

Wesley United Methodist Church

January 6, 2019

“God’s Adopted Children.”

John 1:1-18

Ephesians 1:1-6

Welcome on this first Sunday in the New Year. Some of you have probably been working on your New Year’s resolutions. On the other hand, it’s been six days. Some of you have probably already given up on your New Year’s resolutions.

Someone has said, “A New Year’s resolution is something that goes in one year and out the other.” Someone else has said, “Every year I make a resolution to change myself—this year I’m making a resolution to be myself!” That’s actually not a bad resolution.

One December 31 years ago Charles Schultz in his *Peanuts* cartoon strip had Snoopy the dog think to himself: “So this is the last day of the year. Another complete year gone by and what have I accomplished this year that I haven’t accomplished every other year? Nothing!” He smiles and thinks to himself, “How consistent can I get?”

This year, if you’ve made resolutions, I trust God will give you the grace to accomplish them. If not, I trust God will give you the grace to accept yourself as you are and, at least, admire your consistency.

Someone offered this prayer for the New Year for those of us who are getting a few years on us:

May your hair, your teeth, your face-lift, your abs, and your stocks not fall; and may your blood pressure, your triglycerides, your cholesterol, your white blood count and your mortgage interest not rise.

May you get a clean bill of health from your dentist, your cardiologist, your gastroenterologist, your urologist, your podiatrist, your psychiatrist, your plumber, and the IRS.

May what you see in the mirror delight you, and what others see in you delight them.

May the telemarketers wait to make their sales calls until you finish dinner, may your checkbook and budget balance, and may they include generous amounts for your church and charities.

May you remember to say “I love you” at least once a day to your spouse, your child, and your parents...

That last one leads into our message for the day. Listen again to the words from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians: “Bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing that comes from heaven. God chose us in Christ to be holy and blameless in God’s presence before the creation of the world. God destined us to be his adopted children through Jesus Christ because of his love. This was according to his goodwill and plan and to honor his glorious grace that he has given us freely through the Son whom he loves.”

Did you hear that? “He has destined us to be his adopted children through Jesus Christ...” This is the meaning of your life and mine: Because of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ, we are sons and daughters of God. Imagine what that means for us in the New Year.

It means first of all that we are loved. If you have any question that God loves you, put it out of your mind. We are loved. In Psalm 8 we read, “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what are human beings that you pay attention to them?” That is a legitimate question. This universe is so huge! Why should God care about us at all?

There is one thing that we so often are tempted to do and that is we judge value based on size. However, that is not what God does. We may be a tiny part of creation, but that doesn’t lessen our value in the least.

While we were children we learned that a dime has more value than a nickel, even though the nickel is larger. Value is not determined solely by size. We can dig a two-ton rock out of the ground and it will not be as valuable as a two ounce diamond. Put that diamond on the third finger of the left hand of a woman, and its value increases infinitely.

We don’t love a baby any less because of its size. There’s something about a baby that we love even more because it is small. So, if we don’t judge value by its size, why should God? We may be a tiny part of God’s creation, but we’re far from insignificant.

You may argue, there are so many of us for God to love. There are over seven billion people on earth. How could God know and care about each of us as individuals? Is God like the old woman who lived in a shoe, who had so many children she didn’t know what to do...?

Suppose we went to Mexico City or Tokyo, two of the largest cities of the world. We go downtown. It’s rush hour, and there are thousands of busy people in the streets. What is our first impression likely to be? We will probably just see a great mass of faces that all look alike to us. If we were to stay a while in one of those great cities and came to know and love the people there, and understood their culture, they would no longer all look alike to us. We would see them as individuals.

God knows every single person in the world by name. God knows everything about everyone of us. He is the source of all knowledge and truth. He doesn't just see a sea of people. He sees us and loves us as individuals. We are loved. God loves us just as we are. And, in Jesus Christ, God has adopted us as his children.

As the New Year begins, we will find ourselves in the church season of Epiphany. Epiphany is a celebration of light, a celebration of a star that brought wise ones from the East to the place where Jesus was born. In the Bible there are stories of light that shine so brightly and powerfully that people are blinded. In the story of the Magi, the light seems to shine a bit less brightly, maybe appearing through cracks. Why else would the wise ones stop and ask for directions? The rays of God's light are sometimes spotlight bright and sometimes like the light seeping under a door. Find that light. And because of that light, we know that God sees us as the individuals he loves. That is how, by His grace we can enter this New Year. The slate has been wiped clean. It's time to begin writing a new chapter in the book of our life. God loves us. And this morning he invites us to share in the covenant meal of our Lord Jesus Christ who invites all of us to partake. Amen.