

Sermon for Trinity Sunday
May 27, 2018

“Connected to the Triune God”

Grace, mercy, and peace are yours from the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear saints, chosen, set apart, and made holy by God, are you confident that you are a child of God? I hope that you are, and that you'll be even more assured by the end of the sermon.

But you may doubt that sometimes, or even misunderstand that phrase. Child of God. But most of you are grown-ups. Why not be a grown-up of God, a woman of God, a man of God. Does child of God mean that you're like a little kid in God's sight, forever? Is child of God what you'd call a baby Christian, but should their be phrase for mature Christians, which God wants us to become? Does a mature Christian outgrow that title, child of God, at some point, and move beyond that? Is child of God even a good thing, or is it more like being called sheep, that's not flattering, and reminds us that we're purely recipients of God's undeserved love. Is that what we mean with child of God, that you're just a little kid in the kingdom of God, and you've got no real place or purpose, you're just a kid?

What do mean by the phrase “child of God”? A child is part of the family. A child of God is part of God's family. Being a child of God means you're in. In terms of growing, certainly you don't want your faith to only mature to childhood and stop there, but child of God isn't talking about your growth in faith, child of God is talking about your relationship to God, and that's something you won't outgrow, any more than, as you mature and stop being a child in terms of growth, you are still, and always will be, the child in relationship to your parents. Men, you will always be the son of your mother and father. Women, you will always be the daughter of your mother and father. Child of God means that you are in God's family, and you're not God's 3rd cousin, twice removed. You're his child, directly connected to God.

Are you, really, part of God's family, directly connected to God himself in a relationship of love and blessing? Can that be real?

Doubts can come from all over the place. The devil wants to you lose everything good you've got, and definitely does not want you to be a child of God. One of his attacks is the accusation, “Child of God? You don't deserve to be. You're guilty. You're sinful. You hated God. You sinned against God. You can't possibly be a child of God.” And a quick look into your past backs up the devil's accusations. You have sinned against God. You don't deserve to be called his child and you don't deserve God's love or God's blessings. So you may end up with the doubt – am I really a child of God?

“Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” You might read that verse and know that sons of God is not excluding the females, but you get into trouble when someone reminds you that you're not better than anyone else, and that calling yourself a child of God but saying that someone else is not a child of God – that sounds arrogant. Doesn't it sound much nicer to say that all of us humans, we're all God's children? By creation, all people are equally God's children. He created each of us. So does that make you arrogant instead of confident when you say that you are a child of God? Or do you then see the real the accusation? That if you remember that you're not better than other people, and that we're all created by the same God, do you see the real accusation, that you're not “led by the Spirit of God” any more than anyone else is? And you can look at your own living this past week and see where you did things that did not come from the Spirit of God. Does pride come before the fall, and do you pay the price

for arrogance calling yourself a child of God and claiming special blessing for yourself as you crash down into wondering, “Am I really a child of God? I can see that I don’t follow the Spirit of God.”

And those doubts can swirl up together and then read, in verse 15, “For you did not receive a spirit of slavery so that you are afraid again,” and you’re dealt another huge blow as you admit, “Sometimes I am afraid. I’m not supposed to be afraid, but I am.” And you could be thinking of fear in general, but more specifically, is this a fear of God, like being afraid of God and wondering if he actually does love you, personally. Or have you let God down one too many times, and he’s left you on your own? Did you miss too many church services, or use too much language, or fail the family God told you to love and support? Could you really be a child of God?

You don’t deserve to be a child of God because of your sins. You don’t always act the way a child of God would act. You don’t always have confidence, like God says a child of God should.

Are you really, could you possibly be, a child of God? Or are you a lost cause and you’ve somehow ruined everything God gave you and offers you?

By faith, you are a child of God.

All the failures and all the accusations and all the doubts don’t topple over what God has done. Last week we celebrated and remembered the Holy Spirit coming on the day of Pentecost. Jesus had promised that the Holy Spirit would come, with power, on his people, and the Holy Spirit certainly did – 3,000 people became children of God that day and were added to the Church.

Did those people deserve it? Peter told it like it was as he hammered them with God’s horrifying Law, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” If there was anything a person could do to disqualify themselves from ever being a child of God, murdering Jesus would probably be it, right? But Peter healed their cut hearts with God’s sweet Gospel, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

It works the same way for you. You weren’t there, but your sins are the reason Jesus was crucified. But, undeserved though it is, you can read in verse 15 these good words, “You received the Spirit of adoption.” That’s just like Peter said. What happened to you when you were baptized? Your sins were forgiven. You received the gift of the Holy Spirit, that is, you received the Spirit of adoption.

By whom we call out, “Abba, Father.” Question: Who gets to call God, “Father”? Answer: His children. You are a child of God, the Holy Spirit makes it so, and you can pray the Lord’s Prayer and smile when you say it, “Our Father who art in heaven!” You are a child of God, you are in God’s family, you are directly connected to God – the Holy Spirit lives in you, and God is your father.

But wait, there’s more. Just how “in” are you? You’re in the will. “The Spirit himself joins our spirit in testifying that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, we are also heirs—heirs of God.” Putting it in our modern-day terms, when God met with his lawyers to set up his trust, he named you as one of his beneficiaries who will inherit.

But then that would mean, if you are a child of God the Father, then that would mean that Jesus, who is your Lord and Christ and Savior and friend, is also your brother. “Now if we are children, we are also heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.”

So what do you inherit, along with Jesus? “Fellow heirs with Christ, since we suffer with him, so that we may also be glorified with him.”

Jesus suffered and died, winning salvation for the world, but now has been glorified – he lives and reigns with the Father and Holy Spirit, our one Triune God, now and forever. And you, children of God, can expect the same thing – suffering now on earth, struggling now on earth, being attacked and accused by the devil, by the world, by your own conscience and you can be confident that you are suffering because you have connected to Jesus' in his suffering, and in his glory. You inherit heaven.

Am I really a child of God? Be assured that the answer is yes. You are connected to the one and only true God, the Triune God. You have received the Holy Spirit who lives in you. You get to call God, "Father." You inherit, along with Jesus, the glory of heaven.

Enjoy that connection. Listen to God talk to you and tell you about his love. He adopted you in Holy Baptism. He feeds you in Holy Communion. He talks to you in Holy Scriptures. He invites you to talk to him in prayer and he eagerly waits to listen to you, because he has made you his own dear child. Amen.

Text: *Romans 8:14-17*

Faith connects us to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

¹⁴Indeed, those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit of slavery so that you are afraid again, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we call out, "Abba, Father!" ¹⁶The Spirit himself joins our spirit in testifying that we are God's children.

¹⁷Now if we are children, we are also heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, since we suffer with him, so that we may also be glorified with him.