

## Who is Your Father

We are still standing in the shadow of the cross. Just two weeks ago we celebrated the resurrection of Jesus. The importance of that resurrection cannot be over emphasized. In the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, we find certain truths that come to mind quickly.

First, John 3:16 tells us that we have eternal life; **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16 NASB)**

Second, we have our salvation (we are saved). The continuation of John 3:16 into the 17<sup>th</sup> verse tells us that salvation was brought into this world through Jesus; **For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. (John 3:17 NASB)**

Peter made his defense before the religious leaders in his day by declaring: **And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12 NASB)**

Third, we have access to God the Father through Jesus: **Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. (John 14:6 NASB)**

Those three things are the ones that we most often think about as we reflect on Jesus and His death, burial, and resurrection. Those are certainly big and important things we should know. While these items may be felt on a personal level, they may also be seen on a global or universal level. We see such phrases as **the world might be saved through Him**, and it is easy to see a global perspective.

God’s love and all of the benefits that we receive through His love are global. Yet, they are personal too. There is one area of our lives that we tend to think on personal terms; our families are a personal matter. We tend to coalesce into family units. We may not always be near geographically, but we will come together in times of need. Even adopted children know and rally to the families that showed them love and support. Families are typically structured around a mother and a father. When someone asks us the question, “Who is your father?” We can answer them quickly. Perhaps even help them to identify our father by supplying other relevant information like his family history.

God, through Jesus, has not only provided the gifts we named earlier this morning, He has gone beyond those things and has become our father. John writes in his first letter, these words: **See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:1-8 NASB)**

Within these few verses we are told that, we are loved by God and children of God. We are also reminded that we are not to act in a manner to bring shame on the family.

Paul, in his letter to the church in Ephesus, tells us that God loved us even when we were doing evil things. God's love reached out to us even while we were children of Satan and dead to God, He raised us up with Jesus so that we might share in the riches of heaven.

**And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:1-7 NASB)**

In Jesus, we are elevated to sit in heavenly places. God's love makes this available for us through Jesus. We may remember our sins and decide that we are not worthy to be in heaven with Jesus. It is true that our sins make us dead to God. Yet, as Paul tells us, we are made alive in Jesus by the grace of God.

Just a few verses earlier, in the first chapter of Ephesians, Paul tells us this is the way God planned it from the very beginning. God planned that we would become His children through the sacrifice of Jesus.

**In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. (Ephesians 1:5-6 NASB)**

Before His crucifixion, Jesus promised to send the comforter or Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost as Peter told the questioning Jews **“Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38 NASB)** The Holy Spirit comes to comfort, convict, and to guide us (John 16:7-13). The spirit is promised to all who are called to God through Jesus (Acts 2:39). So, when Paul tells us in Romans the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter: **For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*. (Romans 8:14-17 NASB)**

When we are baptized into Jesus, we receive the Holy Spirit and by receiving the Spirit, we become children of God. Later, Paul writes to the church in Galatia and tells us that we are redeemed by the Son of God and thus we become adopted children of God.

**But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” Therefore, you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God. (Galatians 4:4-7 NASB)**

In each of these passages, we read the word **Abba**. It is a word that is not familiar to many of us. Aside from a Swedish singing group, we do not use this word in our normal conversation. So, let's take a look at the word. The word **abba** is the Greek word  $\alpha\beta\beta\acute{\alpha}$  and is taken from an Aramaic word meaning father. According to a Rabbinical commentary on the Mishna (traditional

teachings of the Jews), it is stated that slaves were forbidden to address the head of the family by this title. It approximates to a personal name, in contrast to "Father". Typically used in conjunction with father in the New Testament and is a blending of the intellectual understanding of the father with the love or affection that a child would feel for their parent. (Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary)

This concept of God being our father changes the whole relationship between God and us. We are no longer in a master-slave relationship, we are no longer an afterthought or an object from the creation. We are now children of God.

We look once more to the book of Ephesians and see that we have become an integral part of God's kingdom.

**So, then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22 NASB)**

Knowing that we are children of God, we should begin to realize that everything that God did, everything that Jesus endured, all the men and women who were a part of God working His plan all contributed to our having a very personal relationship with God.

Yes, God provided Jesus to bring salvation to the world. God's love for His creation is reflected in the sacrifice of Jesus. This is a very broad view of the images of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. In reality, God did these things for one reason. He wanted to reconcile us into His family. God wants us to be His children and not just an example of His creative ability. There are times when we feel unworthy of God's love. We believe that we have become so evil that we can never hope to be a part of God's kingdom. Remember what we read earlier this morning about people who were following their lust? They were dead in their sins and were following the things of this world. In that same scripture, we are told, **But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).**

There is hope and there is a path for us to become children of God.