

Sermon Romans 8 12 17 5th Sunday after Pentecost Series A

Sermon: 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Romans 8:12-17 (v. 15)

Theme: We are God's Children

Goal: To present the privileges and responsibilities of a child of God

Dear Friends,

Introduction: I love children! It is so good to see them running to the altar when they come to the prayer before the Sunday School class and when they come for the blessings during the Lord's Supper! They are usually so happy and natural and spontaneous; if they are not, something is wrong: they are sick or they are stubborn...

Our text refers to us as children of God. I like to think of children as the little ones, not as the grown up ones. Our children are and will always be our kids, even if they grow taller than us. This point of view helps to understand our text better and helps to understand the relationship between God, our Father, and us, His children, His kids.

I – We are sons of God

Some people say that everyone is a child of God. *God is the Father of all in the sense that He created all, and in His love and providential care are extended to all. Jesus said that “the Father in heaven... causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:45). *But not all are His children. Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews of His day, “You belong to your father, the devil” (John 8:44). People become children of God through faith in God's unique Son, and being led by God's Spirit is the hallmark of this relationship” (CSSB 1728). The Gospel of John is clear when it says: “To all who received him (Jesus), to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). This is sure and**

certain, and we shall not have any doubt that we are children of God when we believe in Jesus.

This fact is at the same time a privilege and a responsibility. Our text says: “Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation...because those who are led by the Spirit are sons of God.” Our new life must be led by the Spirit, and not by the human desires of our sinful nature. We cannot be children of God only when we are in His house, and to have a totally different behaviour when we are in our daily life at home or at work. We have to allow the Spirit to guide us always on the right path. And we have to listen to Him when we go astray and He calls us back to repentance.

II – We are adopted children

“For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship”, or of adoption, as some translations say.

We were by nature not God’s children, but we were adopted by God when we believed in Christ. Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God. This condition of adopted children of God has something special to say about our relationship to God.

*Adoption was common among Greeks and Romans, who granted the adopted son all the privileges of a natural son, including inheritance rights* (CSSB 1728), like it is nowadays. Sometimes a slave was adopted. He didn’t need to be afraid of punishment as a slave anymore, but he was living in the house of his father. It was a totally different relationship than it used to be. This is what Paul assures us about in this text.

I don’t know what kind of experiences you have with adopted children. It is very common in the US to adopt children from Africa

and Asia, children who are in danger. One of my sisters adopted two boys. They were my closest nephews during my study time. They received a lot of love, good education and even more than my other nephews from my other siblings. Unfortunately it was not a good experience. The younger one was a lovely boy, intelligent and calm. But he got a disease (muscular dystrophy) and passed away at the age of 25. The older is a drunker and is still giving lots of problems to my sister, now a widow. He is almost 50 years old and still depends on her mother.

Why do I mention this family experience? Because we have to learn from it, as adopted children of God. Some adopted children of God don't realize the privileged status they have, from where they were rescued, and become rebellious and don't want to follow God's rules anymore. This happens sometimes with natural children as well, of course. But I mention it here just to think about the huge privilege we have being adopted by God as His children, so that we take this status in great value, and live a life led by the Spirit of God, and not led by the spirit of this world – the spirit of slavery.

III – We cry to God: Abba, Father

As children of God, we have free access to God. We don't need to book an appointment to talk to Him, our Father. We don't need to wait until He has time for us. A loving father has always time to his children. It is now even easier than when I was a kid; children were not allowed to interrupt when adults were talking; they had to wait until the father or the mother said, "What do you want?" Now, the children just run in and shout what they want...

The text says that we can just "cry 'Abba, Father'". Abba means "Father" in Aramaic, and it shows a close relationship between child and father. This was the first prayer I learned from my mother and it

was in German: Abba, liebe Vater, Amen. In English this means: Abba, dear Father, Amen.

I imagine what Paul had in mind when he wrote this: a slave child was adopted by his lord. His status radically changed. But after being adopted he still liked to go out of the main house and to play with his former friends. When someone tried to hurt or to harm him, he just cried out, “Abba, Father!” and the father came to help him.

As adopted children of God, we are not yet in His heavenly mansion. We are still living among people who are not God’s children and who sometimes try to harm us. They also invite us to go to dangerous places. We are tempted to go with them. What shall we do? Just cry out: “Abba” Father” and He comes to our help.

IV – We are heirs

The last benefit listed by Paul in this text we enjoy as children of God is that we are heirs. “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.” This is the hope we have. Sometimes we don’t see and don’t feel all the benefits we have as God’s children. But once it will be revealed. We have nothing but to believe, to hope and to wait.

Conclusion: The Africa Bible Commentary (p. 1363) says about this text: *The Spirit will lead us and empower us to live a life pleasing to God. The Spirit will also replace fear of God (as slaves) with the freedom that children enjoy with their father. Those who are slaves to sin have good reasons to fear God, but as children, we can acquire boldness to approach God as our Father. Because we have received the legal status of sons, we will be free to address him as Abba, Father. Amen.*