Children of kings often grow up with enormous advantages, but also with an enormous sense of responsibility.

Queen Elizabeth of England, along with her sister Margaret, was educated at home by a private tutor. The 2 girls played together at home a/w/a the local parks, & spent a lot of enjoyable family time w/ their parents (here: Queen Mary, her grandmother).

On weekends, the whole family often went to their country estate in Windsor Great Park.

When Elizabeth was 9, her grandfather, King George V, died, and her uncle Edward became king. Less than a year later, he abdicated the throne. Suddenly her father was the king (being next in the royal line), & she herself had become the presumptive heir to the throne.

Elizabeth’s father, King George VI, started bringing the young princess (now only 12 years old) newspaper articles to familiarize her with politics. She also started receiving weekly lessons on the history of the British constitution to prepare her for royal responsibilities that would one day be hers.

In our Scripture text today, the Apostle John will remind us that we are children of the King of kings—God Himself.
All the privileges/responsibilities of royalty are ours, but like 12 year old Elizabeth, we haven’t yet grown into them. Someday we will rule/reign with X, but for now we’re just learning the ropes=>

How to be worthy of the privilege/responsibility of ruling in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this text John will explain=>

* What we are  * What we shall be  * What we must be.

* **What We Are** (children of God)

[1 John 3:1]=> “See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called **children of God**; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.”

**John was a seer who had seen many extraordinary sights.**

* He had seen Jesus heal the sick, raise the dead, and with a single word calm a huge storm-tossed lake.

* He had seen what only 2 other men had seen=> the transfiguration of X, later writing, “*The Word became flesh... and we beheld His glory.*”

* He had seen the marvel of Jesus’ resurrected body.

But for John, the most incredible miracle anyone could see/ponder was the love God bestows on believers.

It’s as if John holds it up & says to us, “Look at this!”

John first mentioned God’s love in 2:5, he’ll mention it 3 times in chapter 3, and then in chapter 4 he’ll spend 7 verses explaining the wonders/marvels of God’s love in depth.
Here the Apostle just says, “See *how great*” this amazing love is (Gk word=> *potapos*).

It’s the same expression of astonishment that the Apostles used when they saw X calm Lake Galilee (Mt 8:27):

> “*What kind* [*potapos*—same word {“how great”}] *of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?*”

The Apostles as a group, a/w/a John in our own text, had seen something totally foreign to their own experience.

It was something they couldn’t comprehend/relate-to.

In terms of its nature, a/w/a its magnitude, the love of God the Father is utterly foreign to normal human affairs.

**God, by His own uninfluenced choice, decides to lavish His blessings on certain individuals who deserve nothing but His anger, due to their sinful rebellion against Him.**

He selflessly acts to benefit them, draws them into a loving relationship with Himself, and even makes painful sacrifices on their behalf.

This agape love is so far beyond our own experience, that even we Xns have difficulty grasping/even-imagining it.

That’s why in Eph 3, Paul prays for the Ephesians to become spiritually strong enough that they might=>

> “*comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, / and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge*”

(Eph 3:18-19).
God the Father “has bestowed” this amazing love on us, as a gift of His grace.

He says, “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons/daughters.”

Doesn’t this amazing fact stir in you a humble sense of gratitude?

**John has a particular benefit of this divine love in mind=>**

*the fact that, because of God’s love for us, He has seen fit to call us His children.*

He has adopted us, bringing us into His own family, granting us the right to appropriate the title “children of God.”

It sounds pretentious to say, “I’m a child of God,” but it’s not, because He has given us that right.

Because of His love, we have received divine sonship.

As if these weren’t bragging rights enough, the fact that God has adopted/declared us His children brings with it other blessings/advantages as well.

Specifically, an eternal inheritance.

E.g. (Rom 8:17)=> *If children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.*

Our sonship includes an inheritance from God that we will share with X, our Savior.

A child with a little cut/splinter goes to his/her parent for help.

Any good parent stops what he’s doing, out of love, and attends to the child’s mini-crisis.
And we are just as free to take our own little crises to our adopted Heavenly Father, knowing that He loves us.

**In addition to adoption, God has also become our Father through regeneration, so that we are born again.**

At the end of last Sunday’s text, John said that everyone who practices righteousness is => “born of Him.”

Adoption gives us the name of God’s children, but new birth gives us His nature.

Through spiritual regeneration we receive our Heavenly Father’s nature.

Every adopted child of God also becomes His child by being spiritually begotten again.

Are we truly God’s children?

To answer that, we must ask ourselves whether/not we have truly believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, as our Lord/Savior.

Jn 1:12 => “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, / who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (12-13).

If you have saving faith in Jesus X, you are “born of God” and are a child of God.

Those who have received God’s nature will hate sin & love righteousness, because He hates sin & loves righteousness.

This is the spiritual nobility/royalty of God’s children.
I love the 4 words in the middle of verse 1: “And such we are.”

Not only are we called “children of God”—we actually are children of God, just as surely as we are children of our natural parents.

If you’re born again, those 4 words should grab your attention.

You may not feel like a son/daughter of God, but you are.
When you call yourself a child of God, it’s no empty boast.
You are the privileged recipient of sonship from God.

You may say, “That’s prob. true of certain super saints, but it can’t be true of obscure little minimum-wage me.”

Amazingly, that title represents an absolute truth about you.
John himself felt the same way, which is why he included himself with amazement=> “See [Look at it! Can you believe it?] how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us (even us fishermen), that we should be called children of God.”

It must be something like Queen Elizabeth felt as a child when she woke up one morning & thought to herself=>

“Wow, my own father is the king of England!”

Then on further reflection thought, “Wow! I’m going to be the queen someday. I look/feel the same, and I’m still small/young/weak. But I’m going to be the queen!”

Because we are children of God, the world doesn’t know us.

They don’t recognize our royal nature/heritage.
Notice that it’s not in spite of that fact, but because of it.
1st, Jesus says they don’t know us, because they don’t know God, our Father. As Romans 1 says, they have suppressed the truth about Him in their unrighteousness. Their concepts of God are so fallacious/fictitious, they have incapacitated them to recognize/know the true God. They have chosen to dismiss/ignore Him, as He reveals Himself. By contrast, we have formed a loving/submissive relationship with Him, which is inconceivable to them. Our being called the children of that God they don’t know, acknowledge, or believe-in, seems absurd to them.

2nd, in rejecting God, the world has rejected His revealed truth in the Bible. They have systematically replaced it with human wisdom and the doctrines of demons. So when they hear the actual truth, they can’t handle it and don’t recognize it.

* They don’t see God’s hand in creation because they refuse to acknowledge that He is the Creator, or that there even was a Creator.

* They also refuse to recognize Him in His incarnation in human flesh, causing Jesus to conclude (Jn 16:3) =>

“*They have not known the Father, or Me.*”
* So it’s no surprise that they refuse to acknowledge us as God’s children, because they have no capacity for spiritual understanding at all.

3rd, since the Fall, God has usually operated behind the scenes in this world, calling us to follow Him by faith, not by sight. Only rarely does He manifest His presence physically.

E.g. thru the pillar of fire/cloud, or thru miracles.

When God came to earth as a Man, He veiled His glory behind human flesh.

Our identity as His children is also veiled.

* Col 3:3 says our life is hidden w/ X in God.
* Rom 8:19 says the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God—that’s us.

For now, we are the unrevealed children of God.

Rom 8:16 says the H.S. bears witness w/ our spirits that we are children of God, but the world doesn’t know that; They aren’t privy to what the H.S. conveys to our hearts.

They see our faith in Him as a pretense at best, & as a symptom of self-delusion at worst.

4th, the world doesn’t know us because they can’t relate to us, having not been transformed by spiritual rebirth.
Having rejected everything we believe in and hold dear, they are simply baffled by our principles/values, our character/methods.

They don’t share our love for Jesus as Savior/Lord, so our obedience of His commands makes no sense to them.

1 Cor 2:14=> “A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”

He has no capacity for spiritual appraisal.

When we explain that we don’t do certain things because they displease our beloved Lord such as adultery, divorce, and aborting-babies, they take offense at it, as if we were attacking them personally, out of self-righteous pride.

Not only does the world not know us, it actually hates us if we’re open about our faith.

In fact, Jesus warned us=> “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. / If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (Jn 15:18-19).

We aren’t part of the world system, and the difference between us/it irritates them and alienates us from them.
As Phil 2:15 says, we are simply trying to prove ourselves blameless, innocent “children of God,” above reproach, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

But they take offense at our doing so.

Brothers/sisters in X, it shouldn’t surprise us if worldlings only speak about Xns to question our sincerity, misrepresent our virtue, and mock the grace within us.

How could the world know us if it didn’t know our Savior?

This is not the world where our glory will ever be fully displayed.

But a world/time is coming when all men will recognize us as God’s own sons/daughters.

For now we’re like shriveled seeds in a wintry land, but the time is coming when our true identity will be revealed, like flowers in summer, a fragrance of life to the spiritually alive.

Again, John has told us who we are=> Children of God, adopted and regenerated by Him, out of His amazing agape love for us;

But also, people whose sonship is unknown to the world around us, and actually alienates us from them.

* What We Shall Be (glorified, Christlike saints)

[Verse 2]=> “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.”
John says there are things we do know--& things we don’t know—about what we’ll be like, when we’re glorified.

First, if we are truly born again, we do know we’re children of God.

John reminds us of that again at the beginning of verse 2.

Secondly, because we are God’s children, we do know generally where this will lead—children mature into adulthood.

Spiritually-speaking, our adulthood will be Christlikeness.

Rom 8:29=> “Whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.”

Our new nature was created to be a reproduced image of X in holiness and righteousness.

The perfection of that image will achieve God’s predestined plan/purpose for man.

But we’re still in process towards that perfection.

We’ve got a good start at it, but we’re a long way from attaining it.

Col 3=> “You laid aside the old self with its evil practices, / and have put on the new self [that a good starting point] who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him” (3:9-10).

So we are a work in progress, inching towards true X-likeness.

Even now, we as believers can see the beginnings of God’s glory manifesting itself in our character/lives.
**2 Cor 3:18=> “We all, with unveiled face [Moses veiled his face so that no one would see the glory on his face diminishing; but we don’t need a veil because the glory is increasing] beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord [i.e., we look in the mirror and what we see is X’s glory], are being transformed into the same image [X’s image] from glory to glory.”

Obviously, this isn’t literal.

It’s a spiritual metaphor.

It’s as if we can look in a mirror & see our own spiritual growth.

The image is still dim, but we’re beginning to see Christ in the mirror.

As the H.S. continues to sanctify/mature us, that image gets clearer, progressing from 1 level of glory to another.

But, thirdly, we don’t know exactly where this is leading.

What we are now, the world can’t see/understand;

But what we shall be, even we don’t yet see/understand, though we know it will be good.

As I Cor 13:12 says=> “Now we see in a mirror dimly.”

**Fourthly, what we will be is to be revealed, when X appear.**

And one thing we know for sure, is that we will share His glory.

**Col 3:4=> “When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”**

He’ll be revealed in glory, & we’ll be revealed in glory with Him.

According to Paul=> “The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is
to be revealed to us” (Rom 8:18).

John adds that our seeing Jesus will be not only the occasion for our glorification, it will actually be the cause of it.

Seeing God incarnate will instantly transform us into His glorious likeness & His glory will be the cause of our glorification.

John says=> “We shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is” (in His glorified state).

Seeing God has always been a privilege for which true believers long.

David longed for it and wrote=> “I shall behold Thy face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Thy likeness when I awake” (Psa 17:15).

Moses longed for it, but was told by God=> “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!” (Ex 33:20).

But X said in the Sermon on the Mount, that the pure in heart shall see God (Mt 5:8).

In the Upper Room, Jesus prayed=> “Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory” (Jn 17:24).

When Jesus appears, we will see Him, not only dimly in our own reflected faces, but as He is, in His unveiled glory.

We’ll be not only w/ Him—we’ll be glorified like Him.

We won’t be equal to the Son of God, but we will be conformed to His image.
* No longer quick-tempered, but meek/lowly, as He was.
* No longer haughty/proud, but humble/gentle, as He was.
* No longer prone to yield to the lusts of the flesh, but as morally pure as He was.
* No longer selfish/self-seeking, but as selfless, tender, and caring about other people as X.
* No longer susceptible to weakness/illness, but living in a body like Jesus’ glorified body, after His resurrection.
* We will be with X where He is, our constant Companion, who will never again leave us.
* We’ll be as happy as He is, within our own capacity.
* We will be crowned with glory as X is crowned, and rule upon thrones even as He sits on His Father’s throne.
* Most importantly, we will have become perfectly pure in heart, and fully sanctified, just like X.
  This will make it possible for us to see God’s infinite glory & live (not dying as Moses would have).

Paul says in II Thes 2:14 that God’s purpose in calling us, thru the gospel, was that we might “gain the glory of our Lord.”

In the glory of our perfect righteousness we will worship our glorious/beloved Lord, bringing glory/honor to His name.

Charles Wesley=>
“And if our fellowship below
In Jesus be so sweet,
What heights of rapture shall we know
When round His throne we meet.”

That’s a wonderful prospect unless you know you won’t be there, part of it, because you haven’t believed in Jesus Christ.

If that’s you, I can only hope that you’ll seek/find/believe in Him for your soul’s salvation.

If you truly seek Him, He will be found of you, wash away your sins, and someday glorify you, in His own glory.

*What We Must Be* (morally/spiritually pure).

[Verse 3]=> “And everyone who has this hope [glorified Christlikeness] fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

When someone is born of God and becomes a child of God, he comes to hate-sin/love-righteousness, just as God does.

Heaven for him isn’t the easy life, lived on streets of gold.

It is becoming/living like Jesus, by believing in Him, loving Him, and longing for His presence, so that the gradual process of sanctification, can/will be instantly completed when we see Him and He glorifies us.

In 2 Tim 4:8 (Paul)=> “In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; & not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

We love His appearing, because we’ll be with Him at last.
But also because we will be like Him—basking in glory that will outwardly represent the perfect righteousness/purity w/i us.

Meanwhile, we want to get as close to that perfection as we can in this life, because we’ve come to treasure it (loving righteousness and hating sin).

**On a judicial level, only X’s blood can cleanse us from sin, but we have a part to play in purifying ourselves.**

Paul wrote to the Corinthians=> “*Having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*” (II Cor 7:1).

Purification is saying “No” to sin in our lives.

It is steadfastly not compromising with the world, giving its sinful values a place in our hearts.

It is following as closely as we can in the power of the Spirit to our Lord’s pattern of life, seeking to become Christlike here/now.

Seeking to see X more clearly in the mirror.

It is constantly repenting-of/confessing sin to Him, keeping ourselves cleansed from it, so it won’t create a sense of distance in our relationship with X.

Jms 4:8=> “*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*”

“Pure” is hagnos, and “holy” is hagios.
The 2 words are related, but there’s an important difference.

God is always spoken of as hagios because He dwells in the light of absolute holiness/purity.

He is never spoken of as hagnos, which refers to keeping oneself free from sin, while living in the midst of it.

That’s our situation, not God’s.

So Paul writes—“*keep yourself free from sin*” (I Tim 5:22).

John says that everyone who has fixed his hope in Jesus, purifies himself, just as Jesus is pure.

He doesn’t allow even 1 of this world’s wicked thoughts & values to remain very long in his heart, or to settle in for a prolonged stay.

He struggles w/ his flesh, saying with Paul=>

>“Nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not” (Rom 7:18-19).

He keeps on wishing for good, not throwing in the towel and giving in to his flesh, but doing whatever it takes to keep the deeds of the flesh out of his life.

He faithfully utilizes the means of grace which God has provided=>

*meditation on His Word
*prayer
*worship
*fellowship*

He dwells mentally on whatever is true/honorable/right, 
pure/lovely/of-good-repute, excellent and worthy of praise (Phil 4:8).

Isaac Watts was a great English theologian & hymn-writer three centuries ago, who wrote over a thousand hymns.

He summarizes this entire passage in a 5 stanza poem.

I want to close with that poem.

**Behold the amazing gift of love**

The Father hath bestowed On us, the sinful sons of men, To call us sons of God.

**Our souls, we know, when He appears,**

Shall bear His image bright; For all His glory, full disclosed, Shall open to our sight.

**Concealed as yet this honor lies,**

A hope so great, and so divine A world that knew not when He came, — May trials well endure; Even God’s eternal Son. And purge the soul from sense and sin, As Christ Himself is pure.

**High is the rank we now possess;**

But higher we shall rise; Though what we shall hereafter be Is hid from mortal eyes.
"Children of God"
October 16, 2011

Text: 1 John 3:1-3

1. In our Scripture text today the Apostle John will remind us that we are children of the King of kings, explaining…

* What We Are

[1 John 3:1]

2. For John the most incredible miracle anyone could see or ponder was the [10 love] God bestows on believers.

3. John has a particular benefit of this divine love in mind: the fact that, because of God’s love for us, He has seen fit to call us His [20 children].

4. Adoption gives us the name of God’s children, but new birth gives us His [14 nature].

5. Because we are children of God, the world doesn’t know us; they don’t recognize our royal [14 nature] or heritage.

6. When God came to earth as a Man, He veiled His glory behind human flesh; our identity as His [20 children] is also veiled.

7. It shouldn’t surprise us if worldlings only speak about Christians to question our sincerity, misrepresent our virtue, and mock the grace within us; how could the world know us if it didn’t know our [14 Savior]?

* What We Shall Be

[Verse 2]

8. Because we are God’s children, we know generally where this will lead—children mature into adulthood; our adulthood will be [26 Christlikeness].

9. What we will be is to be revealed when Christ appears; we know that we will share His [12 glory].
10. We won’t be equal to the Son of God, but we will be [22 conformed] to His image.

II Thes 2:14

* What We Must Be

[Verse 3]

11. When someone is born of God and becomes a child of God, he comes to hate sin and [10 love] righteousness just as God does.

II Tim 4:8; II Cor 7:1; Jms 4:8; I Tim 5:22

12. Everyone who has fixed his hope in Jesus, purifies himself just as Jesus is pure; he doesn’t allow this world’s wicked thoughts and values to [14 remain] very long in his heart.

Rom 7:18-19

13. He dwells mentally on whatever is true, honorable, right, [10 pure], lovely, of good repute, excellent and worthy of praise.

Phil 4:8