

# All Saints Sunday, Epistle, Year A

NEW SIGHT

1 John 3:1-3

All Saints Sunday

Analysis by Lori A. Cornell

1See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. 3And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

DIAGNOSIS: Not Seeing Straight

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): If a Tree Falls ... John's community has been divided over whether Jesus is actually the Messiah. Some were not convinced that Jesus has been raised from the dead, because they didn't actually see it. They still wanted to follow him—they just wouldn't call him the Christ. But others, namely those whom John is addressing in the letter, believe that even though they were not eyewitnesses to Jesus' resurrection, still Christ is risen. The recent conflict weighs on the community.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): Does It Make a Sound?

John witnessed the resurrection; he was there when Jesus appeared to the disciples (1:1). So he tells this next generation of followers what he has seen. He was an eyewitness, and the next generation will be Christ's "ear witnesses." These

ear witnesses are called to trust that Jesus has divine authority to forgive, which also means that they cannot claim to be without sin (1:8).

Calling Jesus “Christ” puts them at odds with those who have departed from the community. These other “Jesus [not Christ] followers” believe they can continue to benefit from Jesus apart from this community that is called to “love one another.” They also believe that they can be in fellowship with Jesus without admitting their sin, or seeking Christ’s forgiveness. Such a denial not only means that they are misguided in their discipleship, but they are arrogant as well. “Liar” is John’s word for it. What’s more, they confuse those who remain in the faith community about what it means to be honest to God, and to love one another.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): God Knows

God, however, is not confused. God knows their hearts—those within the community and those who have ventured beyond it. All have strayed, and to pretend to be without sin is not only dishonest but faithless. And God sees through such lies.

PROGNOSIS: Cross Eyed

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): God Knows

It’s in this conflicted situation that John calls those who remain within the beloved community to “see.” The better translation for this imperative might be: “Look upon this love the Father has given us.” John calls the remnant community to take a fresh look at Jesus—his sacrificial death, and his glorious resurrection for them. There, in Jesus as Christ, they will see the Father’s love. God the Father knows what we humans long for and need the most: God’s very heart (John 1:18), as seen in God’s Son, who is willing to “love the other” (us) by giving his whole self to this relationship with humanity. It’s

not just his earthly goodness that makes him worth following, it's that he gives up his divine status and breathes his last human breath to be with us and shows that God knows us. Through the cross and the open tomb Jesus makes us children of God.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): We Hear about Christ and Believe

In fact, to hear Christ's love declared is to know it: "Beloved, we are God's children now." We realize that we aren't everything God would have us be; that won't happen in this lifetime (v. 2). "What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is."

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): We See God ...

Seeing what love the Father has given us, we trust that we are children of God. And being children of God, we are empowered to "love one another." In fact, knowing Jesus as Christ means that can see God in the neighbor, and practice the truth of Christ's forgiveness in the beloved community.