just that way.

The Lord is wanting to call us His children and we, His children should want to be like our heavenly Father who created us and who sustains us through His day to day work in our lives. Yes, we are His children, given new life in our baptisms, life eternal because of what Jesus did for us on that cross. He then became the first fruits, with other "fruits" to follow, us, who will rise to eternal life to be with Him when He calls us home.

John writes that the world does not know us. Yes, the world out there doesn't know what we are all about. They think we are kind of simple, believing in God, thinking they can do for themselves and don't need some guy who died some 2000 years ago to do anything for them. It is no different today than it was in the days of Paul and John, *1Corinthians 1:21-23 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles.*

I guess to a mind who can't understand, which those who are unbelievers have, it would seem a little foolish that one person could do something for all people, past,

present and future but we know that Jesus was more than a man, He was also God, the Son of God, at the same time as He lived His life as a man.

We are His children as John said. Yes we look to Jesus for our hope, hope past this life. I guess we call it hope as it hasn't happen quite yet but our hope is more sure than an uncertain hope for we have been given a promise from God that we will be with Him and when the final judgement comes, we will rise to meet Him in the air and be taken to our new heaven and earth, a place being prepared for us even now.

We count on that promise as we count on the sun coming up over the Sacramentos tomorrow. Oh, I guess the Lord could stop the sun the other side of the mountains as He stopped it the day Joshua asked Him to keep it shining as the Israelites were in battle with the Amorites but this isn't some everyday occurrence like the Sun being blocked out by the moon as it was last week.

Yes, the promises of God are sure, just as the promise to send a Son born of a woman in Genesis 3:15. It would be 1000s of years before that promises came true but it did in Jesus, born of the woman, Mary. That promise was fulfilled in Jesus who before leaving promised He would come again, not to save the world but to judge it.

Yes, He is coming as He said but what about in the mean time? What are we to be about doing? In verse 7 of the lesson, John, talking to us as little children says 7b *"Whoever practices righteousness is righteous and He is righteous."*

"Practice righteousness". Interesting terms. I guess we use the term practice in a couple of ways too. Yes, we think of practice, like on a piano or musical instrument to make us better able to play the instrument. We also think of practice in sports to fine tune a body and a group of bodies to work together to meet the objectives set before them. Practice make perfect is how the saying goes.

There is another use for practice which is a little different but yes, they call it a practice. Have you ever heard of a Veterinary practice or a Medical practice? Why do they call something that important a "practice"?

You might say they aren't God so I guess it could be a little practicing. They seem to be coming up with better and better ways to heal and prevent from getting sick every day so maybe, practice might be a good word.

We think of how important it is to practice with sports and I guess you could call doctors practicing so for John to call living in righteousness practice too, we maybe should look at it that way, living each day, hoping to do better each day as we look to

the righteousness of the only one who was righteous. So how could John say the one who practices righteousness is righteous?

Jesus was righteous. We all know that. He lived some 30 or so years and never sinned. He was always righteous. He didn't have to practice, He lived it from day one. But us, we know we aren't righteous but John says we are, we who practice righteousness. Note the last four words of the text, "as He is righteous. In our stated righteousness, it is His righteousness we look to. His righteousness is ours as God the Father looks to the Son to see our righteousness.

So what does our righteousness depend on? It depends on His righteousness. So what is our practicing have to do with it? In our "practicing" righteousness, we are looking to Jesus' righteousness for us. Just as a person is so grateful if a person rescues him from death. So is every Christian who knows what Jesus has done for them, by going to the cross, dying for their sins and rising from that grave bodily which would later ascend to heaven seat Himself at the right hand of God the Father.

We have been rescued from death and now look forward to our righteous Savior to see our certain hope come to fruition. We have that certain hope but there will be those who will try to deceive us, like deceiving a little child. We should however be past the milk stage that little children need.

The writer to the Hebrews put it this way: Hebrews 5:12-14 *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*

The writer talks of solid food and not milk anymore. Solid food is for the mature. How are the mature different than children? They have power of discernment, trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

Constant practice. It takes constant practice as the world around us seems to have a hard time proclaiming the truth. Isaiah 5:20 *Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!*

We look around us and we are dismayed everyday. We can't believe people couldn't see how wrong things are. How could the taking of a child's life up to the time

of birth be a good thing but we have a whole political party saying it is OK. How could we allow people who have no respect for the rule of law be allowed to come into our country without finding out why they are here and if their purposes are going to be good for this nation God has given us? Since when is the taking of another's property OK as long as you stay under a certain limit? I could go on and on but how long before even our minds are tempted to change, even a little bit? Might we too throw up our hands and say let them go to the devil?

No, we have a Savior that is righteous and He, by His work has made all who believe in Him righteous as well. Our hope in Him makes us pure by faith.

We have been made pure but there is always that temptation to sin. And as I talked of being led away from the truth by the world, we need to be in constant practice of righteousness. We need to be in the Word for in it we have eternal life.

When a person becomes a Christian, he can be led away from Christianity. We see that in the parable of the sower. Seed, the Word, was sown, but some fell on the path, never to take root in anyone. Some fell on rocky soil, yes, some were brought to faith but it didn't last and they died to the faith. Others fell among the thorns and you could see how they began to live their Christian life but maybe they never got out of the milk stage as the cares of this world and deceitfulness of riches choked the Word right out of them.

It is those who practiced righteousness, those of good soil, those who hear the Word and understands it that yield and don't die to the faith they are given. It is those who don't look to self but to Christ that sees sin for what it is, evil. They too look at themselves and see a sinner for who he truly is, a sinner who deserves hell.

Yes, each of us deserve to go to hell for our lack of faith. We deserve the fires of hell but even as we smell the smoke we also know that Jesus has put the fires out with His righteousness which we, by faith extinguish all those flaming darts of the devil.

God loves us so much, so much so that He would call us His children. He has adopted us into His family and like the child that one of the children of Frank Enyert adopted, when he entered the place where the child was came running over to him and wrapped his arms around his legs and said "your my daddy". Yes, God, you are my daddy, one who chose us to be His and His alone.

We, knowing who we are in Him. We are reminded to practice righteousness, looking to Him who is our righteousness, Jesus Christ our Lord and righteous Savior.