

ALL IN THE FAMILY

1 John 3:1-7

Matthew 5:1-12

August 26, 2007

I love to read things that kids have said or written. They always seem to have a unique perspective on life and the things around them.

The other day I ran across a science test that some 5th and 6th graders had taken. There were some thought provoking answers, not necessarily the right answers but thought provoking.

On the law of gravity one student wrote: "No fair jumping up without coming back down." In regards to thunder and lightening a young lad wrote: "You can listen to thunder and tell how close you were to being hit by lightening. If you don't hear it, you got hit, so never mind." As to cloud formations a couple of responses read: "I'm not sure how clouds are formed, but clouds know how to do it and that's what is important."

The next child wrote: "Water vapor gets together in a cloud. When it gets big enough to be called a drop, it does." One girl said a "Monsoon was a French gentleman." About planets a student wrote: "When planets run around in circles we say they are orbiting, when people do it we say they're crazy." One young girl describes the spinal column as a long bundle of bones, your head sits on top and you sit on the bottom.

Now admittedly these have absolutely nothing to do with the sermon but there is one that really does. A boy is describing genetics: "Genetics explains why you look like your father and if you don't; why you should."

In the context of our scripture this really hits the nail on the head. "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called the children of God! And that is what we are!...." Is there a resemblance of a family here? There **SHOULD** be.

I wonder how these early Christians who this

letter was sent to felt about it. They had some pretty bad and difficult times. They had seen false teachers come into the church and deny the incarnation of Christ. Thus there was conflict in their fellowship and some dissension about the relationship between faith and action.

And to help this situation worsen the surrounding cultures of the Romans and the Greeks tended to bolster the lack of belief that there was only one God. Religion in these cultures was seen as paying homage to the gods so that they would protect and enhance one's life. Probably the early converts saw Christianity as another way of approaching the gods to ask for security and prosperity. Sort of a celestial good-luck charm.

The sad part of this is that people don't seemed to have changed much from then to now. Faith and religion is seen as more of a hobby. Going to worship is something that we do when there isn't a good football, baseball, basketball, hockey or golf game to watch on T.V. Its

something to do when the weather is too bad to go boating, swimming, fishing, golfing, skiing or any other outdoor activity, but the weather can't be too bad or then going to church is just too dangerous. Worship is where we take little Johnny or Janey when there isn't some sort of athletic event for them to participate in. Our society's message is abundantly clear: PRACTICE YOUR FAITH WHEN IT IS CONVENIENT AND WITHIN YOUR FOUR WALLS AND LEAVE IT THERE!

But the Apostle John tells us the truth. We have been given a lavish gift. God's love!!! It is truly a privilege to be named a child of God. We are His children NOW not just sometime in the distant future. John tells us in verse 1 who we are-members of God's family. Verse 2 tells us who we are becoming--a reflection of God. And the rest of the chapter tells us what we have as we grow in this family.

We have victory over sin and death. There is a difference between committing a sin and

continuing to sin. Even the most faithful sometimes commit sins, a believer who commits a sin repents, confesses, and finds forgiveness. What a gift.

We have love for others. Every time we give to a charity, or place a dollar bill in the offering plate we are sharing God's love for us and for others because those dollars go to help those who are hungry, have no home, they are ill, or have had a disaster strike. You help feed them physically and spiritually.

And we have confidence in God. This means that we know that He will fulfill his promises. We know when we ask for forgiveness we will receive it and we know that no matter how bad things get or how difficult times are, God is there with us, walking the path and if truth be told He is usually carrying us through those times.

If we are believers then we are in the family, we are His children. Now someone is probably thinking; "Aren't ALL people children of God?" The answer is Yes and No. One commentator in

the Homiletics magazine I get explains it like this:

"There are two words in the English language that are closely related but whose meanings are very different. They are PATERNITY AND FATHERHOOD. Paternity describes the biological. It is the relationship in which a father is responsible for the physical existence of a child, but as far as paternity goes it can be and not infrequently but always unfortunately happens that the father has never set eyes on the child and wouldn't recognize them if years later they were to meet.

Fatherhood describes a more intimate, loving and continuous relationship in which Father and child grow closer in every way each and everyday. In the sense of paternity; "Yes, all people are children of God; but in the sense of fatherhood we are only children of God when we make a response to the gift of God's steadfast love that He so graciously offers us.

Verse 2 is also very meaningful to me, cause it tells us what we are becoming. "Dear friends now

we are Children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known we aren't through growing up. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is". When we profess to be a follower of Christ, then we must actually live like Christ and not be ashamed to be a part of the family of God. "See what love the Father has given us that we should be called children of God and that is what we are...." And yes, we will be different because of this all in the family relationship. And with that privilege comes responsibility. Are we ready for it?

A pastor from the South Indiana Conference of the UMC relates a story of an ordination service:

"There were about 1,800 UM's gathered for this service in the auditorium of Indiana University. A bomb threat is called in to the school during this service and the auditorium is quickly emptied.

The people left in a hasty and not to orderly

fashion. Outside they discover it is raining, but there wasn't much complaining because everyone knew that the rain was much needed in this drought stricken area. About 45 minutes later the announcement is made that nothing has been found and they could re-enter. As these wet Methodists started to re-enter the building the security people kept repeating, "Please enter at your own risk!" Kind of a strange greeting for people entering a religious service, or is it?

Imagine entering our church and reading a sign saying: Enter at your own risk, because after the service, your life may never be the same again!"

See what love the Father has lavished upon us that we should be called children of God and that is what we are...What a love, a life-changing love, a love that is truly "ALL IN THE FAMILY!!!"