

***Xai Esmen***  
**(“AND WE ARE!”)**

*See what kind of love the Father has given to us  
in that we should be called God's children!*  
**AND THAT is what we are!**  
*It does not yet appear what we shall be,  
But we know that when he appears  
We will be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*  
(1 John 3:1a, 2)

A sermon by Siegfried S. Johnson on All Saint's Sunday, **November 4, 2018**  
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I've offered you my title this morning in the Greek of the New Testament. *Xai Esmen* means, **AND WE ARE!** The exclamation point is called for, surely no mere period suffices to express the intent of the author.

To say that these two words stand out in the Greek text would be an understatement. Reading this chapter, it's as if you are having a nice stroll down a lovely lane, contemplating God's love:

*See what kind of love the Father has given to us  
in that we should be called God's children!*

In Greek, as in English, the cadence is smooth and the meaning is charming. Then, suddenly, as if from nowhere, two unexpected Greek words pop up . . . *xai esmen!* **AND WE ARE!**

In a literary sense, the effect of these two words is to break the relaxed, walking cadence with a sudden jolt, the mood shifting abruptly from a tranquil stroll of delight to a sudden shout of celebration. “*And we are!*”

It reminds me of the television commercial on just now from Boost Mobile. A couple walks in the store and the woman is relieved to hear that if they switch to Boost Mobile her husband can stream as many games as he wants with unlimited gigs of data. The pace of the sales conversation is smooth with a businesslike explanation of features. But then, as if from nowhere, suddenly the man pumps his fist and affirms his excitement by saying, “Touchdown!” breaking into a momentary dance of celebration.

That's this passage! The theology of unlimited grace is offered in a smooth and well-paced presentation, an explanation of the boundless benefits of God's love. Then, suddenly, in a light of recognition, the author says, *And we are! Touchdown!*

Then, after that interruption, the writer returns to his earlier casual cadence, inviting us again to stroll down his theological lane of hope and promise. *“It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”*

Now, a quick Greek lesson is necessary, especially for those of you who have tried to follow my reading in the King James Version of 1611. In that much-heralded version of the Bible, these two Greek words are absent. The reason is that the underlying Greek text used in 1611, the *Textus Receptus*, omitted these two words, *xai esmen*. The result is that in King James continues to glide along without that shaking, without that “Touchdown!” moment of exhilaration.

Ah, a textual dilemma. I’ll begin with the obvious, that I believe the words to be original to the text. They are, without question, included in the oldest Greek manuscript evidence yet discovered, which is why virtually all modern versions in English, include it.

Here’s what seems to have happened. Until Gutenberg’s 15<sup>th</sup> century printing press transmission of the text was necessarily by hand. Somewhere along the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century a scribe seems to have regarded these words *xai esmen*, standing out as they do, as an error, an embellishment added later upon the original text. One scribe omitted them, and from that Alpha source a textual stream was produced, other scribes incorporating this omission.

It is clear, however, that our most ancient manuscripts, including what may be regarded as the “Big Three” codexes -- Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, and Vaticanus – without exception include these two Greek words, *xai esmen*, *“And we are!”*

With that I dismiss Greek 101. Lesson finished. I mean for this thought on *All Saints Sunday* to invite us to wonder, the same wonder John felt in the recognition of Whose we are. Paul writes in an equally stunning way to the Roman Christians, *“And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’”* What a stupendous revelation, that we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Jesus Christ.

It may surprise you that perhaps of all the biblical passages I read publicly, in a worship setting, I read these verses from 1 John more than any other. Did you know that? You may better recognize Luke 2 and the Christmas story (*In the days of Caesar Augustus there went forth a decree that all the world should be taxed.*) More recognizable certainly would be the words of the Easter story, *“He is not here, he is risen, come see the place where the Lord lay.”*

Yes, highly recognizable New Testament texts, but with those passages, it’s pretty much one and done. We tell those stories at their special time, Christmas and Easter.

This passage, however, 1 John 3, I read in worship over and over throughout the year. When? At the very opening of almost every funeral or memorial service or graveside service. The church regards these gatherings, not merely as a coming together of family and friends to celebrate and remember one who had passed away, but as worship services.

Often even my posture is different while quoting these words, not standing in the pulpit but walking or, rather, processing and leading the family of a recently departed love one into the

sanctuary. As we walk I offer Words of Grace, “*As in baptism (Mary) put on Christ, so in death may she be clothed with his glory. Here and now, dear friends, we are God’s Children. (And we are!) What we shall be has not yet been revealed. But we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*”

As now we share the Great Thanksgiving for Holy Communion, we will read the names of those of our congregation who have this year transitioned into the Church Triumphant, twenty-seven names. Reading over those names this week I reflected on so many of those services which we began with these words of 1 John 3.

I recalled, also, how often our Fellowship Hall blossomed with photographs and memories so that a portrait emerged from these memories from the various stages of their living, a chronicle of their procession from baptism to death -- childhood, education, career, family, hobbies. Each was different, their obituaries forming a kaleidoscope of shifting images unique to them, but all were the same in this, that they were the beloved children of God.

***AND WE ARE!***

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen!