

SERMON NOTES

SUNDAY 06.10.24

PREACHER: PS ADAM DODDS

**SURPRISE, NOT SURPRISED,
AND SURPRISE AGAIN!**

BECOMING CHRISTLIKE

*BEING, **THINKING** & DOING*

Conviction of a Disciple: As we grow into Christlikeness we become increasingly secure in our identity in him. We know that we have been adopted into his family and we are growing into Christlikeness through surrendering to the lifelong work of the Holy Spirit.

OVERVIEW

As we walk with God, we are surprised by his commitment to bringing us into his family, not surprised that we face opposition, and surprised again and again that despite our failings, the Holy Spirit is active in making us into the likeness of Christ.

ACTION

Step 1: Reflect: How much do I trust God's word? Do I really trust what he says about me and about himself?

Step 2: Commit: Is there something I need to turn away from? Do I have a settled habit of sin that has crept into my heart?

Step 3: Act: What can I do this week to actively step towards Jesus in these areas?

THOUGHT

SCRIPTURE: 1 JOHN 3:1-10

There's something amazing about getting a gift or surprise. There's also something amazing in knowing a great surprise is on its way and you're left in the anticipation of waiting. The waiting is tantalising, especially if the gift is from someone you know loves you, knows you, and gives great gifts. The waiting shifts the way you think and perhaps even your action as you ensure you're available to receive this gift.

This idea of surprise, receiving and waiting for good gifts is woven throughout the Christian faith, especially as we await Jesus' return. In 1 John 3:1, John writes, "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!". Wow! What an incredible gift. John invites us to stand in awe of the surprising love of God. This "children of God" status is no happenstance. It's a love so unexpected, so foreign to the world, that John describes it as though it comes from another realm entirely. It's a love we could never fully anticipate or grasp. And yet, this is the love that God has poured out on us, making us His children. This is the first surprise we receive. We, through God's kindness, are his children.

But the surprises don't stop there. John tells us that when Jesus returns, something even greater will happen: "We shall be like him." Even though our status as his children is secure, we are very much a work in progress in becoming like him in our character.

We await this great gift of being like him not with our "fingers crossed" but with a settled certainty. God is working behind the scenes in our life to draw us nearer to himself and the more we expect, believe, and hope for this, the more it becomes a reality. In hoping to be made like Christ, we begin to cooperate with the work the Holy Spirit is already up to deep within us.

While we are constantly surprised by the depth of God's commitment to love us, we should not be surprised that there are counter-narratives and other agendas that regularly fly around us. John cautions his readers/hearers that there are many false beliefs and false teachers that would try to plant doubts in us that pull us away from God's life-giving Spirit and Truth. Deceit can be loud and obnoxious or subtle thoughts and voices, even from "Christian" places. For this reason, we need to be in community and foster relationships of honesty, vulnerability, openness, and mutual submission - ready to be encouraged and open to being corrected.

In verses 5-9, John encourages us to not remain in sin. It is a no-brainer that in the life-long journey of being made like Christ, we'll have lapses in judgement, and make mistakes. Jesus covered us for these completely. We are forgiven. John is talking about becoming settled in habits of sin (going in the opposite direction of the Spirit). To these areas, John challenges us to make a decision, reminding us that we can't live in two worlds at the same time.

However, as we remain loyal to living in the way of Jesus, we will be surprised again and again with how much we are being changed by the slow, steady work of the Holy Spirit. Living in the knowledge that Christ will return and we will be made like Him releases a power to change. This is our great hope - we will be like Christ. It reminds us that the struggles we face today are temporary and that a glorious transformation awaits. As we wait for this ultimate surprise, we are invited to live with hearts open to God's transforming work in us.

DISCUSSION

1. How does the concept of being a "child of God" surprise or challenge your understanding of God's love? What impact does it have on how you view yourself?
2. In what ways do you find yourself anticipating the return of Christ? How does this anticipation shape your day-to-day choices and actions?
3. What are some practical steps we can take to foster a community of openness and accountability, especially when we face struggles with sin or misleading voices?

PRAYER

Lord,

Thank You for the incredible gift of being called Your children and for the hope that one day we will be like Christ. Help us to live with anticipation, trusting in Your transforming power in our lives. Guide us to remain faithful, even in the face of struggles and potential deceptions. Strengthen us as a Connect Group and fill us with honesty, love, and grace.

Amen