

Pastor Don Nelson

Sermon: December 7, 2014  
Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

**“HE CHOSE US!”**

**John 1:1-5, 10-12**

☑ Type the phrase, **“I smile because, I laugh because”** into your Google search bar, and you’ll get about 88,100,000 results in 0.3 seconds. My favorite was an image with a big heart on a blue background and the words: **“I smile because you’re my Dad. I laugh because there’s nothing you can do about it.”**

Switch out the pronouns, and the meaning is different but equally true: **“I smile because I’m your Dad. I laugh because there’s nothing I can do about it.”**

Being a father is one of the easiest things I do.

I cannot help but love our daughters. The first time I held AmyLynn I felt my heart would physically burst with joy and tenderness and devotion. You wouldn’t think it could happen more than once, but then I was overwhelmed with love at Hannah’s birth, and once again at Emily’s.

My love for our girls has only grown stronger and deeper since then. Feelings ebb and flow; yet I love them better now than ever before. I would take a bullet for them.

Being a father is one of the hardest things I do.

No one tests my compassion, kindness, gentleness, patience, courage, and self-control like my daughters. No one brings me face-to-face with my own inadequacies and inconsistencies the way they do. No one causes me to question myself – and my sanity – like them.

Girls, my shortcomings are not your fault. They’ve been there all along. I am not blaming you!

Just the opposite, our God is working through you and our relationships to refine me. I am more like Jesus because of you.

I could not ask for better children! Each one of you is a precious gift from the Lord, and I thank him for making you my daughters.

Being a dad is one of the hardest things I do. Even so, you make it one of the easiest things I do.

I will never forsake you, never stop loving you. This is both the effortless inclination of my heart, and my deliberate commitment to you.

I have permission to share this. My goal is not to make you feel uncomfortable, but to help us appreciate the astonishing mystery of the Incarnation.

■ John 1, selected verses:

**<sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. <sup>11</sup> He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> Yet to all who did receive him... who believed in his name, he gave the right to become *children of God*.**

{Jn 1:1, 14} That first part, verse 14, is mind-boggling: **“the Word”** who **“was”** **“in the beginning,”** and who **“was with God,”** and who in fact **“was God”** **“became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”**

{Ps 97:9; Ex 15:1} He who is **“Most High”** and **“exalted,”** **“majestic in holiness”** and **“awesome in glory”** – *he* **“made his dwelling among us.”**

{Mt 9:11; 23:38} **“Among us”** greedy **“tax collectors and”** depraved **“sinners”** and **“among us”** **“Pharisees”** who project an image of righteousness **“but on the inside ... are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.”**

{Jn 5:4; Jer 17:5} **“Among us,”** **“blind... lame [and] paralyzed,”** and **“among us”** who are so confident of our own strength.

{Lk 4:18; Jas 2:6; Jer 5:28} **“Among us”:** **“the poor... the prisoners... the oppressed”** and **“among us,”** **“the rich”** **“who have grown... sleek”** and **“do not defend the just cause of the poor.”**

{Rev 7:11; “Let All Mortal Flesh”; Rev 19:16} God the Son, before whom the angels **“[[fall] down on their faces”**; the Son, in whose presence the seraphim and cherubim **“veil their faces”** and ceaselessly **“cry, ‘Alleluia, Lord most high!’”**; the Son who is **“KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS”** – he **“made his dwelling among us.”**

The Incarnation was not merely a geographical relocation. It was the means by which Messiah established his home among wretched, inglorious, sin-sick creatures and made us his neighbors and friends.

**“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”** We focused on this last week but, speaking for myself, it never gets old. Amen?!

■ Drawing near was far better than we deserved, but the Savior did not stop there. Verse 12: **“to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”**

**“He gave the right to become children of God”!**

Beth and I have lovable daughters. It is easy to be their dad, for the most part.

Still, they are adept at pushing buttons no one else knows exist. There are moments when our relationship is ten percent effortless inclination and ninety percent deliberate commitment to protect and provide for and nurture them.

Some biological fathers never embrace that commitment. They do the math and figure that parenting is too exhausting, too time-consuming, too expensive, too limiting, too difficult to be worthwhile.

Even worse, some are not inclined to love their offspring. In their eyes the kids are too demanding, too disappointing, too disobedient or too disrespectful to love.

Given the choice, some men reject their own children. They willfully abandon their sons and daughters, their own flesh and blood.

{1 Jn 3:1} How amazing is it, then, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit seeks to make us his children. **“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And”** if we are in Christ **“that is what we are!”** Consider the implications.

★ 1<sup>st</sup>, God chose us before we chose him.

{Eph 1:4-5} The *Father* **“chose us... before the creation of the world... In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.”**

{1 P 1:9-10} In Christ we **“are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special**

**possession... Once [we] were not a people, but now [we] are the people of God; once [we] had not received mercy, but now [we] have received mercy.”**

★ 2<sup>nd</sup>, God chose us despite our unworthiness.

{Ro 3:23; Is 64:6} We have not earned adoption on the basis of inherent goodness, **“for all have sinned and fall short of [God’s] glory.”** **“All of us [are] like one who is unclean, and”** even our **“righteous acts are like filthy rags”** in comparison to YHWH’s perfect holiness.

{1 Co 1:27-29} We have not earned adoption due to our utility to God. **“What are mere mortals that [he is] mindful”** of us? Frankly, **“God chose the foolish things of the world... the weak things... the lowly things of this world and the despised things ... so that no one may boast before him.”**

{Eph 2:8} We have not earned adoption even on the strength of our faith. To be sure, he gives that right **“to those who [believe] in his name.”** But as the apostle Paul explains, even our trust in the Savior **“is not from [ourselves], it [also] is the gift of God.”**

★ 3<sup>rd</sup>, God chose us at great cost to himself.

■ Back to John 1:10: **“He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world *did not recognize him.*”**

{Jn 6:42} The majority did not accept his divine Sonship. **“Is this not the son of Joseph?”** they said. **“How can he say, ‘I came down from heaven?’”**

{Mt 9:34; 12:24} Some religious leaders accused him of being in league with the devil. **“It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons.”**

{Jn 7:5; Mk 3:21} Even his half-brothers (Joseph and Mary’s natural sons) **“did not believe in him”** till after Easter. They could not decide if he was a liar or a lunatic.

■ And verse 11: **“He came to that which was his own, but his own *did not receive him.*”**

{Is 53:3} Isaiah foretold how he would be

**despised and rejected by others,  
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.  
Like one from whom people hide their faces  
he was despised, and we held him in  
low esteem.**

The prophet is referring as much to the agonies of being unwanted, abandoned, denied, hated and betrayed as to the bodily torture of the cross.

The Word made flesh endured misunderstanding and character assassination to secure our place in the family. He bore rejection, abandonment, denial, hatred, and betrayal so we can **“become children of God.”**

★ 4<sup>th</sup>, God chose us for a high and holy purpose.

{Jn 3:16} Christ became human so we can become godly. **“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”**

{Ro 8:17} And Christ became human to glorify himself by glorifying us. Hear the word of the Lord: **“Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if...we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”**

★ Finally, God chose us without reservation.

{Is 49:15} Many children are rejected and abandoned by their human parents. The Living God is not like that! He has promised, **“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!”**

{Ro 8:14-17; Dt 31:8} **Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit [we receive] does not make [us] slaves, so that [we] live in fear again; ...the Spirit... [brings] about [our] adoption to sonship... by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.**

Join God’s family and **“he will never leave you nor forsake you.”**

**“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”** Better yet: **“to all who [received] him... who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God”!**

This is the meaning of Christmas.