

060119

- I. My Notes... WWC message 6/2
- II. Series: Let's Find Out Who We Are
 - a. Title: I'm Just a Kid
 - b. Text: John 1:12-13
 - c. Quote: "It's all about family..." Pastor Rick
- III. Introduction
 - a. Have you ever thought about what it would be like if Jesus were on the Earth today? Would He be accepted? Would His message be much different? Perhaps the real question I am asking is, would Jesus and His message be received today in the place that I live? I know these are philosophical musings but there are times that reflection is a healthy exercise. Is the Christian church growing today? Let me share some figures with you (source: renewal-theology.com/2019/04/24/christianity-is-fastest-growing-religion-in-world), (1) in Africa, Christianity Today reports that Christianity has grown from 9 million in 1900 to in excess of 650 million today. In the last 15 years, the Church has seen an increase of 51% (approx. 33,000 per day). (2) In Sudan, despite persecution the Church has grown tenfold (10 times its number) in the last 40 years. "Today the steadfast and resilient Christian church in South Sudan is one of the fastest growing in the World." (3) In Ethiopia, the Church is growing – Seminaries and Bible schools are being established – persecution is rising. (4) In Nepal, in 1959 the first church had 29 members. Today, there are 500,000. Note: in 2017 Nepal criminalized conversion to Christianity and evangelism... Non-Hindus are being targeted. (5) China, in 1949 under Communist rule and oppression there were 1.2 million Christians. Today estimates exceed 100 million believers in this oppressive society. (6) Cambodia, late 1970's 2,000 Christians. Between 1975 and 1977 there were 2

million deaths in this country. Today, the Church has more than 150,000 believers. There are many more statistics to show growth of Christianity (measured by converts) throughout the world. In America, the Church isn't growing at those numbers... But it is changing. Denominational lines are shrinking but people aren't leaving the Church, they are going to other places that worship Jesus Christ and aren't as politically oriented. When addressing the question is America becoming more secularized (non-spiritual, materialistic)? New Harvard Research reported, "Not only did their examination find no support for this secularization in terms of actual practice and belief, the researchers proclaim that religion continues to enjoy "persistent and exceptional intensity" in America." (www.thefederalist.com). Would Jesus and His message be received today? Absolutely! Love, grace, and forgiveness transcend cultural boundaries and societal misconceptions. They are the key to a whole and healthy community.

- b. God is very much invested in how we love others (and ourselves too). The Apostle John wrote, "No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known." (John 1:18 NJB). Man hasn't seen the Father but the fullness of who He is, the Grace and Truth He desires for us to partake of, were observable in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Jesus shared the love of the Father with those He encountered. He revealed God's grace at every opportunity and His words were full of Truth – whether they were accepted or not, they were true. Later on, Jesus said that we (believers, Christ followers) would be identified by their love for each other (cf. John 13:34,35). Love is revealed in serving, by acceptance (not agreement), by acts of compassion and kindness. That's the way to grow "the Church". It isn't the rules or the judgements, the moral outrage, the "holier than thou" actions and attitudes, that convince others to come to the Lord in their brokenness. It is simply love.
- c. I'm going to share a story from a book by Phillip Yancey (that I have read more than once). "Love has the power to win over the stranger. A news

event in 1995 shocked both sides in the culture wars controversy. Norma Leah McCorvey, the “Jane Roe” of the famous *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court case of 1973, converted to Christ, got baptized, and joined the pro-life campaign. Most astoundingly, it was the director of the anti-abortion group Operation Rescue who influenced her. As she tells the story, the change occurred when that director stopped treating her like an antagonist. He apologized for publicly calling her “baby killer” and started spending time with her during smoking breaks in the parking lot that, oddly enough, their offices shared. In time McCorvey accepted an invitation to church from a seven-year-old girl whose mother also worked at Operation Rescue. Pro-abortion forces had dismissed McCorvey – her dubious past of drug-dealing, alcohol, and promiscuity made bad public relations – but Christian leaders took the time to counsel her in the faith while keeping her out of the spotlight for some time.” (Vanishing Grace, 2014, Zondervan). Love brings light to places that were only assumed darkness would dwell. Love changes and transforms. It is never wasted.

- d. Why is the Christian faith being persecuted in America today? In my opinion (and I know that doesn't carry much weight) it's because of (1) self-righteousness, the attitude that I have the answers and I am better than you and (2) the inability to listen. Answers are forced down the throat of others before questions are asked or understood. I, for one, am ashamed of the behaviors and hurts that the church has caused in the past. We can only apologize, learn from our mistakes, and do our best to be kind and loving from this point forward.
- e. We are wrapping up this series today. There has been a foundation (of sorts) established. We have learned about our rights and position because believers are “In Him” (Eph.1); we have looked at the truth that we have been chosen, not because of who we are or what we can do. We have been chosen (John 15), just as we are – flaws and all – to be part of the God's family; we learned about the covenant established with Abram

(Gen. 12-15) and the fact that God understands man so well, that He made the covenant with us and then did the work Himself to guarantee the pledge. Today, we are going to look at the right we have been given to be His children.

IV. Text

a. John 1:12-13 (CSB)

But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born, not of natural descent, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God.

b. Belief, acceptance, brings with it certain rights.

c. Believing that Jesus was the person (and deity) that He claimed He was given us access to many things.

d. We gain power and authority. It's too bad (in the past) we have misunderstood and misused these words

e. The power is to become part of "the Family". To have certainty of our eternity, to be able to love – no matter the cost – and to show grace.

f. This power is granted, not by birth or culture or desire or strength. It is granted by grace – because of kindness – and through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit

g. Think about it. Because of our nature (sin), we don't have the ability – without help – to live eternally with God

h. Our union with the Lord God is by faith – through grace (see Eph. 2:8-9)

i. We are children – being a parent I know that I have been frustrated with my kids, but they will always be my kids – and no matter what, we are loved

V. No Longer an Outsider

- a. Our association with the Lord allowed for a change in our relationship position
- b. The Apostle Paul taught us, "Therefore, you are no longer a slave (bond servant) but a son; and if a son, then [it follows that you are] an heir by the aid of God, through Christ." (Galatians 4:7 AMP)
- c. Being related means we carry the family characteristics – love, compassion, forgiveness... and have protection (God has us)
- d. Romans 8:14-15 (NLT2)

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father."

- e. We get to call Him Daddy
- f. And think about it. Much like the covenant with Abram – it's not because of anything we've done or could do. It's because of the grace God revealed by the choices and actions Jesus lived out in front of us. In other words, He did it Himself
- g. Outside the family, we are in bondage (captivity). Sin – despair – disillusionment is what we serve
- h. Our pledge is to self – it is difficult to find or be loved
- i. Faith focused on self, causes a breakdown in our relationship with the Lord
- j. People who don't really believe in or rely upon the Lord may, in the hard and challenging times, cry out in despair. But because there is no family connection, they can't ask Dad for help or hope

VI. Joy

- a. We can be happy, have joy and contentment - no matter what is occurring because of our family relationship
- b. Part of being a kid is knowing that Mom & Dad are there to help you gain perspective
- c. Learning to see things through the eyes of Jesus helps us find joy in moments of difficulty or sorrow
- d. John 17:12-14 (ESV)

While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

- e. Jesus poured so much into the Disciples. We get the benefit of that
- f. There was protection, truth, and Joy
- g. There is great truth that it is because of Joy, we find strength.
- h. See, finding the blessing in the moment of stress or difficulty breaks the bondage of despair or anxiety
- i. Standing for truth, for the righteousness, in the face of fear results in joy
- j. We have joy and hope because of the love and grace we learned from Jesus

VII. Freedom

- a. Have you ever noticed a parent spoiling his child by allowing him to freely roam, disobey, be out late at night without accountability, talk back to him,

and so on? There are times that parents can be fearful of losing their child's love if they restrict their activity or don't give in.

Just like a spoiled child who rebels against his parents and/or quits loving them because he didn't get his way, we often quit on the Lord, throw in the towel because we blame Him for the difficulties of life or think that He doesn't care or isn't listening

b. 1 John 3:1 (ESV)

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.

c. We have freedom in our relationship with the Lord – freedom to love, freedom to serve, freedom to be known and accepted

d. The world acts like those spoiled children I referred to a moment ago. Behaving poorly because there is no relationship

e. They become angry with believers because of the peace and joy they have in the face of life's' challenges

f. God has shown us so much love that He wants us to be a part of His family – forever

g. Because of grace we have the freedom to discover and be the people that God has chosen us to be

VIII. Final Words

a. James 4:4-6 (MSG)

You're cheating on God. If all you want is your own way, flirting with the world every chance you get, you end up enemies of God and his way. And do you suppose God doesn't care? The proverb has it that "he's a fiercely

jealous lover." And what he gives in love is far better than anything else you'll find. It's common knowledge that "God goes against the willful proud; God gives grace to the willing humble."

- b. How do you show love, especially in family relationships? You are interested in their day, encouraging in the hard times, supportive when there are doubts or struggles, and concerned about what's ultimately best for them
- c. It takes investment to discover the things that might be going on with someone else. Listening is a developed skill
- d. The best way to serve begins with listening and seeking to understand
- e. Humility is the choice to see all others as valuable, even those that might be perceived as enemies.
- f. We choose to love, to serve, to invest – the key is humility
- g. And the Lord chooses to show grace, to protect, and to help everyone discover their purpose and joy
- h. Let's Pray
- i. May the blessing of family encourage you on your path. May you find peace and joy in each moment. And may the Holy Spirit guide you into the freedom you have been called to live in
- j. Grace first.... Grace always
- k. Live simple, live practical, love eternally