

“The Father’s Love” – Pr Jim Sprengle – All Saints’ Day November 5, 2023

- I. **1 John 3:1-2** - ¹See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are... ²Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared;
- II. **All kinds of creative ideas came to people** during the Covid lockdown.
 - a. For example, a British radio host named Sam Darlaston found a surprise when he opened a bag of broccoli from the grocery store--a caterpillar.
 - i. But instead of taking the broccoli back and complaining, he decided to take care of it.
 - ii. It became a new hobby for him during the lockdown in his apartment in London and he became somewhat of an expert on how to raise caterpillars.
 1. He told a reporter, “I did my research initially and discovered the exact type of caterpillar/butterfly we were dealing with. I then decided to build him a little home in my (living room) with all the broccoli he wanted.”
 2. He named his caterpillar Cedric, and was planning on maintaining a habitat for one, until he went to the same store for more broccoli... and got more caterpillars!
 3. He said, “The broccoli I’d got as a replacement contained 5 more. And then a 3rd broccoli belonging to my housemate had another one! So, 1 became 7 caterpillars overnight!”
 - iii. As a radio host, Darlaston had an audience that followed him, and he kept them up to date about his 7 little friends.
 1. Eventually they became a chrysalis and formed cocoons... and in time, they became butterflies and flew away.
 2. He said it brought him happiness to see these little creatures fly to freedom, and the whole process was very satisfying during a very difficult time.¹
 - b. This is kind of a funny story, but the more I thought about it, the more I saw how God works in our lives.
 - i. Somehow, some way, He saw value in us when we should have just been destroyed... or at the very least someone should complain about us and try to get a refund!
 - ii. God also intervened and brought us under His care, as He transformed us into new people.
 1. We would be left to our own destruction, happily eating what was right in front of us, but it is not the kind of environment that allows for life.
- III. **In the Bible, people are sometimes described as worms.**

- a. God calls people worms... or people call themselves worms... which pointed out the obvious, they were weak... or that they were under God's judgment.
 - i. One example is found in Isaiah 41:14, "Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I am the one who helps you, declares the LORD; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel."
 - 1. Here God is pointing out their weakness as little worms, but as God, He is able to protect and save them.
 - ii. Another example is Job 25:6 as Job responds to his friends how little they know compared to God and describes people – "man, who is a maggot, and the son of man, who is a worm!"
 - iii. In other Scripture, worms or maggots are the sign of judgment and devour people...
 - 1. In Mark 9:48, Jesus describes hell by saying the "worm does not die and the fire is not quenched."
 - iv. Finally, King David writes words that describe Jesus being rejected and dying on the cross in Psalm 22.
 - 1. The Psalm begins with the last words of Jesus on the cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Psalm 22:1; Mark 15:34; Matthew 27:46)
 - 2. But then the Psalm goes on to say, "I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people." (Psalm 22:6) – which is pointing to the judgment that was placed upon Jesus as He took our sins upon Himself.
- b. As we consider the greatness of God and just how much bigger He is than our understanding and ways (Isaiah 55:8-9) – it blows my mind that He would stoop to our level and care for us... let alone love us.
- c. In our limited understanding, we are destructive... consuming everything around us and creating brokenness and despair in our path.
 - i. It doesn't really matter what the situation is, we humans can make anything worse.
 - ii. We struggle with relationships, where I heard a quote from someone the other day saying that 20% of families have someone who is estranged or no longer communicating with them.
 - iii. Our stewardship of the earth is filled with destruction and short term versus long term thinking –
 - 1. Yes, the Lord said to subdue the earth and manage it in Genesis 1 with the goal of supporting and blessing humanity – but the sinful side of us wastes resources, hoards rather than shares, and consumes rather than produces.
 - iv. We also surround ourselves with the comforts that we think make us fulfilled and happy – rather than placing our trust in God.

1. Having nice things isn't necessarily the problem, it's the constant pressure to have more, to make more, and to have goals for success... while being indifferent toward God.
- d. There are probably many more good reasons for the Lord to see us as worms, but out of fatherly love, He searches us out and calls us His own.

IV. **God finds us in our sin and changes everything.**

- a. Imagine those caterpillars that man found, they were not crying out for help or searching for some higher power... they were totally unaware of their fate.
- b. In the same way, God finds us wherever we are at – in whatever circumstances and state of being we are in – and He gives us grace.
- c. Sometimes grace comes at the baptismal font as a little baby – and yes, even babies have sin – and other times He comes to us later in life as His Word and Good News come to those who hear... and grace through faith follows.
- d. So the question for some is how does God show His love for us?
 - i. The story of our Savior Jesus Christ coming into the world as an extension of the Father's love is the key to all of this.
 - ii. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him would not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16)
 - iii. God Himself came into the world – from perfection with the Father in heaven to human form – and chose to die for us so that we might live.
 - iv. As you have faith in Jesus Christ as the one who died and rose for you, all of the benefits and blessings of God are passed on to you.
 - v. Jesus becomes the worm as He is scorned and despised, tortured, and killed for our sake....
 - vi. As His blood was spilled upon that cross, it became the cleansing power of the one-time sacrifice for our sin.
- e. An interesting fact is that the Hebrew word for worm is also used for scarlet colored material.
 - i. The deep red color represented sacrifice and blood, and was used inside the temple and on priests' clothing.
 - ii. The reason they used worm and scarlet material as the same word was because they got the red dye from a scarlet worm.
 1. The female worms laid eggs on trees, and in the process released this scarlet dye making the bark look like blood.
- f. Can you envision the cross with the scarlet blood of Jesus on it?
 - i. Our God rescues us from sin, places a white robe of righteousness on us that has been bleached in the scarlet blood of Jesus (Revelation 7:14), and we receive forgiveness, life, and salvation.
 - ii. The transformation is not yet complete, because we will one day come forth in the resurrection of the dead with a glorified body that is beyond our imagination.

- iii. But until then, remember the Father's love for you – and the great expense and sacrifice that He made to call you His own.
- iv. We are now the saints of God – covered in righteousness with our sins forgiven... and all because of the Father's love. Amen

¹ David Moye, "Man Finds Caterpillars In Supermarket Broccoli And Raises Them As His Own" HuffPost (6-24-20)