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Welcome to the New Life Podcast, a ministry of New Life Presbyterian Church in Ithaca, New York. Today we have this week's sermon, preached by Tim LaCroix, our senior pastor. Join us for worship each week at 10 o'clock at 950 Danby Road, Ithaca, New York. You can also visit us on our website, [www](http://www). Now here's this week's sermon.

00:43

reading from the first letter of John, chapter three, verses one to nine.

00:50

See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God, and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.

01:07

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness. Sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared in order to take away sins.

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and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning. No one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared,

02:05

was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. This is the word of the Lord. Thank you, God.

02:26

Spring training started last week. I love baseball. The smell of the grass, the chatter in the stands, the taste of beer and brats. I love it when the batter hits a C&I grounder through the left side and the catcher on second with catcher speed rounds third and slides head first with a hook slide and a home plate for the walk-off winner.

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I love it when it's the bottom of the ninth and the batter has a full count and the closer throws high heat which the batter whiffs at, perhaps earning himself the golden sombrero and the winning team on getaway day wins the rubber game and has a happy flight. I'm annoyed at a few things about baseball though. I

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I'm annoyed by the infield fly rule. I am annoyed with the fact that managers don't get ejected from games anymore because they have instant replay. And I'm annoyed with the inconsistency of the strike zone. But I love baseball. Who wouldn't? Three and a half hours watching a game for about a minute and a half of action. It is truly America's pastime.

03:45

One of the other great things about baseball is probably about 99% of you have no idea what I've just been saying for the last two minutes. Why is that? Because I've been a baseball fan for over 40 years. I spend hundreds of hours every summer watching baseball. And so I know the game. I know the slang. I know the jargon. I know what's going to happen in game situations and strategy. I can...

04:14

I can tell what kind of pitch just got thrown at, a breaking ball, a fastball, a slider. I know that because I've been a part of the game either as a player or as a fan for a long long time. And so for those of us who are hardcore baseball fans, we kind of have a connection. We have a community. We know the slang. We know the rules. There's something about baseball called the unwritten rules of baseball. Like how you shouldn't, you shouldn't.

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hit a home, you shouldn't take a walk when you're up by 10, things like that, there's other rules that apply. You can do this with almost any fandom, right? It doesn't have to be baseball.

04:55

It could be fandom in a TV show or a movie franchise. It could be fandom in a board game or a musician that you appreciate. When you have fandoms, you create some sort of community. There's a community. People appreciate each other. They have a connection with each other. There's slang. There's jargon. There may be unwritten rules. And so this is what it's like to be a part of something. This is what it's like to be a part of something. In the text today.

05:26

One of the things that John is communicating with us is that we're a part of something like that. We're a part of a community where we belong to something. We belong to someone, in fact. And in that community there are rules. In that community there are slang, there's jargon, there are inside jokes, as I talked about with the kids. They have inside jokes. This past week,

05:53

Well, I'll save this illustration for after I at least save the main point. So what we see is that we're a part of a family. And being a part of a family means that there are things that people who are not in the family don't get. They don't know. Like you listening to me talk about baseball, like why in the heck is he talking about? No, we don't know anything about baseball. This is not a great illustration. Well, actually it was, because it proved my point.

06:17

We're all a part of something as Christians that other people just don't get. It'd be like if I was standing up here talking about hook sliding into second or what they call the swimmer's move. Like, you don't know what any of that is, probably. This is John's point. We're a part of the family and there's a part of being in God's family that makes us different. Makes us different. The text today, we move into chapter three of 1 John. It's in the bulletin. You can also look it up however you look at the Bible.

06:48

And what we're doing is we're continuing to move along. A lot of the themes that we've already seen are here. Like there's the theme of sin, that we've already talked about several times. But here we have it brought into us this new idea, and that is being a part of a family. Being a part of God's family. And this theme is all throughout this text, and so that is the theme of what we're going to talk about.

07:15

Today. Today, basically, there are two points in this text. There are two imperatives, second person imperatives, two commands, and so there's two points in the sermon. It's a two-point sermon. The first point is this. We are beloved children of God. Therefore, the world does not know us. We are beloved children of God. Therefore, the world does not know us.

07:43

So I've had a pretty interesting week this week. I've already told a couple of you about it. If you were here last week, you probably heard me talking about how we were gonna get on a plane and go down to Florida. I was gonna go to a conference and bring my family with and so we could spend a few days in the sunshine on the beach, et cetera. Well, that didn't happen. You may know that Sunday afternoon, we had snow, we had wind, our plane out of Ithaca was canceled.

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there was not another flight for two or three days that we could get on. We tried to get on one on Rochester. The weather was bad again on Monday. And Monday afternoon, much to the disappointment, to put it mildly, of my kids, we pulled the plug. We pulled the plug on the trip and canceled the flights and did as much as we could to get refunded. But what I did was, is I wanted to salvage this somehow.

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So I texted my friend who has a house in North Carolina near Raleigh and I said is there any way that we could go stay at your house this week because we had this horrible thing happen and he said sure, absolutely. So we drove down to North Carolina and we spent a few days. Now the reason why I'm telling you this is we spent a lot of time in the car. There's a 10 hour drive there, 10 hour drive back. It's not like flying, when you're flying everybody's got their headphones on, you don't do much talking. In the car you're stuck with each other. So you know there was some reading.

09:08

messing around on phones, but we also had a lot of time to joke. We had a lot of time to point things out and we actually we actually started a few inside jokes for our family that I think will be around for decades actually. This is what it's like to be in a family. You have shared experiences, somebody says something silly, it becomes an inside joke, and when you reference a shared experience or an inside joke you do it with shorthand, right?

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It can be just a word or a phrase. The rest of the family laughs, they remember. If you're not in the family, you have no idea. It's not funny because you weren't there. This is sort of what John is saying here. We're a part of family. We're a part of God's family. It says in chapter 3 verse 1, See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God. We are children of God. We are members of His family.

10:06

As I said, there are only two imperatives, two commands in this passage we read today. The first one is see. And see in Greek, many languages too, but especially in Greek is a metaphor for know. John wants us to know this. To see is to know. He wants us to know what? He wants us to know...

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What kind of love, how great the love, that we're gonna sing this in a few minutes, how great the love of the Father is for us, that we should be called children of God. Now we've heard this phrase, children of God, so many times probably, it has lost meaning. Like we hear children of God all the time. Let's just think about this for a second, what this means. That we're children of God.

10:58

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be the child of someone with immense wealth or power? I've thought about that. Like, what would it be like? I think it would be kind of nice, probably. I actually found myself thinking this this week, because we're staying at my friend's house. His cabin, which is probably the nicest place I've ever stayed at in my life. And he's a millionaire many times over.

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And I caught myself thinking, what would it be like to be one of his kids? I mean, it would...

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It would be so nice to just be in a family like this where there's almost unlimited resources. Now, my buddy is really generous and very kind to me, and he shares, he's very generous and he shares with me, but I just couldn't help thinking, what would it be like to be his kid and live this life? I don't know if you've ever thought that. What would it be like to have a very wealthy or powerful parent, you know, like to be a child of a baseball star?

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millions and millions of dollars a year. I was thinking about Harrison Ford because we watched the new Captain America movie and Harrison Ford has had a resurgence of late. He's been in TV shows and movies and he's in commercials. I just thought to myself he's 82 years old. He's not going to have, he's got plenty.

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Where's that money gonna go? I just think about these things sometimes because of course in our culture having wealth makes a difference for your life. I don't know if you ever thought about that. What would it be like to be the child of someone who was powerful, someone who was famous, someone who was wealthy? Now think about being a child of the most powerful entity in the universe. Now we've talked about this before.

12:46

We talked about how we discovered how massive, massive the universe is. Trillions of stars, billions of galaxies. The expanse is so broad we can not really comprehend it with our minds. The amount of power contained in those stars is so large that it's hard for our human minds to comprehend it. The space, the mass.

13:16

created that, whoever created that is even more powerful as I've mentioned before bordering on infinitude if not infinitude itself. In order to have created this universe and most of us have come to the conclusion I know not everybody has but that this universe was created by something. Whoever created this universe had to have been powerful beyond imagining.

13:44

Large beyond imagining. The universe is almost 14 billion years old and And create, you know to create a universe it almost it makes you have to be outside of time and space so infinite in age This God this this is the magnitude of what John is saying here He's saying that we are children of that entity the most powerful

14:11

the most massive, the most aged creator of all. And this is...

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This is in contradiction to what his opponents are saying. We've been talking about how the letter of 1 John is writing against people who have split the church, they've been teaching false things. We don't know exactly what they've been teaching. We've been getting some hints. Last week we saw they denied Jesus as the Christ. We see in 2 John they deny Christ came in the flesh. We also see that they deny that there is any such thing as sin. We have that concrete.

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What we don't know for sure, what we think is pretty sure, is that it was also an aspect of denying the goodness of the created world and the goodness of the God who made it as a way to explain the existence of evil in this world. And so John is making actually a quite radical claim. He's saying the creator of this world, the father of this universe, is not only good, he is, he loves you and he loves you so much.

15:12

that he calls you his child. This is very simple. I mean, the grammar of 1 John is really, really simple. It's the first task of any Greek student is to translate 1 John, because it's really easy to do, and it makes you think you know something. You know? But the simple language, the simple grammar conveys a profound truth.

15:44

The false teachers were denying either the reality of the material world or the goodness of it. And John says, no, we are grounded in this. The God who made all of this is our Father. He calls us children of God. And so we are, he says. Now, what's the payoff of us being children of God?

16:10

and in his family. Well, let's continue to read. The first thing is that the world doesn't know us. In the Gospel of John, chapter 15, Jesus says the world hates us. You know, Jesus uses even more stark language.

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As I told you last week, John is trying to massage the situation. He doesn't want to be too polemical. He wants to draw people back in. And so he says it a little more softly. He says, the world does not know. And why does the world not know? Because they're not in the family. They don't have the inside jokes. They don't have the jargon. They don't have the shared experiences. They don't have the relationship with God, the Creator. He says, the reason why the world does not know us is because they did not know Him. This is also one of the most.

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radical claims of the Christian faith. 1 John chapter 3 verse 1 is one of the reasons, there are many, but there's one of the reasons why the Bible can't just be a good book. It can't just be Christianity, it can't just be a moral philosophy, a good story. It is actually much more than that. What it claims is that we who know this God, who follow this God, are children of God.

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and the world does not know us because it does not know him. That is a claim of exclusivity that doesn't fit with this just being a good story because if it is not true, it's not good. If it's not actually true, it's not good to be exclusive like that. But if it is true, then of course it is true. And that is John's claim, that it is true. So...

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We are beloved children of God, therefore the world does not know us. In verse 2, he moves us into the future. He says in verse 2, beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, and we shall see him as he is. John here is appealing to the future, and in this verse he is

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He's setting the foundation for a little bit of what will follow when he talks about sin and how those who are in God don't sin. But this principle, theological principle is called the already not yet. Some of you have heard me talk about this before. What it says is there are truths about our faith that are true, as John says, you are children now, but there's a not yet aspect. Like Jesus Christ we believe has defeated death, hell, and the grave. That is done.

18:49

Jesus Christ has done that, but there is a not yet. We don't experience the fullness of his victory yet. People still die. There's still sorrow and pain. There's an already and a not yet. Here we have an already and a not yet of us being God's children. You are God's children now, but the fullness of what that means has not yet been revealed. So we have a future that we are looking to. And

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John is here again calling back to the fact that eternity is what's in view. Last week we saw he talked about this is eternal life, to know, to know God, to know the Father, to know Jesus Christ as his Son,



and to know the Holy Spirit. Here we see as we are children now, but the fullness of what we will be is not revealed yet. It will be revealed in the future.

19:44

and we shall see God as he is. We shall see God as he is. This is what theologians call the beatific vision, seeing God for who he is in all of his glory is something that we have to look forward to as children of God. And also the fullness of our relationship as God's children will be revealed. And so that's the first point.

20:12

The first point is that we are in God's family, we are his children, and this means that the world doesn't understand us. We're like those who don't know anything about baseball, especially those who may be from a different culture that doesn't play baseball, like Americans are with soccer, you know, we have no idea. Well, some of us do, but a lot of people don't. Or cricket, there's a better illustration, cricket. That's what it's like to be in God's family, the world doesn't understand. But the second thing...

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He wants to say, is that Jesus Christ, this is point two, Jesus Christ has defeated the devil, therefore we no longer sin. We no longer sin. Now, this is the literal text, the translation here translates it as makes a practice of sinning, keeps on sinning, and that is the correct interpretation, but that is not what the Greek says. The Greek says, anyone who sins practices lawlessness.

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anyone who belongs to God does not sin. Now I'll get into why the Bible translators translated it that way. But essentially what he's saying is since Jesus has defeated the devil we shouldn't act like that hasn't happened. Since we are children of God we should live as members of his family. There are two, I said there are two commands, there are two imperatives in this section.

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in this passage. The one we saw was you need to know this. And the second one I'll get to in just a second. Let's look at verse 3. It says, And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. In other words, this is not, as I said, it's not just a moral philosophy, it's not just a metaphysical way of thinking about the universe. There are moral claims placed on believers. Because God is pure.

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we are called also to purify ourselves. He says in verse four, everyone who, and this is what it literally says, sins, practices lawlessness. Everyone who sins practices lawlessness because sin is lawlessness. Here is the claim. John's claim is that there is a moral standard. It is God's purity. And his claim is that when we say something isn't sin,

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He's been talking about that since chapter one. When we say there is no sin, or when we say that something is not a sin, we can't pick and choose. You know, Christianity is not a cafeteria where we say, oh, I'll take the mashed potatoes, or I'll take the collard greens, or whatever. We don't pick and choose. What John is saying is if you say there is...

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If you sin or if you say that something is not a sin, it's lawlessness. It is a rejection of God's law. It is rebellion. This is similar to the point that James makes in his letter, that if you transgress any one little point of the law, you transgress it all, or how Jesus puts it in the Sermon on the Mount.

23:19

And so what we see here is that we should not sin. Now, I mentioned the already not yet, and I've already talked about how this is translated, makes a practice of. How do we defend that? Well, two things. The already and the not yet. We live as fallen beings in a fallen world. First John chapter 1, which we read earlier in this service, realizes that reality.

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In fact, John says if we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar. John recognizes the reality that we are going to sin. We are going to commit sins. And because we already know that, and because we know that John is setting before us a future, and he's also setting before us what should be... the way we should look at how this passage talks about sin is exactly how the ESV translates it.

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What is referring to is a rejection of any such thing as sin or a rejection as any particular thing that God says is wrong being wrong. Or a deception or a defiance that I know it's wrong, but I'm going to do it anyway. That's what John has in mind. A defiant...

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high-handed intentional transgression of what God says and what he doesn't say. Now notice he doesn't mention any particular thing. We've talked about this over and over. John does not go through a list of sins. You may have some in mind, but he doesn't do that. He simply says if we reject one, it's lawlessness. We can't pick and choose. It's rebellion. We're part of a family. We abide by the family rules. So that's where we that's why we're going to go through verse 4.

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in verse 5 and translates it makes a practice of sinning. Now, this point is that Jesus defeated the devil therefore we don't sin. We see this in verse 5. You know that he appeared in order to take away sins and in him there is no sin. Jesus came to defeat sin he says it later in verse 8. The Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the devil. If Jesus came to defeat sin

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and to destroy the works of the devil, why would we want to do those things? He came to defeat those things. He came to destroy those things. He came and he lived a perfect life that we couldn't do. It says he was without sin. Why would we want to sin? If we're going to be in God's family, we follow what God says. We live according to the family rules. No one makes a practice of sinning.

26:05

is a part of God's family. This is where we come to the second command. The first command is to know, know that God loves you and has made you a child of God. The second command is little children let no one deceive you. Those are the two things John wants to say. Know this and don't be deceived. How would we be deceived? By those who would tell us, apparently, those who were saying there's no such thing as sin or you don't have to worry about this sin or you don't have to worry about that sin.

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particular sense and view here were they didn't have to be a part of the church. They didn't have to be a part of God's people. They could deny that Jesus Christ was real. We don't know particularly what they were saying. John's point is this. Don't let anyone deceive you. Don't let anyone deceive you and tell you that what God says is not right. We may not understand why. I've talked about this many times before.

27:02

We often don't understand why, the why of commandments. But John's word is very simple. If we're in his family, we abide by his rules. And if we don't, that's lawlessness. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, he says, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. And then he says, no one who is born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning.

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So those are the two main points. Now, to wind this down, to conclude it.

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I know that many of us, when we talk about God being Father, this can be a difficult thing because many of us don't have great relationships with our parents. Some of us have fathers and mothers who did not, you know, did not produce an environment that was conducive to the kind of things that John is talking about. I know that some of us, many of us in fact, maybe the majority of us had...

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great family situations and I'm very thankful for that but I know that some of us myself included had parents who really let us down or betrayed us and it can be hard to think about God being father or being a part of a family when family is not something that we really like a whole lot part of what John is doing here though is redeeming the notion of family he's redeeming the idea of a father even if our earthly fathers are imperfect even if they hurt us very badly

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He's saying, look, I am your father. I have placed you into this perfect family and you belong to me. You are adopted into my family. Again, going back to the most powerful being, the most wealthy person in the universe, you're in that family. And we are looking for a day when we will see God and experience the fullness of what it means to be a child of the infinite King of the universe.

29:09

Thinking about God being Father, thinking about being in God's family may be difficult for a number of reasons. It could be because God's family has hurt you. And it could be because the church has hurt you. But what God is saying, what John is saying, is to redeem that. To say you are a part of a family that transcends those earthly families. You're a part of God's family. And therefore, we should know.

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how much He loved us to make us His children, and we should not be deceived by someone who would tell us that what God says is not good. Let's pray. Thank you for listening to this week's podcast. Please rate and review us on your podcast service and share with anyone who may be interested.

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