

## “Adopted In Christ”

May 8, 2022

I'm Ant, the pastor at Midtown Two Notch. Glad to be here with you, and before I go any further, I want to say Happy Mother's Day to the Moms that are with us! Can we take a minute and make some noise for the moms in the room today. We appreciate you and value you and hope that you are celebrated and honored today. You do so much for us and sacrifice so much, and we are grateful for you!

I also know that Mother's day is a very difficult day for many people. Many mothers that aren't with their children for one reason or another. Many children that aren't with their children for one reason or another. Many women who desire to be mothers, but are not mothers. And there are other reasons that Mother's Day is very difficult for some. Before I go any further, I just want to pray for you if Mother's Day is difficult for you, and Christians in the room, I'd ask that you pray with me as well for any that find Mother's Day to be difficult.

### **Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:3-5**

*3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,*

I have friends who have adopted from foster care. These were kids who were passed around from home to home. Relationships were always changing, and nothing was permanent.

But there are often two problems that show up once kids are adopted into a forever family.

1. They have a hard time actually believing it's a forever family. They think something will happen, and eventually they will have to move on again. So it takes a lot of work to help them believe that it is in fact a forever family. They were saying things like, "I hope my next parents are as nice as you guys are." Or when parents left for a weekend away, "Oh wow, you guys came back. I didn't think you would."
2. And then once they believe that, you start the work of helping them learn to act like they are now in their forever family. They were waking up every night to go and check and see if Mom and Dad are still there. Hiding food in their beds because they weren't confident food would be available tomorrow. Or sometimes there's a fear that if they messed up and did something wrong, their parents would no longer want them, like something as small as doing a chore wrong.

What was true was that their reality had changed, but they didn't know yet how to live like it. They weren't fully able to enjoy and rest in the fact that they'd been adopted because their new reality hadn't sunk in for them yet.

And as Christians, that's where we often find ourselves. We've been adopted into the family of God, but we're still learning what it looks like to fully enjoy the benefits of that. To rest in that and to be able to experience all of the good that comes with that.

This often looks like us feeling like or thinking that God is distant and disconnected from us. Maybe you find it difficult to see God as someone who delights in you. Maybe in your mind you feel like the primary way that God relates to you is as a judge who is just checking in on you to see what you're doing right and that you're doing everything He told you to do.

Today I want to talk to us about the tremendous spiritual blessing that is being adopted into the family of God and highlight why this is such a deep well, a fountain of joy for all who are In Christ. And it is my hope and prayer that God would use this sermon to help us all who are in Christ more fully realize this new reality that we are adopted in Christ.

### **Ephesians 1:3-4a**

*3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him...*

God the Father has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing. All spiritual blessings that we have come from our union with Christ. They come from the fact that we are united with Him. Or as Sinclair Ferguson said it, "All that we were when we were "in Adam" was put on Christ for a moment - when He took our sin upon Himself and died for us - and all that He has has become ours forever."

So, each week we're picking a blessing that Christ has shared with us. In verse 5, the apostle begins to get into the spiritual blessing of our adoption. "...*In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will...*" Because of how much God the Father loved us, His plan from long ago was that, in Jesus, He was going to adopt us to Himself. And in Adam, because of what Adam did in the garden, we were separated from God. Our sin caused us to not be connected with God in this way.

But praise be to God, that His plan was always to do this, even before Adam messed up in the garden, his plan was to bring us back - to clothe us with His righteousness, destroying the division between us and God the Father. This was always His plan. And since we are now in Christ, we are now all children of God.

And I want to point out two little phrases in verses 4 and 5 about this adoption we have received. "***In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Christ Jesus.***" It really is intriguing to me that the apostle doesn't *just* say "in love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Christ Jesus." He says that in His love He predestined us for adoption "to himself". This is personal to God the Father. If you're in Christ, you becoming God's child is personal to Him.

David Platt says this: "Adoption starts with the parent's initiative, not a child's idea." God the Father wanted you individually. He wanted us as His people collectively. The Father,, way way back, whenever He did all of His predestining, in His great love and desire for you, before you were created, He looked way way forward into the future at all of us who are in Christ, and said, "I want her to be my daughter. I want him to be my son."

He saw everything about you. He saw you at your best, you at your worst. The things about you that you don't want anyone to see or know. The things about you that make you not want to accept yourself. And He says I want her as my daughter. I want him as my son.

And the end of verse 4 says that he does this "in love." The Greek word there is *agapē*, and among other things, it means to have affection for someone. Which is to say that one has a feeling of liking and caring for someone or something; it refers to a fondness for someone else.

I am troubled by the fact that oftentimes as Christians, we can profess that we believe that God loves us, without believing that God likes us and delights in us. I'm troubled by the fact that, oftentimes, I think that God loves me but it's hard for me to believe and enjoy the fact that He delights in me and takes pleasure in me.

We often can read a verse like this and see that in His Love, He adopted us to Himself, and miss the fact that, inherent in that term, He did it because He is fond of us. Often times, even though we know that He sent His son to adopt us and that he loves us, somehow we believe that He more tolerates us than really likes us. We think that God's feelings towards us is moreso that He is just waiting on us to get our act together than He is pleased with us.

And I want you to know why I'm pointing all of that out. We were talking about this in Teaching Team, and the great Lizzie Keegan said something that I thought was extremely insightful. She said, "We don't delight to be with God often because we don't think He delights to be with us." I think Lizzie really nailed it when she said that. Because of course we don't enjoy being with Him, if we think He doesn't enjoy being with us.

I want to remind us of something that happened at Jesus' baptism.

### **Matthew 3:16-17**

*16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him;*

Jesus is in the water getting baptized, and the skies open up, and the Holy Spirit descends like a dove and rests on Him. And then look at what God the Father does.

*17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."*

Listen, often times in the Bible when God speaks to us, He speaks through a prophet. He gives His Word to someone else to give to us. But this time God the Father makes a scene to announce to all who were there that this is His Son whom He loves and that He is pleased with Him. He takes pleasure in Him. He likes Him! And because we are in Christ and His status with the Father is ours, we can know with certainty that God feels this way about us!

Hey, Christian in the room, I need you to hear me on this. Because you are in Christ, and His status as a child of God has become yours, God likes you, right now, as you are. No matter what you did yesterday or this morning. God takes pleasure in you. You, with all of your faults and shortcomings and sin and

failures. He delights and takes pleasure in you! Oh, I hope you love your union with Him! I hope you cherish it all of your days! I hope you know that His Fatherly love for you is greater than any other love that you've ever seen in your life. You are loved with a love that is greater than any love that you have ever loved anyone with! I hope you know that His love for you is steadfast, is enduring, is greater than all of your flaws and faults and shortcomings and failures.

I hope that for the rest of our lives, when we see this verse we are reminded that God finds pleasure in us because we are in Christ. I hope we can picture God the Father pronouncing over us: "This is my beloved daughter Tiffany, Melissa, Jessica, Megan, Kelli. This is my beloved son, Zach, Kevin, Justin, Devante. And I find great pleasure in them. I am delighted to be their Father."

For anyone who just feels unloved and unwanted by people in your life. For anyone who feels like people don't like you or want you for you sometimes. For anyone who desires to be desired. For anyone who struggles because you've been rejected and or abandoned maybe repeatedly by people you were close to and by people you loved. For anyone who feels like people like them when they're fun and outgoing but not when they're tired.

The Spiritual Blessing of being adopted in Christ proclaims over you today and everyday that you are definitively loved and wanted by the one who knows you better than anyone else! We project how we feel about yourselves onto God. His delight for us is true and ongoing.

And I want to encourage you to remember that the next time you're going through a difficult time of suffering and/or uncertainty and confusion and you just feel like, "God, are you still with me?" Yes, He is. And He will always be. You're finding it difficult to go to God in prayer because of sin you have committed. God is still with you and still desires for you to be with Him.

We need to keep our hearts reminded of these truths, just like the children that were adopted by my friends needed to be reminded over and over again that they're in a new family, before they were able to truly enjoy all the benefits of it.

And what I'd like to do with the rest of the time I have before you is share with you two of the benefits of being adopted in Christ that I love and value the most.

### 1. We Get New Brothers And Sisters

When we are adopted by God, we don't just get a new Father, but we get a new family, a new people to call our own. And, man, it is a blessing to my soul to see us realize that truth about who we are and live it out. From the time I first became a part of Midtown until now, there have been so many incredible instances, big and small, of people embracing the fact that we're a family and living that out. I'd never heard of meal trains before. I've seen dozens and dozens of times when someone has been going through a tough time, and someone in our church starts a meal train for them allowing our church family to take care of them by signing up to bring them meals.

One of the hardest things is when you have to move. I've seen so many times when people are moving into a new apartment or house, and, man, y'all know how difficult and how much of a burden moving is, and because of that, other brothers and sisters come to lend a helping hand just to make the burden a little lighter because we're family now.

And, man, I know for my family, because one of my children has a condition that required him to have about four surgeries a year, and the financial burden of that was just overwhelming. And on more than once occasion, people from our Midtown church family came up to us and gave us financial gifts that were immensely helpful for our family.

Also, I think about all of the times in LifeGroup Meetings or in GroupMe or when we're just hanging out and spending time together where we're able to provide encouragement and support for each other as we seek to help each other grow in Christ.

2. He will always love us as His children.

In the time and culture in which the apostle Paul was writing these verses, adoption was final. You could legally disown a biological child, but adoption was forever. If you adopted a child, that child was yours forever, no matter what. So when you think of being adopted in Christ, my hope is that you would hear that His love is set on you forever, and there's nothing anyone or anything can do about that!

I'm reminded of Romans 8:38-39: For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

As I mentioned, one of my sons has a condition that required him to have about four surgeries each year the first few years of his life. We had to go to Boston Children's Hospital each time. And I think it was about as hard on his twin brother as it was on anyone. I'd have to leave him and take my son with the condition, and we'd be up there for as much as a week. Often times he'd be under anesthesia for 1-3 days, sometimes more, and so going home I'd be carrying him and luggage through the airport. One time, I got home, my other son runs away from me. "No, daddy, no! No! No!" I picked him up and just held him, and he fought me. And I just kept saying, "I love you, son, and I'm not letting you go!"

Over the next 2-3 months, he wouldn't initiate any interaction with me. It was so sad. Finally, one day at the table before work, I was eating breakfast, and he came to me with a toy. He showed it to me, to say, "Will you play with me?" I was late to work that day. I cherished that moment because I just loved to be with my son.

There was nothing in me that was condemning or mad toward him. I wasn't holding it against him that he didn't want to be with me. I wasn't bitter towards Him. I was just so happy that his time of not coming to me was over. I was more than happy to be late to work that day! Was I so weary of him because he ran away from me when I called Him or because he refused to come to me for months? No! I just wanted to be with Him! I'm his dad, and I was just happy that he chose to begin to live like that was true!

God is so much more loving as a Father than I am! And his delight in those that are in Christ is greater than my delight in my children! Listen, if you're a Christian, and you haven't been consistent in prayer and meditating on God's Word. You haven't been going to God in repentance for your sin as you should. You're finding it hard to believe that God finds pleasure in you right now for any reason. I'm here to tell you today that His love for you is not based on any of those things! Just because you are worn down because of your sin doesn't mean your heavenly father is worn down with you!

He still beckons you to come to Him and enjoy Him because you are his daughter. You are His son. And He takes pleasure in you.