

The Lavish Love of God

1 John 3:1-3

All Saints Day

1 November 2020

How good was Tuesday?

I don't know about you, but I thought it was awesome. I even noticed our new Pastor Nick posting it on Facebook with a huge smile on his face; but I don't think I have ever seen him without a smile!

What was it about Tuesday? It began with strong, slow, build-up of humidity. The Bureau of Meteorology had promised it. But I have been let down by those promises so many times. But then it started. Not the rain. The notifications. A storm is coming. It didn't take much for me to decide to work from home for the rest of the day.

My office window at home faces North West. So I could see it coming. The rapidly blackening of the clouds. The smack of lightening. Then I heard the loud crack of thunder. And then the rain. Bucket loads of it.

Are you one of those who gets a smile on your face when that happens?

Then at about 5.20pm it stopped. Mostly. I couldn't get outside fast enough. It was so refreshing. I went for a walk by the creek where we live.

A **cockatoo** flew overhead.

A **brush turkey** settled high in a tree.

The **creek** was flowing – wonderfully flowing.

And the **frogs croaked** with delight.

It was as though the heavens were declaring God's praise – that after such a long dry winter, life was being restored.

And as I walked, deeply breathing the fresh, rain-chilled air, I couldn't help but wonder – if this is what it feels like to be lavished by the love of God. Joy rising within. It was awesome.

Why did it speak like that to me?

Have you heard of the Five Love Languages? Gary Chapman first wrote about them in 1992.

Words of Affirmation, Acts of Service, Receiving Gifts, Quality Time, Physical Touch.

Spend a moment appropriately distancing, talking with the person next to you about your love language. About how you feel most loved.

One of my love languages is physical touch. To smell the rain. To deeply breath the rain-chilled air, for me, is to tangibly experience God's presence in my soul. It is an incarnational experience. **The lavish love of God!**

Today, many churches around the world celebrate All Saints Day. A day when we remember those saints who have gone before us, those people who have spoken God's grace into our lives, who have helped us taste, notice, encounter, experience, even be the incarnational lavish love of God to us. And today we remember them.

And one of the bible readings – from 1 John 3, begins

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1, TNIV)

Sit with that for a moment. Hear those words again. Think about what image they create in you...

See what great love the Father has lavished on us...

See what great love the Father has bestowed on us...

See what great love the Father heaped on us...

See what great love the Father has showered upon us.

To taste that grace, like deeply breathing the rain-chilled air, comforts our minds and fills our hearts with joy!

During the week I was thinking how I could help you taste that lavish love of God.

Have you seen one of these? (A bubble gun). How do you notice children respond when bubbles rain down? Don't you notice shrills of delight?

That's what God is doing... he showers his love on all people; like delicate bubbles raining down... so that, as the bible declares... **we should be called children of God!**

God raining his love down on all people. Like the waters of baptism being rained down on us, God is loudly declaring that we are the children of God. That is our hope. That is the inescapable promise that you can always cling to when things are not going well, when your heart is broken, when you feel dry and lonely; be it in the isolation of lock down, or coming out of a long winter dry spell – to know that God has claimed you in your baptism is a tangible expression of knowing that you are lavishly loved.

The Psalmist knew that too. Throughout the Psalms we hear the lament and the hope...

“When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, “The LORD has done great things for them.” The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Restore our fortunes, LORD, like streams in the Negev. Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them.” (Psalm 126:1–6, TNIV)

Oh, the Lavish love of God!

In fact, as one commentator said – the gospel language used in 1 John 3 is much, much stronger than the language of John 3:16, 'God so loved the world'. In 1 John 3, it is this lavish love of God, poured over you through Jesus in your baptism. That is what declares you to be God's deeply loved, uniquely chosen child.

Sit with that. Listen to that. Taste that. Because it doesn't depend on what you do. It totally, completely and utterly depends on what God has done for you.

As the Psalmist declared...

The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.

Why is that important? Because knowing that God is the one who declares us His children, is what fills our hearts with hope.

Knowing that God is the one who declares us His children, is what allows us to weep our tears, confident that from the watering of those tears, God will grow new things.

Knowing that God is the one who declares us His children, is what helps us to hold out to God those things which we do not understand, those things which make no sense, certain that God will create new life.

This is the promise of the resurrection. The promise of restoration to life once more. God lavishing us with his love by calling us his children.

And in that space, today, as every day, we live with boldness.

In that space, today, as every day, knowing whose we are, helps us confidently live knowing that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God...

“Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:38-39, NLT

It is because of the lavish love of God, that nothing can separate you from God. There is nothing you have done, that could stop God from loving you. And there is nothing that you can do, that could have God love you more. Because God is God. And that God, you are not! God has chosen you. Declared you to be his children. And that is who you are!

So how do we respond? We live as his family. Doing the good things that families do... we laugh together, love together, share life together, maybe even argue a little together, but we also forgive together and remember together.

In a moment, you will have an opportunity to remember those who have helped you experience God's lavish love – those saints who this last year, and past years, have already gone before us and crossed that river that separates life as we know it, from the resurrected life.

And as you do, thank God for all that he has done, and continues to do, as he lavishes his love on you.

God is good. All the time. All the time, God is good.

Pastor David Schmidt