

Created in God’s Image:
Always Remember Whose Child You Are!

Dear Friends in Christ:

We had the joy back in June of celebrating our grandson’s high school graduation in Pinehurst, North Carolina. In just a few weeks he will begin his freshman year of college at East Carolina University, home of the *ECU Pirates*. Of course, we are very proud of Jonathan, and like most grandparents, wanted to send him off with a few “*words of wisdom*” - or “*pearls from Preston*” as we like to call them in our family. You know - instructions, guidance, advice, precautions - a good lecture that would prevent him from “walking the Pirates plank” of foolish behavior or poor study habits!

But most high school grads have probably heard enough of those lectures already, right? So, instead, we wrote a special note in his graduation card that simply said, “*Always Remember Whose Child You Are.*” With his permission, I’m going to share a few of those words even though they’re personal to our family, because I believe it relates to our sermon theme today: **“Created in God’s Image.”**

“ALWAYS REMEMBER WHOSE CHILD YOU ARE!”

First, you are a child of God, baptized in your grandpa’s church in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God loves you and promises to be with you always. Remember to reflect God’s love in all that you say and do. May life lead you to a more personal and closer relationship with Christ and His church as your faith journey unfolds.

Second, you are the child of Mark and Tonya, parents who raised you right and love you dearly. You come from “good stock” so make them proud as you make a difference in this world, finding happiness as you use your gifts and talents in meaningful ways.

Third, you are the “grand” child of Preston and Lana who cherish your sweet spirit and wonderful smile. We always pray the best for you and know that you have a heart that’s going to do something good for others. You are a person of great value and worth and we are proud to call you our “favorite” grandson!

“ALWAYS REMEMBER WHOSE CHILD YOU ARE!”

Those words capture for me the essence of what it means when *“God created us – male and female – in his own image.”* (Genesis 1:27) We are something special in God’s wonder and wisdom, created and designed to reflect the image of the Heavenly Father who created everything good in this world. If ever there was an *“image”* to be *“conscious”* of it is that we are children of God. Created in God’s image is not first a lecture on who we *“should”* be or how we *“should”* act, but a reminder that we come from *“good stock!”* In the very beginning of time, *“God blessed”* and made His children worthy of honor and respect and gifted them with potential and promise! No wonder the Psalmist affirms: *“I praise you [God], for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”* (Psalm 139:14)

Now to be sure, we shatter the *“image”* all the time, don’t we - every day, in thought, word and deed? We are all *“chips off the old block”* trapped in the same pattern of sin and temptation which caught Adam and Eve in its snare. No wonder the language of the Bible refers to disobedient children, wayward and wandering people, cracked pots, broken vessels, untamed tongues, anxious hearts, troubled souls, restless evils

and sinful deeds! James hits that nail right on the head, declaring, *“From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers [and sisters], these things ought not to be so!”* (James 3:10)

I know that, don't you? The Law of God is convicting and penetrating and leads us, just like the first parents, Adam and Eve, to flee from the presence of a Holy God when sin takes hold and gets the best of us. Satan is lurking around every corner of our hearts and lives tempting us to be less than God intends! ***But always remember whose child you are!*** Always remember a Creator God who keeps seeking and calling, *“Where are you,”* even when trying to run and hide from His presence! Yes, we are the fallen children of God, but we are also never far from the Heavenly Father's grace-filled call to repentance and faith, echoing the verse:

*Someone Special, Who would give
His own Son that all might live,
And by Him would set us free
From all sin and misery.
Someone special I must be,
Since You gave Your Son for me!**

Created in the image of God then is so much more than wearing a bracelet that asks *“What Would Jesus Do?”* It is more than Fatherly advice on faults and failures, warning about actions and attitudes that shatter the mirror of holiness. **Created in the image of God** is a relationship so divine and so precious, that God loved His children enough to send His only Son to save the world from sin and death, dying on Calvary's Cross and rising to give everlasting life to all who believe. **Created in the image of God** is one of the foundational truths of the faith, rooted in the Word, reminding us that we are persons of great value, dignity and worth, reclaimed and cleansed in Holy

Baptism as His children, saved by grace through faith, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to walk in the newness of life!

Created in God's image! Think about the implications of those words whenever you're feeling lousy and less than worthy, when people let you down, when circumstances aren't fair, when sin and death do their thing, when peers and prejudice hurt and wound, when you sometimes feel less than acceptable. In moments of doubt and despair, facing challenge and change, dealing with setbacks and disappointments, *always remember whose child you are!* Never forget that that God, your heavenly Father through Jesus Christ loves you and promises to be with you always.

Created in God's image! Consider also the implications for how you treat others, valuing every person as someone precious in the sight of God. Hear the call of the Word today to affirm the gift and sanctity of life. Treat every person with dignity and respect. Consider your marriage and family as honored relationships. And *"remember whose child you are"* when out there in neighborhood and community, returning to school or going away to college, interacting with co-workers, mingling with friends, balancing daily demands, struggling to find happiness and purpose. If you're looking for a new persona and image, skip the tattoo Pastor Lew talked about last week and prayerfully commit to reflecting and mirroring this image, life-changing instructions from the Word of God, recorded in Paul's Letter to the Colossians:

¹⁰ Put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing

with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:10, 12-14, 17)

Created in the image of God... sounds a lot like the advice we gave to our grandson: **Always Remember Whose Child You Are!**

Amen.

- Rev. Preston E. Wagner
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