

1 John 3:1 Children of God: You are of great value to God! Epiphany 3 (Life Sunday) 01/21/18

By Pastor Kenneth Mellon, Trinity Lutheran Church and School, Pleasant Valley Rd., West Bend, WI

God's grace and peace are yours and for all people through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

God's Word of love and esteem for His children is written in 1 John 3:1

This is Your amazing Word, heavenly Father. Please use it show how You value all human life. Amen

Dear Children of God, in Christ,

What is it that gives us value? The cost of the chemical and mineral components of our bodies according to a Google search indicated that our recycled body value is \$1,985.77. That's not much value in today's world. Another way to consider our worth is: if we were kidnapped and held for ransom, how much would someone pay? Your family could come up with many 1,000's of dollars. If we were important employees of a big company they may pay 10's of 1,000's. If we own many expensive possessions and large bank accounts, they may get 100's of 1,000's for our return. But, if we had no family or were homeless we might not have anyone pay a cent for us. That may be how the world values people, but it isn't God's way. To Him, every one of us has value. How do we know that God values us? He sent His one and only Son from heaven to pay a ransom so great that we cannot count it. God sees Jesus' life and death as having an eternal value that He applies to us so that we can say in Christ:

Children of God: You are of great value to God!

First, why does the sinful world value things differently than us? We believers are guided by God's Word. From it, we learn what is true or false, right or wrong, and according to God's will or against it. But the thinking of unbelievers is not in harmony with God's truth. Our verse states: *"The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him."* (v. 1) Unbelievers do not understand Christians. They don't understand that people are saved by grace through faith alone in Christ. Those without God's Word think that the way to impress God is by increasing their value by doing good works. They think that a loving God will accept their goodness which is more than their faults. They think that they'll need to suffer a little on earth, but in the end, they do not expect to face eternal judgment. On the other hand, believers know that we deserve to be judged for our sinfulness which has increased from the time we were born. (Psalm 51)

In regard to how Christians view human life, many in the world do not understand how we can say we value life and yet can accept the death penalty. To us it isn't a matter of opinion or of what a majority of people say. It's: What does God say in His Word? It states, first, that God is the creator of human life. It is a unique from all other animals. Genesis 1 states that God gave people a soul and made them in His image. When people sin He judges them and, in His time, life will end in death. God said, *"There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life."* (Deuteronomy 32:39) In other words, God has power over life and death. He said, *"The soul who sins shall die."* (Ezekiel 18:4) And, He warned people, *"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed."* (Genesis 9:6) In Romans 13 we learn that God has given governments authority to end the life of those who have committed murder in order to protect the innocent from being harmed by that person again. This is God's truth.

It is also by God's Word that we accept the truth that children who are unborn should be given an opportunity to live. We read earlier in Psalm 139, *"You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.... Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."* (vs. 13-16) It is God's will that we save innocent lives. The world says if a pregnant woman wants a child, then the fetus is a baby. If she does not want a child, then the fetus is not life. The sinful world says that if a baby will be unwanted, it is better to end its life before birth. This is against the Word of God. Because of the world's view is so prevalent, too many pregnant women don't have

the freedom to choose. They are told: Have an abortion or your husband or boyfriend or family will disown you. Too many women are counseled that abortion is the “easy” solution for their lives. But, it sadly leaves many people in worse circumstances and with consciences weighed down by guilt.

How could people end up so far from God’s ways? St. Paul wrote, *“The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.”* (Romans 8:7) He also wrote, *“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ....”* (2 Corinthians 4:4) Paul wrote, *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to approve what God’s will is....”* (Romans 12:2)

Second, we need God’s truth. God created all people. Because of sin He sees how they are now His enemies by nature and dead to spiritual truths. But, He does not hate sinners. He pities and loves them. He wants all sinners to repent and to learn the saving truth of Christ. The truth is that the best things we own, the highest positions of work, and having the best family cannot save anyone. God looks at the heart. He demands perfection because that is His nature. And He originally created people to live that way. God had every right to judge all sinners and to send death and eternal punishment for all. But, here is the wonder that John describes in our verse about our gracious God: *“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”* (v.1) Our value comes from our loving God. God knows that we cannot get true value by looking to ourselves or to the sinful world. We will always be disappointment!

That is why God gave the Word: *“God so loved the world that he gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* (John 3:16). We have value because God made us. More notably we have value because God’s Son paid the ransom for our sins. He didn’t pay 1,000’s or millions of dollars. He paid our release by shedding His blood on the cross. Paul wrote, *“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”* (Galatians 3:13) He received the curse we deserved by taking on all our sins. It was as if God saw that Jesus had no value. God said that it was better that Jesus would die than that all people suffer for sins. Jesus atoned for all sins, that is, He turned away the anger of God by dying so He doesn’t see any sin. He sees us as His dearly loved Son. Paul wrote, *“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”* (Galatians 3:26) And John wrote, If that is what God calls in His Word, then *that is what we are!* (v.1)

We want all people to know of God’s view in Christ: from a 90 year-old person on death row to every unborn child and even to those who have had or committed abortions. Jesus died for all sins and for all sinners. He is the Savior for all. His sacrifice gives us an amazing value in God’s sight. It should lead us to value everyone else around us, no matter who they are. If the world can’t stand to look at us, God says, “I see my **beautiful** children, dressed in Christ’s perfection! If the world says that Christianity is worthless, God says, “I see My **wealthy** children, possessing all the riches of Christ, including an inheritance in heaven. With Christ as our Savior, everyone one of us is in the same family, with God as our loving Father and Jesus our dear brother. Children of God: You are of great value in Christ! Amen.

