

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, Wash.
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1 John 3:1,2

Thank God He Took Time for Us!

1. *What this means for us now*
2. *What this means for us eternally*

Hymns: 339 – 380 – 461 – 449

All Scripture quotations from the NIV

1 John 3:1,2 – How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

A major way you can show a person respect and interest is by giving them your TIME.

Especially in our day and age of hurry-hurry-hurry, our use of time shows what is important to us. It reveals what we value. It shows love and courtesy. It is a valuable investment to make. Conversely, it can be presumptuous to infringe on someone else's precious TIME. Can you imagine asking a tremendously busy person for some of their time during the day? Can you imagine walking into the capital building and asking if you could have a half hour to chat with your senator? Or asking your doctor during his day if he'd like to do lunch? Or dropping by school mid-morning

to see if the teacher or principal has some time to talk?

People are usually well aware of the value of time. You've probably heard someone sincerely tell you after they've engaged you for some time, "I'm so sorry for bothering you with this. I know you're busy." We've also sensed it when we call up a person and they ask pretty quickly, "What do you need" or we hear someone say, "I don't have time for this." TIME is valuable!

Today, we are beginning a sermon and worship service series on TIME. It's the beginning of a four-year emphasis in our Wisconsin Synod, commissioned at our last synod convention. The four-year emphasis is called "***Christ's Love, Our Calling.***" During each of the next four years we'll have a worship service series for a few weeks that will refocus us on this theme. Year one is called, "***Love Takes Time.***" We will examine in the next weeks many aspects about God's gift of TIME.

As we begin this series, we read from 1 John 3: "*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*"

Today let's "Thank God He Took Time for Us!" We will learn:

1. **What this means for us now**
2. **What this will mean for us eternally**

1 – John begins our text by "marveling at the love the Father has lavished on us, that we are called children of God." Before we can fully grasp that

amazing fact, we need to understand what our former condition was like. What is the opposite of happily being a member of a family? It is being homeless. Orphaned.

It's sad to be without a family. One of the first books I ever remember reading as a child was called, "**Are You My Mother?**" I remember it vividly. It was a children's book where a baby bird falls out of its nest and is lost. As the baby bird wanders around, it keeps asking whoever and whatever it comes across, "Are you my mother?" The baby bird asks a kitty, a dog, a cow, even a bulldozer, "Are you my mother?" All along, the child reading the book has this building feeling of hoping the poor baby bird finds its mother and its home. Happily, at the end of the book the bulldozer lifts the baby back into its nest in the tree, where its mother is waiting. A happy ending!

Many books and movies have followed the same storyline of someone trying to find their way home or find their family:

- Some of you older folks might remember the classic: "Lassie, Come Home!"
- Some of you younger ones here today know the storyline of "Lilo and Stich."
- Charles Dickens classic book "Oliver Twist" dealt with the sad facts of what orphans had to deal with in England.
- Little Orphan Annie longed for a home of her own.
- "Home Alone" had its humorous moments while the rest of the family left town leaving the youngest boy home alone, but no one wanted the poor boy at home to never be reunited with his family again.

To take things a step farther, it can be shameful to be without a legitimate home and family. We have a word in the English language for a person who is not a legitimate child of two married parents. Do you know what the word is? Should I say it? It has so much baggage attached to it that it's become a naughty, shameful word, a shocking word and I don't want to say it. Many a person who has been violently upset at another person has called them this shameful name.

To make matters even worse, an orphan lives in a deadly situation. Who will provide for them? Where will they live? I came across some interesting statistics this week on orphans in the Ukraine. It's a dangerous life for an orphan there:

- Ukraine has over 120,000 orphans.
- 90% of these children are orphans not because their parents have died, but because they have been abandoned, their parents imprisoned, or they've been abused.
- At age 15 or 16, children are turned out of the orphanage to find their way.
- 60% - 70% of boys who are orphaned will grow up to be men who pursue a life of crime.
- 60% - 70% of girls who are orphaned end up in prostitution.
- 10% of released orphans commit suicide before age 18.

What a depressing situation! If you imagine yourself as one of these orphans, how sad and dangerous your life would be!

However, looking at what Scripture says to us today, we must admit that our situation has been worse. We are much worse off than orphans in the Ukraine, in

Russia, in China, or Africa. We have been orphans because of our parents' behavior. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, ran away from God. They had a happy home and they rebelliously left it all. With their fall into sin, the effects of sin have flooded the world. Sorrow, sickness, pain, and death are now a part of our world. How sad!

Not only is this a sad situation, it is a shameful situation. I mentioned before that there is a naughty word in our English language today, which expresses that a person doesn't have legitimacy. Our situation spiritually is even worse than that word! It is worse because the Scriptures tell us that by nature we are children of the devil. Listen to an exchange that Jesus had in John 8 with people who didn't think it was so: *"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.' They answered him, 'We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?' Jesus replied, 'I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me... You do what you have heard from your father.' 'Abraham is our father,' they answered. 'If you were Abraham's children,' said Jesus, 'then you would do the things Abraham did. As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. You are doing the things your own father does.' 'We are not illegitimate children,' they protested. 'The only Father we have is God himself.' Jesus said to them... 'You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a*

murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him... He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.' "

By nature we are God's shameful enemies. If we wonder whether it's true, we have to look no farther than our behavior. Our sinful nature has prompted shameful behavior. Day after day our thoughts and actions show that our sinful nature is alive and well.

Taking this a step farther, we also see that this is a deadly situation. What has our condition as orphans and slaves of Satan gotten us? Guilt in life. Physical death that looms ahead. And eternal death in hell that you deserve. **What a hopeless situation!**

Then we read about a happy development in our text today: *"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"* The reason our status and situation has changed is because God has taken the TIME to do something. In John 14 Jesus told his disciples, *"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."* This was said to them in the upper room where he was teaching them for the last time before he would go to the cross. That very night he would be arrested and put on trial. He would be condemned by the Jewish ruling council and the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. He would be tortured and executed on the cross. This was to fulfill the plan of God the Father to save the world from its slavery to their father, the devil. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had to die. **The price had to be paid. And what great time and effort was put into this plan.**

For centuries the stage became set up so the Savior could be born. For years he went about his public ministry, revealing he was the Savior of the world. For torturous hours, he paid for your sin and guilt by

giving his life on the cross. **Thank God he took the TIME for you!**

This time, plan, and effort has changed your orphan status dramatically. Galatians 3 tells us, “*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*” For those who put their faith in the Savior sent to the world, God credits the forgiveness his Son has won and has given you the right to call him your Father. And he calls you his child. You’ve been adopted!

Have you ever seen anyone honored because they were a child of another, a child who perhaps hadn’t even done anything as noteworthy as their parents? Perhaps someone has pointed in a crowded room and said, “That’s so-and-so’s son!” I always wondered why such a big fuss was made over John F. Kennedy, Jr., son of the president. He didn’t seem to accomplish great things when he was alive, and yet seemed to be quite a celebrity. Why? Because he was President John F. Kennedy’s son! And people would crane their head to try to see him. Perhaps someone who has known your parents or grandparents has done that to you at some time or another, and said, “Your Ernie’s son?” and a smile comes across their face when they remember your Dad.

Think about whose son or daughter you are now. Your status has changed. **You are a child of the Chairman of the Board of the universe! And all because he took the TIME for you.**

This leaves us with joy in our hearts. Think again for a moment about orphans and adopted children. I know that natural children can be assured in a very comforting way that their parents love them and want them. But think about an adopted child. If there’s one thing they can know for sure, it’s that they were wanted and that they are loved. How do they know this? Their adoptive parent spent much TIME seeking them out, going through interviews and

application processes, and paying fees. They were sought and found. How much more can we rejoice, knowing that we were sought and found also? God spent TIME seeking us out and planning our salvation when we did not deserve it. **We are loved! And we have been adopted into his family!** Can you imagine how comforting this is in wondering whether our physical needs will be provided for? Or whether God cares about our prayers? How comforting!

2 – Our reading gives us one other perspective on our new status as God’s children because he took the TIME for us. Up till now we’ve focused on what this means for us right now. But with the term “child” goes another term that we are very familiar with: “Heir.” Galatians 4 says, “*So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.*” What does it mean to be an heir? It means that you do not fully possess what you have coming because of your sonship. You have something that you will fully inherit someday, but do not fully have yet.

Our text put it this way: “*Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*”

Many people have fear and anxiety as they think about death and the afterlife. What does the Bible tell us as children of God? In our Bible class last week, we talked about the inheritance we have coming. We read verses such as:

- *Psalm 16* – “*You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*”
- *1 Corinthians 13* – “*Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know*

in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”

- *1 Thessalonians 4:17-18 – “And so we will be with the Lord forever.”*
- *2 Peter 3 – “That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.”*
- *Colossians 3:4 – “When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”*
- *Philippians 3 – “(Christ) will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”*

These are pretty exciting verses about our final home in heaven that we will fully inherit one day! Many people have questions about this final home that we can't answer in full details, but our text makes two points clear: We will be like God and we will see him as he is. How much more would we want to know? What an amazing promise this is!

For today, though, we must admit that we do not fully possess this yet:

- Not yet do we hold the palm branch in our hand
- Not yet have we received the final crown of glory
- Not yet do we see the saints victoriously gathered around the throne of God
- Not yet do we experience angel fellowship
- Not yet do we sing the heavenly song of praise

- Not yet do we shine like the sun as with Christ's glory
- Not yet are we “like him”
- Not yet do we see God

No, we are still climbing to the summit. We still are wrestling with our sinful flesh. We are fighting temptation. We still experience sorrow and sickness. We still have pain. We still sense the gate of physical death ahead of us. We still are on the pilgrim journey. But don't let that take the joy away from what the Lord has done! He has taken the TIME to make you his child. And he has prepared your place by his side at the top of the mountain.

As we close our look at 1 John 3 today in the first of these services on “**Love Takes Time**,” we can see that this service series has really started in the right place. In a service series on TIME, we could have jumped right in to talk about your time and my time. But we have not done that. We started where we should start, looking at how God has spent his time and effort.

Thank God he took time for us! What a fitting beginning and motivation to focus in the coming weeks on how we use our time,

As we continue to focus on the theme “**Love Takes Time**,” may God fill us with an appreciation for how he took TIME to accomplish our salvation. And may we learn how to use our TIME to his glory! Amen.