

“Behold, What Manner of Love!”

1 John 3:1-2

A survey was done a few years ago where participants were asked: “What three words would you like most to hear said to you?” The top three answers sum up the needs of all of mankind.

1. I love you.
2. I forgive you.
3. Supper is ready.

Doesn't that sum up our needs. We have **emotional**, **physical**, and **spiritual** needs. We want to be **loved**, **forgiven**, and **fed**. God meets all these needs by one primary truth, and that is He loves us.

As I've preached on the topic of the love of God during the last nine months, I feel like John must have felt when he wrote our text. John was known as the Apostle of love. Yet, he was so overwhelmed by the love of God, all he could say was, *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!”* He couldn't find the words to adequately express the love of God. Words like wonderful... amazing... marvelous... incredible... magnificent all seem to fall short of the true character of God's love!

God's love is as infinite as God Himself — *“God is love.”*

I. The CALL to contemplate (“Behold...”).

- ➡ **“Behold,”** means “to look closely and ponder; to take notice.”
- ➡ **“Behold,”** is like a flashing light on a highway designed to get our attention. It calls for one to stop... to contemplate... to consider the truth of what is being said.
- ➡ **“Behold,”** a word that tells us not to rush or casually pass by what is being said. “Take a long lingering look until it registers.”

“Behold” occurs over 1,200 times in the Bible. It usually indicates something that is amazing and worthy of serious consideration:

- ***Behold, a virgin shall be with child,***
- ***Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world***
- ***Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.***

- *Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself:*
 - *Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him,*
 - *Behold, I come quickly:*
 - *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*
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➔ **BEHOLD, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us...**

A. Consider the “MANNER” of love.

1. “*What manner of*” is translated from a word that means “from what country, race, tribe, or realm” (cf. Jud. 8:18). God’s love is a heavenly love that is foreign to this world.

In Matthew 8:27 the disciples used the word when they saw the Lord Jesus still the storm and raging sea. “*What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!*” They never saw anything like it! Christ’s ability and power was not ordinary or of this world.

➔ The love of God is NOT ordinary. It’s **extraordinary**.

2. It is not of this world. God’s love is an “out-of-this-world” kind of love! There is nothing else like it.

B. Consider the MEANING of love.

1. It defies defining. It is love that surpasses knowledge or understanding.
2. All we can do is behold it and contemplate its wonder.
3. Where can we “**behold**” this love? AT CALVARY, and “Survey the Wondrous Cross.”
 - 1 John 3:16— “*Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us!*”
 - “*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*” (Rom. 5:8).

II. The CONFERRING of charity (“...love the Father hath **bestowed upon us...**”). This is “love in action.”

- A. The word “**bestowed**” refers to something “given” or “poured” out in a lavish or extravagant way. It is more than just someone loving us. It is someone loving us in an uncommon and extraordinary way.
1. To be loved is not uncommon. Our parents love us... our spouse and children love us... our friends love us (we hope).
 2. But the love God that bestows upon us is greater than a mother’s love or a father’s love—Higher than the love of a husband for his wife or a wife’s love for her husband.
 3. Think of the one person in this world you believe loves you the most. God loves you infinitely more than that!
- B. The kind of love the Father has bestowed upon us leaves us speechless and amazed. All we can say is “Wow!”
1. Isaac Watts put it this way:
**Alas, and did my Savior bleed, and did my Sovereign die?
 Would He devote that sacred head, for such a worm as I?**
 2. Charles Gabriel wrote:
**I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene,
 And wonder how He could love me, a sinner condemned, unclean.
 How marvelous, How wonderful, and my song shall ever be!
 How marvelous, How wonderful, is my Savior’s love for me!**

III. The CONSIDERING of the cause (“...*that we should be called the sons of God...*”).

- ➡ Why would God bestow His love upon us? One great reason: That we should become “*sons of God.*”

In C.S. Lewis’ book “*The Screwtape Letters*, the senior devil named Screwtape sends letters to a junior devil named Wormwood instructing him how lead a certain man to hell. Screwtape warns Wormwood that his assignment will be difficult, because the “enemy” (Screwtape’s name for God), “Has a curious fantasy of making all these disgusting little human vermin into SONS!”

- "...called the sons of God." What a great name to be called! This name is higher than any title or name the world could bestow upon a person.
- How does one become a "son of God"? The same way any son gets into a family. Three ways:
 - A. The LIFE way— Born into a family naturally.
 - B. The LAW way— Adoption into a family through a legal process.
 - C. The LOVE way— Entering a family by marriage.
 - God employs all three ways of bring sons into His family:
 1. The LIFE way— The new birth (John 3:3). We were children of the devil! God's love re-made us. We have been born a second time into God's family as "*sons of God.*" (John 1:12).
 2. The LAW way— Adoption (Rom. 8:15).

Two brothers were signing up to play Little League. The registrar was puzzled when he noticed on their registration papers that their birthdays were only six months apart.

"You are both brothers, right?" he asked.

"Yes sir."

"But you're only six months apart," he wondered.

"Well, one of us was adopted," said one of the boys.

"Which one of you was adopted?"

"We've asked our dad, but he says he can't remember."

Jesus prayed in John 17:23, "*I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and **hast loved them, AS thou hast loved me.***" The word "**as**" means "to the same degree." God the Father loves me, His *adopted* son, to the same degree He loves Jesus, His *only begotten* Son. Amazing!

3. The LOVE way (Romans 7:4—*Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye*

*should be **married** to another, even to him who is raised from the dead.)*

IV. The CONCEALMENT of character (“... *therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*”).

- A. The world doesn’t comprehend what it means to be a Christian. The world cannot understand why Christians act the way they do. The world does not understand...
- why we separate ourselves from the things of the world.
 - why we give sacrificially to send the message of the Gospel of Christ around the world.
 - why we go to church so often and talk about Jesus so much.
- B. Why doesn’t the world understand Christians? Because the world does not know Jesus Christ.
- Jesus came to the world 2000 years ago, but the world did not know Him (John 1:10-11). They rejected Him then, and they reject Him today. If they rejected Him, they will also reject those who believe on Him.
 - Do not be upset if the world does not treat you nicely—they treated Jesus Christ far worse.

V. The CULMINATION of Christlikeness (v. 2).

- A. **What we are NOW**—“*Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be,*”

God doesn’t merely love us for what are now, but what we shall be. It is like a baby in a cradle. While the parents love that little child as he lays there, they also have big hopes for him in the future. He is not loved merely for what he is today, but for what he is to become!

So with us. “*It doth not yet appear what we shall be.*” We are yet morally and physically imperfect. I do not appear now as I will when all those imperfections are removed.

- B. **What we SHALL BE.**

1. When Christ comes we will see Him as He IS— Not as He was, a lowly lamb—but as He is now in His glorified body.
2. When we see Him at His coming, our imperfections will be removed and we will just like Him.
 - We will have a body just like the body Jesus Christ has. *“Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body...”* (Phil. 3:21).

SUMMATION: *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be...*

We don't always act like sons of God or look like sons of God now, but when He shall appear, we shall be like Him. Amen!

In April, 1996 Sotheby's auctioned the estate of former First Lady, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. The prices bidders were willing to pay exceeded what anyone at the auction house expected. For example, a rocking chair sold for 200 times what Sotheby's estimated. A necklace valued at \$500-\$700 sold for \$211,500. A humidior (airtight container to store tobacco) sold for half a million dollars!

Why did these common items bring such exorbitant prices? Helyn Goldenberg of Sotheby's explained that the greatness of the person to whom a item belonged increases the value of the property.

In the same way, my worth is based on who owns me. I'm the property of Jesus Christ, and that makes me worth something. I'm His son!

Are you a “son of God?”