

## CHILDREN OF THE LOVE OF GOD

Fourth in an Advent Series: Jesus, the Light of the World | John 3: 1-3 December 23, 2012

### The Church of the Covenant

*Twinkle, twinkle, little star...* I remember when I was a student pastor while in seminary having been asked to do the Apostle's Creed in worship. We were taught in seminary always to have a printed copy of things like The Apostle's Creed or the Lord's Prayer right in front of you, because, no matter how well you knew it, you could go into a temporary "brain freeze" and forget it on the spot. But of course I knew better than what I had been taught, had been saying the Apostles Creed for years, so didn't have a printed copy of it in front of me. So I got up in front of that large, very formal, congregation, intoned, "Let us stand and state what we believe by saying the familiar words of the Apostle's Creed." And promptly couldn't remember the first line. I smiled at the congregation, thinking they might start without me. But they just smiled back. There seemed to be an eternity of time going on. And as God is my witness all I could think of to say was: "Twinkle, twinkle, little star". If I had uttered that from the lectern it would have been my final Sunday in that church. So finally after what seemed an eternity, the pastor from the other side of the chancel area called out "I believe..." and the problem was solved.

Our scripture from I John where it states: "*See what love the Father has for us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.*" (I John 3: 1) is the one I say as I am taking a baby up the church aisle after I have baptized them. The child is raised to the light and God's light shines into their heart. They are claimed as a child of God, as Children of the Love of God. But of course there is the double meaning of it. We, adults, are also children of God; we are the ones adopted by the love of the heavenly Father through the Son, Jesus Christ. The light shines into our heart; we know we are children of God just as surely is that little baby; we know we are children of the love of God.

A little girl in this congregation, and I have asked for permission to use this both from her and also from her parents, was having some trouble a couple of years ago adjusting to her school. She didn't want to go; would become quite anxious. As I used to say: I don't mind school; its just the principal of the thing!. The parents invited me over to speak with her and I spoke with her about how she could go into any setting because she was a child of God and that love gave her the strength to do so. She didn't have to be anxious about anything. But she could trust completely in the love of God. I gave her a star wand that made a goofy sound and told her that she could "Be a Star"; standing for STOP –TAKE a DEEP BREATH and RELAX. And whenever she felt anxious about something she could take out her star wand, press the button and remember that the love of God was surrounding her. I wasn't sure whether this would work or not. But she packed the star wand in her backpack. She adjusted to school that year. Two years ago, when we had the church theme, "Follow the Star", at this service as we were exiting to go out and see the live nativity scene, she was dressed as a cute little golden star. The whole congregation followed her to the manger scene that year. And now, she sings beautifully in front of tons of people; indeed has sung for us today. Whenever I see her sing now I think to myself: "*See what love the Father has for us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.*"

There was a reason why God showed the place where Jesus was to be born by placing a new star in the heavens. The light of the world is Jesus. It is His love that shines into our heart and gives us the confidence and assurance to face whatever we face in life today. "*I am the light of the world*", says Jesus. It is He who gives us the light and the love that empowers us to persevere in life. It shines in the darkness. And the darkness can never overcome it. Maybe, when you think of it, "twinkle, twinkle, little star" is a profession of faith in the One who shines into our heart this Christmas. "*See what love the Father has for us that we should be called children of God; and so we are.*" Amen.