

Let us pray,

Lord, guide us to be children of you and not of this world. Lead us towards your will always.

Amen.

“He gave power to become children of God”

What does it mean to be a child of God?

Aren't we all children of God as God created us humans?

Or do we need to do something to become a child of God?

What does it mean to be a child of God?

There is this balancing act that is often portrayed in scripture of God coming to save the world, but also having a people set apart from the rest of the world to be the world's example of what it means to follow God.

The Israelites were those people for the longest time.

But now, the Gospels are proclaiming that it no longer matters about our connection to Israel, but rather how we live our lives and who we call savior, that sets us apart as chosen people.

I think sometimes we get so caught up in our desire to be saved from Hell, that we forget that we are also called to live differently in this world today.

As Lutherans, we do not believe that our actions provide a means to salvation.

We are saved by Grace through our faith, period.

But as Martin Luther famously said,

“God may not need our good works, but our neighbor does.”

Jesus came to save the whole world from Sin, but Jesus also called us to be better and to follow him.

Jesus wasn't just concerned with our eternal souls, he was also concerned with how we lived our lives today in this life.

Again, not as a reason on why we get to go to heaven, but as a changed person who cares not just about a personal future reward, but the whole of God's creation.

God desires for us to care for God's creation in this life as a testament to our love for God.

Not too keep us out of Hell, but to show our love for this God who loves us.

So what does it mean to be given the power to become a child of God?

Well its that we were given the example on what it means to truly follow God through the life and story of Jesus Christ.

Jesus came and saved us,
so the question we have to answer is, what are we going to do with that salvation?

You see, God wants us to move away from legalistic thinking.

He wants us to see that an eye for an eye is not the fullness of truth.

Punishment that meets the crime is something that makes us humans feel better, or justified, but God has no such expectations.

God does not desire to punish for the sake of retribution.

God only punishes as a way of correction or redirection.

The punishment that Jesus had inflicted upon him was not one of a vengeful God, but one where God needed to show us that the path of sin that us humans are on leads only to death.

Jesus' life on earth was one that was meant to not only save us from our sin, but to redirect us away from it as well.

To show us that even when God walks among us and is trying to save us from ourselves, we chose to kill God rather than join him. Our love affair with sin is much greater than we like to admit.

God wants us to become children of God and has given us the power to do so, but we have to recognize that when we try to do life on our own, when we choose our own self interests over the interests of God, we always choose the wrong path.

Rabbi Shais Taub, is an American Hasidic rabbi and does a lot of work on addiction recovery.

He says quite frequently that the pursuit of happiness is killing us.

Because what it does is it says that my happiness is more important than any other value that us humans have,

The pursuit of happiness gives us the rational we need to do what ever it takes to make sure that our happiness is set at the forefront of our own lives.

But he wisely said that Happiness is not a goal, it is a byproduct.

He suggests that we need to emphasize purposeful living and that happiness will happen when we stop chasing it, and focus on what we are made for.

Christian mystics would also say that meaning and purpose are found in the things that we are already doing.

That it isn't found in some far off land, but in the thing we find ourselves in now.

We often think that there is this one thing that we were born to do on this earth.

And once we find that "thing", then we will be happy and find purpose.

But the mystics would remind us that our purpose is not in the function of our productivity, but in the call of God to be a child of God.

Which can be done in any vocation, on any continent.

So our meaning and our purpose as Christians comes not in what we do, but in who we are, and how we then act based on who we are.

For example, it is not necessarily true that it is our life's purpose to be a construction worker, bank teller, custodian, truck driver, corporate executive, or whatever job one finds themselves in. But rather, its how we include God in those things that we do, that makes meaning and purpose.

Our purpose in life is to be a child of God, not our job title.
And not our own personal pursuit of happiness.

So I ask again, what does it mean to be given the power to be children of God?

It means that we have been given the gift of Grace, forgiveness, mercy, and an example of what it means to live a life that God calls us to live through the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

It is a call that says we are not called to pursue happiness, but to pursue goodness.

And through our pursuit of goodness, we will find the happiness and joy that only God can provide.

May we learn from our ancestors, from their wisdom and their failures.

May we say yes to God, and no to sin.

So as Christ shows up in our daily lives, may we follow his ways, and use that power we were given to add to the light that only Christ can bring and experience the only true happiness.

Amen.