

Adopted

Romans 8:12-25

Introduction

I am going to begin my sermon with a brief commercial.

Choosing Hope Adoptions is a licensed full-service nonprofit adoption agency that began here in Springfield. Angela Bobbitt has been the Executive Director for this ministry since its inception.

- As many of you know, our grandson Gabriel is adopted. Eleven years ago Angela came alongside our family in a season of crisis and helped us make that adoption happen. Without her, it might not have.
- Our family will forever be grateful to her and to Choosing Hope.
- If you know someone who is considering adoption, I highly recommend them.

Because of Gabriel, stories about adoption always grab my heart. In fact, a good adoption story will bring a tear to my eyes faster than any other story.

Did you realize that adoption is one of the primary images used to describe the Christian life throughout the Scriptures and throughout the writings of the early church fathers? Paul uses it here in our text today.

This image works well because Paul is writing to the church in Rome, and Romans did a lot of adoptions. In fact, the Emperor Nero was adopted!

- The Romans had a very detailed public ritual that happened whenever an adoption occurred, so every Roman citizen was likely to have witnessed at least one.
- The bottom line is that Paul's adoption imagery resonated well with his readers.

I hope it resonates with you too, because that is our word for today:

ADOPTED

Throughout these summer months, my sermons are focusing on what it means to be the church. Jesus established the church to do His work once He returned to heaven, so we need to understand who are we and what are we to be doing.

- Each week I am taking ONE WORD from our texts that summarizes what the text teaches about who we are as the church
- So far this summer we have looked at the words CALLED, SENT and ALIVE.
- Today our word is adopted, and we see it reflected in verse 15:

... the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. (Romans 8:15)

These first readers in the city of Rome – and those of us today – are presented with three truths that shape our identity as Christians and together as the church. Because we are adopted ...

#1: WE HAVE A NEW FATHER

Look at verse 16:

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. (Romans 8:14)

Every one of us has an earthly father, but we also have a spiritual father.

- There are many options for earthly fathers. Just look around this room. A few of you share the same father, but for most of us, there is a different father for each.
- So over the history of the world there have been billions of earthly fathers.
- But there are only two options when it comes to spiritual fathers. And you are a child of one or the other.
- Jesus pointed out the first option when the Jewish religious officials challenged His right to heal someone. He made their spiritual heritage quite clear:

You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.
(John 8:44)

That same gospel also outlines the other option:

Yet to all who did receive (Jesus), to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. (John 1:12)

By faith in Jesus Christ, through the working of the Holy Spirit in us, we now have a totally different Father. We have been adopted. That means we can rightfully pray "Our Father, who art in Heaven." It is not symbolic. A fully legal transaction has occurred, paid for by the blood of Jesus. That's why the Scriptures teach us:

You are not your own; you were bought at a price. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

The Roman Emperor Claudius didn't care much for his four natural sons. He thought they were too weak to rule the empire. He did, however, greatly admire his stepson – the son of his fourth wife. That boy's name was Nero. Claudius wanted Nero to eventually become the emperor. But for that to happen, Nero had to be adopted. In the eyes of the law, Claudius had to be his father. And that's what happened. Nero turned out to be a very bad choice, but he got a new daddy.

God loved us so much that He went to extraordinary measures – the sacrificial death of His son Jesus – so that you could be adopted in His family. Because of that, you and I today can stand with every other believer throughout all time and proudly proclaim "I have been adopted, and now I am a child of God."

That is one of the most powerful truths in all of Christianity. Say it with me:

I am a child of God.

Because Jesus Christ is my Savior, I no longer live in the power of sin and the devil. I have a new father.

#2: WE HAVE A NEW LIFE

Because you have been adopted, you have a new life. Look again at verse 15:

The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.
(Romans 8:15)

What a contrast! From slave to sonship.

We don't know much about what Gabriel's birth family was like. It's probably not right for me to speculate. All I know is that on the day the adoption was finalized, our lawyer pulled me aside and said "You just saved this boy's life."

- Whatever the circumstances may have been for Gabriel in his former life, his adoption gave him a new life. And in this new life he has the chance to thrive.

In another one of his letters, the Apostle Paul describes our condition before we came to faith like this:

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.
(Ephesians 2:1-3)

He then contrasts that with the new life we have:

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.
(Ephesians 2:4-7)

The Scriptures are filled with other descriptors of this life: It is abundant, eternal, filled with hope, joy and peace even in the midst of life's turbulent storms. Why? Because you have been adopted. And with your adoption, your old life is no more. You have a new life in Christ!

My Mom sang in a ladies' trio. One of the songs I heard them sing many times was a John Peterson number. Here's the chorus:

New Life in Christ! Abundant and free!
What glories shine, what joys are mine,
What wondrous blessings I see!
My past with its sin,
The searching and strife,
Forever gone, there's a bright new dawn!
For in Christ I have found New Life!
(Tune and lyrics by John W. Peterson, used by permission)

#3: WE HAVE A NEW FUTURE

I love this part. Look at verse 17:

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ...
(Romans 12:17)

Can you imagine? You saw that in the verses from Ephesians 2 that I quoted earlier:

... that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:7)

Not only has God made me His child and rescued me from my old life, because of my faith in Jesus Christ I am an heir to His incomparable riches of His grace! All the resources of heaven are mine!

That's why the Psalmist can write:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. (Psalm 23:1)

And why Paul can tell the Christians in Philippi:

My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)

I don't have the time to tell this whole story, so you will need to ask me about it sometime when you have time to listen to one of my long drawn out stories, but here is the short version. In 1985 Karen and I had a pressing financial need – essentially because our second child was due. As we prayed about the situation, we were reminded of this verse of Scripture:

Listen, my people, and I will speak ... I am God, your God ... every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. (Psalm 50:7, 10)

Karen is a farm girl. Every year of our marriage we have purchased a half of beef from her father to fill our freezer. We knew what a cow was worth, so we did the math and asked God to send us three cows to meet our financial need.

- What happened? Well, let me just say this: When we get to heaven, you all are going to inherit three more cows than Karen and I will. Because we already got them.
- But I'm not worried! Everything belongs to my God, and I am His heir. I can never run His resources dry.

My God promises me a home in heaven, a place with golden streets filled with worship and praise. The inheritance of my life before Jesus was filled with guilt and shame, pain and sorrow, weeping and gnashing of teeth.

APPLICATION

When you become a Christian you entered into the very family of God. You have done nothing to deserve it. But nonetheless, God, the great Father, in His amazing love and mercy, adopted you into His own family. You have a new Father, a new life and a new future.

We are the church! We have been adopted.

Amen