

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.”

Growing up as the youngest of three siblings, I looked up to my older sisters who are 8 and 11 years older than me. My preferences for hobbies and favorite bands, even the university I attended followed the pattern set by my older sisters.

We are continuing our sermon series on 1 John. The first half of our series is titled *Alive in Christ*, and today our sermon is titled, *Watching Big Brother*. Younger siblings pay attention to and try to emulate their older siblings. We have been made Children of the Heavenly Father through the blood of Jesus Christ which purifies us and adopts us into the Father’s family. We are children of God and Jesus Christ is our big brother.

In the Gospels we read **“And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, [Jesus] said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”**” Likewise, at the resurrection, Jesus talked to Mary and referred to the disciples as “my brothers” (John 20:17). Today we learn, **BECAUSE WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD, WE FOLLOW IN OUR BIG BROTHER'S FOOTSTEPS.**

First, I. We know where our big brother went, but we're not there yet. Those little brothers and sisters are always trying to tag along. You can’t blame us. We get carted along for your special events. I remember going to my sister’s soccer games and begging my dad to get me Skittles from the concession stand. I was there for their graduations and weddings. The picture of my oldest sister looked down upon me when I was traveling between classes in high school as she was her class salutatorian.

It's through a big sister or brother that we start to learn what life will be like. But we’re not quite there yet. We’re surprised when our older sibling doesn’t want us hanging out with her when she’s with friends. We’re not old enough to drive a car, even if we really really want to.

Through the Bible, and especially the Gospels, we hear where our brother, Jesus Christ has gone. We read about His way of life. Especially in this Easter season, we see what His life was like after His resurrection. We see this in passages such as our Gospel reading where He appears to the disciples, eats food, and continues to teach them.

John writes to us in his Epistle, **“Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”** We will be like our big brother, Jesus. However, we don’t know exactly what that will look like. We want to go to college, like our big brother, but we might find out that engineering isn’t our cup of tea, but rather, biology. We want to drive a car like our big sister, but

maybe we opt for borrowing mom's car occasionally rather than working two part time jobs to afford car payments.

When we're raised from the dead, we will be like Jesus, but there will be dissimilarities as we will be perfected, for example, we will never be God like Jesus is. We get a picture of what resurrected life will be like, but it is still somewhat of a hazy one.

But as we follow in Jesus' footsteps, we sometimes take two steps backward before we take one step forward. John warns us: "**Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.... No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.**" This side of heaven, we will still struggle against sin. We will still fall short of Jesus' perfect image.

At the same time, that doesn't mean we can take grace for granted. We can't use our baptism as a license to sin. John tells us that this is practicing lawlessness. That's like saying just because my sister was high school salutatorian, then greatness must be in my veins, so I don't need to study or apply myself in high school, my reward is coming my way.

Second, II. One day, we will be with our big brother. This is the hope that seeps through John's Epistle. One day we will be like Him because we will see Him face to face. We hear the reason that Jesus came to this world, "**You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.**" Jesus, our big brother, His path didn't just involve growing up, but it went to the cross, to the grave, and to the empty tomb. This path blazes a trail that we as coheirs of grace will also receive.

Because Jesus, our Savior, has become our righteousness through His perfect life and by taking on our sin, He also becomes our brother. This is how it is possible that John can write, "**Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.**" We practice righteousness through the Holy Spirit who raises us up into the stature of the Son, Jesus Christ.

There comes a point in every family where the little brother grows up and becomes a peer with the older sibling. By the time you all have jobs and families, those differences in childhood start to fade away.

Jesus is and always will be our Lord and Savior, but we look forward to that day when we will be changed by being raised up to eternal life. That is our Easter hope. "**What we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.**" Even more than a younger sibling hopes to get her driver's license, graduate high school, or move out of the house, we look forward to that day when we who are alive in

Christ will be with Him and all believers forever in the new Heaven and the new Earth with perfected bodies that do not age, decay, or suffer.

But we're not there yet. III. Until then, follow His voice. Throughout this series I'm going to try to pair the sermon with some practical advice on how to implement a spiritual practice. Today's practice is on reading Scripture. I focus on this today because how can we watch Jesus, our big brother, apart from hearing His voice in the Bible?

What advice might I give to someone who tells me, "Pastor, I know I should read my Bible daily, but I don't know where to start?" First, I would say don't worry about the Bible you have. We can nitpick translations and compare Bible editions, but I'd rather have you read the Bible you have than switch from Bible to Bible trying to find the perfect one. If you don't have a Bible, I will give you one after service for free.

Second, pick a set of passages to read. It's fine to want to read through the Bible cover to cover, but please start with Matthew then read to Revelation before circling around to Genesis. It's fine to start in Genesis, but you'll get halfway through Exodus and start to lose steam when they detail the blueprints of the tabernacle. I suggest taking home the Green Sheet devotional guide with you and aiming to read the daily readings. If you continue on with that, you will read a little less than half the Bible in a year, and it is the easier to understand passages.

Third, if you're busy, try setting a timer for five minutes and devote to read your Bible just five minutes a day. Something is better than nothing, and if you skip a day, don't beat yourself up over it, just continue on. If you're like me, you look at your phone for 12% of my waking hours. I don't care how busy you are, Facebook or Instagram can wait.

Fourth, if reading isn't your thing, listen to the Bible for five minutes. Websites like Biblegateway.com have a free audio function to have someone read the Bible to you.

Fifth, if you don't understand something, don't go down a rabbit hole to solve the puzzle. Make a note and continue reading. Perhaps something later in the text will answer your question. If not, email me with the question, I'm happy to answer it.

Sixth, there are plenty of secondary resources out there to help you understand the Bible, but much like medical advice, not all Bible resources are created equal. I like to suggest a podcast The Word of the Lord Endures Forever which is a chapter by chapter verse by verse Bible study by a Lutheran pastor named Will Weedon. You can trust resources from Concordia Publishing House.

All these are ways in which we can watch our big brother, Jesus. He is our savior and our teacher. As we continue to follow Him and listen to His word, before we know it, our journey on earth will be complete and we will see Him.