

The Father Heart of God

Matthew 3:17, 17:5 and John 12:28

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Consider

One of the most breath-taking aspects of the good news announced in the Bible is that through faith in Jesus Christ, we receive full adoption into God's family and become children of God. As 1 John 3:1 puts it:

*See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!
And that is what we are!*

This Father's day we considered the gift of our adoption as full-fledged sons and daughters of the Living God. Through Jesus we have the privilege, not only of *knowing* that God is our Father, but also of *experiencing* this relationship on a daily basis.

Let's Examine

Read Matthew 3:16-17, Matthew 17:1-5, and John 12:28

These moments where the Father speaks are moments of tremendous significance in Jesus' life and yet, as Jesus himself says (John 12:30), they are very much for our own benefit and instruction as well.

- As you look at each of these texts, what are some key words or phrases that speak to Jesus' identity? *Take some time to observe, write down and share them as a group.*
- Picture yourself there standing in the crowds at the river: you see the rocky Judean countryside, you hear the river water flowing, and you see people respond in earnest to John's call to return to God. All of a sudden, the sky tears open and a voice speaks these words about the man who just came up from the waters: "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased." What do you feel in that moment? What thoughts are coming to mind about the man standing in the water? The words were directed to him. As a first century Jew, would you have ever thought it possible that such words could be spoken about a human?
- What does the Father speaking and the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus teach us about who God is?
- Zoom out and consider the further claim of the New Testament: that those words spoken uniquely to Jesus might *also apply to us* because of who Jesus was and what he came to do?

Let's Apply

As you may have already observed, John's Gospel emphasizes *glory*. John uses the term *glory* more than any other gospel writer. Jesus' desire in John 12:28 is this: "Father, glorify your name." That's his mission: to bring glory to His Father, and he obediently lived this mission out when he walked the earth. As Christ's body, that's our mission too: to glorify God with everything we are and have.

- What do you think it means in John 12:28 when the Father says he will glorify his name *again*? How was Jesus about to glorify the Father?
- Discuss how it is that we, as sinful human beings, can come to share in the identity of Jesus and be called children of God? How is it that what is true of Jesus becomes true of us? Why is it so important that we know this identity in heart and mind with firm conviction?
- Consider God's *hesed* (loyal, covenantal love) in making us his children through Christ. How does God's *hesed* empower us to bring glory to the Father?
- What are some practical ways the Father's love is impelling you into the mission of Jesus? Where is Jesus inviting you to give of yourself and your resources more fully for the sake of the kingdom of God?
- Lastly, consider what might be some obstacles you experience in receiving the love of the Father? What are some ways you are tempted to come to God with closed fists rather than open hands? Are there any habits of thought or soul at work in your life that rob you of the joy of entering into the Father's love on a daily basis and joining in Jesus' mission?

Let's Pray

- Pause and quietly consider what the Holy Spirit is saying to you from your time.
- Rejoice and give thanks that in and through Christ, we are adopted into God's family and become his children.
- Ask the Father to continue to reveal his love to you. Ask for the grace to respond to his love with love, obedience, and faithfulness on your part.
- Yield those "closed fist" areas of your life that rob you of the joy of entering into the Father's love and participate in his mission. Open your hands and yield to God's love and purpose for your life.

Holy Spirit, empower us with the love of the Father to join Jesus in his mission. Grow us as your body for your global mission. Through Christ we pray. Amen.