What We Will Be
1 John 3:1-3

This has been a year full of change at Iowa State. A new football coach had to be hired after Matt Campbell and many players went off to Penn State, and we wondered what the football team would look like. Most of the players on the women's basketball team left after a disappointing season, and now with Coach Bill Fennelly announcing this is his final season, many are wondering what the women's basketball team will look like. A new university president, David Cook, was hired, and we wait to see what sorts of changes he will make in the changing world of higher education. A new athletics director was hired to replace Jamie Pollard, and now we wonder what will happen in the changing world of college athletics. We don't know yet what they will be.

We're also waiting to see what will happen with the election coming on Tuesday. Will it be a blue wave, as most midterm elections are a reaction to the party in power? Or will polling have missed Republican voters again, and the status quo will remain? Will the results of the election change the direction of our country and state, or things remain the same? If nothing else, we will all be thankful for the end of the political ads.

One of the big factors in the election is the economy. Last week in the New York Times, Natasha Sarin's opinion column titled Everything Feels So Expensive. Here's What's Really Going On, stated "The question is not whether our wages are outpacing inflation, but whether we have enough confidence in our economic futures to trust that we can afford the lives we expect for ourselves and our families — and that we can survive whatever comes. Americans are facing a financial crisis all right, but it's not just affordability. We're facing a crisis of economic security, and it's getting worse. … The real drivers of financial stress are the biggest expenses: housing, health care, education, care for our children and our aging relatives." The lack of confidence in economic future is a challenge that will have to be dealt with.

Even more disconcerting is the uncertainty of the future. College degrees used to be a sign of job security and that you could make a good living. Students were told to learn to code, but now that AI can be used to create computer code, there's less of a future. Jobs that didn't even exist a few years ago are now in demand, and jobs that used to provide a steady career are going away. Healthcare and the trades seem to be the way to go for job security, but those predictions may not turn out right, either.

Here at Memorial, we wait to see what will happen during this time of transition. We'll be looking at the congregation profile, of where we are, where we hope to be, and what skills a new pastor should have or where they should focus their efforts and energy. We don't know yet what we will be.

Now ultimately, we know what we will be. Dust you are, and to dust you shall return. We're surrounded by the reminders that we shall all die. We're reminded of what awaits us when we watch the news, or get a phone call that the cancer is back, or read the obituaries in the paper, or watch the falling leaves. Even as we admire the beauty of the leaves changing color, we know that they will fall, and that, cut off from the trees that give them life, die. Cute ghosts and fake blood over teenage zombies and vampires may try to make us laugh at death, but they, too, point us to what we will be.

That someday, we will hear those words intoned over our final resting place. That we will be buried. We know what we will be. As John writes his letters towards the end of the 1st century A.D., the early Christians are waiting and wondering, facing an uncertain world. John is the last living apostle of Jesus, the last of the twelve who'd walked with Jesus during his earthly ministry. And the people wondered what would become of them as the generations shifted, as persecutions arose again, as death awaited them.

In the midst of that uncertainty, John reminds his readers that they do have a promise they can trust in. They are the children of God because of what Jesus did for them on the cross. They are the children of God, even when the surrounding culture doesn't recognize them as such. They are the children of God, which gives them purpose and value. They are the children of God, which gives them a place in God's family, and unites them with their brothers and sisters in the faith throughout all time and all space. Children of God is what they are, and what they will be.

The same promises hold true for us, as well. How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! We were made a part of God's family through baptism, when we became God's children. That is a certainty. That is not only what we will be, that is what we are. It gives us purpose and value and an identity found in something outside of us, not based on what we do. It is true that we are children of God even when we don't feel close to God. We are children of God not because of anything we do, but because of what God has done for us.

If we are all the children of God, then we have other promises, too. We have our brothers and sisters in Christ gathered around us. As the children of God, we know that we always have a place we will belong. We know that through all the changes and challenges of life, we will always be a part of God's family, and that God will be with us whatever we do and wherever we go. But even as we know what we will be, what the end of every life is, our future can still be uncertain.

College students (and their parents) struggle with same question. "What will you be?" The question stretches back even further, as children who dress as firemen or astronauts or ballerinas for Halloween are asked if that's what they want to be when they grow up. But even when you're older and think you have life figured out, the question still remains. As you move from job to retirement, from out in the country to closer into town, from your own home to a nursing home or assisted living place, the question still is asked. What will you be?

The present reality is that we are children of God, but that is not the end of the story. In the time between the comings of Christ, in this time of now and not yet, when what we shall be has not yet appeared, yet we know our identity as children of God, we live in faith and trust. We know what we are, and we know what we shall be. We know we shall be like Jesus. The process that began at our baptism that will reach its fulfillment when Christ returns or calls us home will keep shaping us to be like Jesus. As we remember the saints who have gone before us, we celebrate that they see Jesus as He is, and that they are like him now.

Buildings and bodies decay. Friends and family become separated by distances sometimes measured in miles, sometimes more of an emotional distance. Bank accounts and 401ks may not be as strong as we hoped them to be. The future is full of uncertainty. If the future were simply the sum of present trends, death is

the end every time. But because Jesus is our past, present, and future, we are God's children now.

In some ways, we don't yet know what we will be. What we will be has not yet been made known. But we do know part of what we will be, we have a glimpse of what we will be. Out on the horizons of the future, we know what we will be. We know that when Jesus appears, we shall be like him. We shall see him as he is. We don't know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future. We know with all the saints who have looked to Christ, those who've gone before us in the faith, we see our crucified and risen Lord drawing near to meet us.

And so we pray: Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending; by paths as yet untrod, through perils unknown. Give us faith, not knowing where we go, but only that Your hand is leading and Your love is supporting us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Pastor David Beagley
Memorial Lutheran Church and Student Center
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