

Sunday 23rd July Children of God
Romans 8:12-25 Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Intro: Adoption

-Laura adopted 2 young children

-Georgie and the Marajesho project in Kenya to help prevent children needing to go in to an orphanage

-Some of you know first hand the significance of adoption

-A new identity is a part of being adopted

-The people that Paul was writing to in his letter to the Romans certainly knew what adoption and this new identity was all about.

Adoption, particularly of boys, was a common occurrence in Roman times in order to ensure a suitable heir was in place

As a result of adoption, the boy would receive a new name, status, estate and therefore security. These boys were often not homeless or orphans but by agreement with their parents, were adopted in order to enable someone **else's** status and name to be passed on

In fact many of the Roman emperors became such through their adoption including Augustus, Nero and Hadrian. They took on a new identity and received a new inheritance

A central message of our reading from Romans today is about being adopted by God, so becoming children of God, resulting in us being heirs of God our heavenly Father and co-heirs, joint heirs with Christ Jesus

John - one of Jesus' closest friends - records Jesus own words

Jesus himself said 'I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you.' John 14:18

Who was Jesus speaking to when he said these words?

Well - his friends and disciples. Two of them - Peter and Andrew were certainly there among those to whom he was speaking and we know that they were not biologically orphans. Their father was Zebedee and their mother asked Jesus if her 2 boys could sit at the right and left of Jesus in heaven. So we know that they certainly **weren't** orphans in a physical sense. But maybe Jesus was meaning he would not leave them orphaned spiritually.

Adam & Eve banished from the garden

If we go right back to the start of The Bible, right back to the earliest times, we read how Adam & Eve chose to eat of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, despite having been warned not to by God, and as a result they were banished from the garden of Eden and with that banishment came a separation from God their creator. They became, if you like, spiritual orphans. Over **hundred's** of years God sent many to tell of his love for his people but none could adequately express that perfect Fatherly love except his son - Jesus.

What Jesus did, and said, who He was, was a perfect expression of Father God's love for his people and this love was ultimately displayed through Jesus' death on the cross - a perfect sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

All that happened 2000 years ago in Jerusalem, with Jesus' death on the cross, was the ultimate expression of the Father's love for all of his creation so that we could be called children of God.

1 John 3:1 says 'See what love the Father has lavished upon us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we **are**.'

The incredible, inexplicable, priceless gift of the cross was to enable the relationship that once existed between Adam and Eve with their heavenly Father, to be available for us all, enabling a

fully restored relationship between us and our Father God. We need no longer be spiritual orphans but be adopted as children of God. Heirs of God. Joint heirs with Christ Jesus.

We, who are led by the Spirit, who have chosen to receive that incredible gift of Jesus, receive a Spirit of adoption. **We become children of God, we are adopted into His family, we become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ !!!!!** WOA! Let that sink in.

Just as the children that my friend Laura has adopted received **a new name and new legal standing**, just as the boys in Roman times who were adopted received **a new status and new security**, so too do we, who accept the gift of Grace that Jesus offers us because of what he did on the cross. We receive a **new identity and a new inheritance. We become Children of God ! :-)** :-)

What does it mean for us to BE children of God ?

Well, according to Paul here it means that we will suffer with Christ. It also means that we will be glorified with Him and one day we will experience the redemption of our bodies. But what about the here and now, even in the midst of possible suffering?

I thank God for my parents. My mum and dad were great parents. My mum still is. They gave me love and security and opportunities. They encouraged me, they put up with my changes in career and my several returns to living at home... even when it meant FILLING the loft with all my possessions for a year or 2! :-)

But privileged as I am to have had such great parents, they were not perfect. And whether we have been blessed to have good parents or not, they can never fill that inbuilt, created need in all of us for a relationship with our perfect, loving heavenly Father.

That is why Father God provided the perfect means for us to be adopted into His family, into His Kingdom as the reading from Matthew says, for us to receive a new spirit of adoption. We can be in a new and intimate place with our heavenly Father and call Him Abba - daddy. And we can trust Him totally for our worth and identity. **For our status and security.**

Laura's 2 adopted children are having to learn to live in a new identity. They are having to learn what it means to be the son and daughter of Nick and Laura. They are having to learn new boundaries. They are having to learn what it is like to live with love and consistency and security after the difficult and vulnerable home that they lived in before. And that only happens as they experience the love that their new parents have for them.

As adopted children of God, how have we experienced Father God's love for us? And what difference does that make to our identity and security?

We live in a culture where our physical appearance is highly valued. Pictures in all our magazines are carefully photoshopped to cover up the slightest blemish or an extra pound or 2 of weight!

Are we always conscious of needing to wear the right clothes? Are we always having to keep up with the latest fashion? Do our trainers have to have the right name on them? Are our legs always perfectly waxed?

Are we only secure in our identity when we have the right material possessions? The right phone? Or the latest TV or music system? A friend who came to stay a couple of weeks ago was shocked

that I didn't have some sort of blu-tooth speaker to play music from my phone or iPad through! I realised what an IT dinosaur I am !!

Do we feel worthwhile or accepted only when we have the right things around us?

Are we motivated, driven, by the need to succeed and do well? By the need to make a name for ourselves? This can sometimes be so subtle.

Just a couple of weeks ago I saw in the Church Times that a friend of mine who is also a vicar, has just been joined by a newly ordained Deacon to serve alongside him in his parish. Oh so quickly I started thinking to myself 'Crikey - a new post was created for him as full time vicar in that parish instead of a part time House for Duty... and now he also has a curate.... He must be doing really well... the parish must be thriving.... He is a great vicar... what is he doing that I am not? What do I need to do to be more successful?' NOT a helpful or a Godly way of thinking!

Yes - Tim is a very gifted and special person. But Tim is Tim and I am Catherine and we are called to different ministries but BOTH LOVED EQUALLY by God!

Are we driven by the need to make a name for ourselves, to be recognised by others for doing something good?

Tim's identity and my identity are both unique as individually, loved, welcomed, embraced, children of God.

Do we sometimes do things for God in order to try to earn more of His love? Do we, if we are honest, get just a tiny bit jealous of other people's apparent success?

Do we feel insignificant or unloveable?

I have news for us all....

Because of Father God's extravagant and unconditional love for ALL of us, we can freely receive His Spirit of adoption and become children of God, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

The gospel reading from this morning ended with the words - The righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen! Matthew 13:43

If we, having been led by the Spirit, have accepted the gift of life and rescue that Father God has given us then we are children of God and part of His heavenly Kingdom.

So If you have ears... listen!

PLEASE LISTEN this morning.

God loves you. He accepts you. He wants to give you the best security and status and identity that you could ever have or wish for. And it cannot be earned. We just need to accept that, to learn to live in that, and enjoy living as children of the most perfect loving heavenly Father where there is nothing we can do to make Him love us more and nothing we can do to make Him love us less.

If you have ears... listen ... to the love & acceptance of your heavenly Father!