



Living and Sharing the Gospel

Weekly bulletin
March 22, 2020

Worship services are being cancelled until further notice because of Covid-19. However, we will have worship services through the Internet Zoom platform every Sunday at 10:30 AM. If you need more information, please contact Mr. Vautour. See the bottom of the bulletin the contact information.

If you have a prayer requests, other events you would like to announce and/or praise to our great God you would like to share, please contact Mr. Vautour by email, text or email.

Certainly, we all need to realize, during this time of crisis, that even if situations appear bleak and evil appears strong, God is still the ruler yet. Jesus sustains all things we are clearly told in Colossians. We could not be in more loving hands! Although we may go through temporary troubles, we have to always keep in mind the hope we have in Jesus.

We need to pray for our civil leaders, those in high positions as well as Christian religious leaders to give appropriate leadership as we traverse difficult periods. God tells us to pray for all people and to do good to everyone especially those of the household of God. (**"1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior," (1Ti 2:1-3 ESV)**)

We all need to remember that this fallen world system will one day which only known by God will be replaced by the fullness of the kingdom of God. (**"3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen." (Ga 1:3-5 ESV)**)

Four prayer requests, please see www.worshipim.ca under "Members Only". If you have forgotten password for this section only, please contact Mr. Vautour.

Prayer notice: message received from **Mr. Gary Moore** that he and his wife Wendy are praying for us during this time of crisis in Canada.

Mr. **Peter Silumula**, pastor in India with whom we have had longtime correspondence, wants to let us know that he is also praying for us during this time..

THE MESSAGE OF JESUS: ON BEING A CHILD OF GOD

Jesus' disciples sometimes had delusions of self-importance. They once asked Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (**Matthew 18:1**). In other words, what personal characteristics are the best examples of what God wants in his people?

It is a good question, and Jesus used it to make an important point: **"Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (verse 3).**

The disciples must have been surprised, even puzzled. Perhaps they had been thinking of people such as Elijah, who called down fire from heaven to consume some enemies, or a zealous person like Phinehas, who killed sinners (**Numbers 25:7-8**). Were they the greatest in the history of God's people? Their idea of greatness was misguided. Jesus said that what God wants most in his people is not bravado, not spectacular works, but childlikeness. If we do not become like little children, we will not be in the kingdom at all!

In what way are we to be like children? Are we to be immature, childish, uninformed? No. We are to put childish ways behind us (**1 Corinthians 13:11**). We are to discard some characteristics of children, while keeping others.

One characteristic we need is humility, as Jesus says in **verse 4: "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."** The humble person is, in God's way of thinking, the greatest—the best example of what God wants in his people.

This is because humility is characteristic of God himself. God is willing to give up his privileges for our salvation. What Jesus did in becoming flesh was not contrary to God's nature—it revealed what God is like all the time. God wants us to be like Christ, willing to give up privileges to serve others.

Some children are humble, but others are not. Jesus used one particular child to make a point: We are to see ourselves in certain respects as like children—particularly in our relationship to God.

Jesus also pointed out that as children, we ought to *welcome* children (**verse 5**), and he probably meant this both literally and figuratively. Adults should be attentive to and respectful of young people. We should also welcome and respect people who are young in the faith, immature in their relationship to God and in their understanding. Humility involves not only our relationship with God, but also with other people.

Abba, Father

Jesus knew that he had a unique relationship with God. Only he knew the Father well enough to reveal him to others (**Matthew 11:27**). Jesus called God by the Aramaic word *Abba*, an affectionate word that children and adults used for their fathers. Perhaps the best modern equivalent is "Dad."

In prayer, Jesus talked to his Dad, asking him for help and giving him thanks for whatever he had. Jesus says that we do not have to flatter our way into an audience with the King. He's our Dad, and we can talk to him because he is our Dad. He has given us that right, so we can be confident that he hears us.

Although we are not children of God in exactly the same way that Jesus is the Son, Jesus taught his disciples to pray to God as their Abba. Many years later, Paul could assume that the Roman church, more than a thousand miles from Aramaic-speaking lands, called God by the Aramaic word Abba (**Romans 8:15**).

Using the word Abba isn't required in prayers today, but the widespread use of the word in the early church shows that it made an impression on the disciples. They had been given an especially close relationship with God, a relationship that gave them guaranteed access to God through Jesus Christ. The word Abba was distinctive. Other Jews didn't pray like that, but the disciples of Jesus did. They knew that God was their Dad. They were children of the King, not just members of a chosen nation.

Rebirth and adoption

The apostles used several metaphors to help communicate the new fellowship that believers have with God. A term like *redemption* conveyed the idea that we belong to God. We were redeemed from the slave-market of sin through an enormous price—the death of Jesus Christ. The "price" wasn't paid to anyone in particular, but it did convey the idea that there was a cost involved in our salvation.

A term such as *reconciliation* emphasized the fact that we were once enemies of God, and are now restored to friendship through Jesus Christ. His death allowed our sins, which separated us from God, to be wiped off the record. God did this for us, because we were completely unable to do it ourselves.

The analogies that Scripture gives us are analogies, and the fact that several are used indicates that none of them gives us the complete picture. This is obvious when it comes to two analogies that, when taken literally, are contradictory: first, that we are born from above as children of God, and then, that we are adopted.

Both these analogies tell us something important about our salvation. Being born again tells us that there is a radical change in who we are as human beings, a change that begins small and grows in our lives.

We are new creations, new people, living in a new age.

Adoption tells us that we were once strangers to the kingdom, but now, by God's decision, attested by the Holy Spirit, we are declared God's children, with full rights of inheritance and identity. We who were once far off have been brought near through the saving work of Jesus Christ. In him we die, yet because of him we do not have to die. In him we live, yet it is not we who live, but we are new people, being created by the Spirit of God.

Each metaphor has its value, and each has its weakness. Nothing in the physical or social world can fully convey what God is doing in our lives. But these are the analogies he has given us, and one of the most consistent images that Scripture uses is that we are children of God.

Become as children

God is Creator, Sustainer and King, but far more importantly for us, he is Dad. It's an intimate bond, expressed in the most important relationship of first-century culture. In that society, you were known by your dad. Your name was, for example, Joseph son of Eli. Your place in society was determined by your dad. Your economic status, your occupation, your future spouse, were determined by your dad. If you inherited anything, it was from your dad.

In modern society, mothers play a more prominent role, and many people today have a better relationship with mom than with dad. If the Bible were being written today, maternal metaphors might be more common. But in Bible times, father metaphors were more important.

God sometimes reveals himself with maternal characteristics, but he always calls himself a Father. If our relationship with our dad is good, then the analogy works well. But if our relationship with our dad is bad, then we will have to think harder to see what God is trying to communicate to us. We are not to judge

God as no better than the father we know, but to think more creatively, to the idealized parental relationship that no human being ever matches up to. **God is better than the best.**

As children of God, in what way do we look to God as our Dad?

God loves us deeply, and he sacrifices to prepare us for success. He made us to be like himself, and he wants us to succeed. Often, it is only when we are parents ourselves that we can appreciate how much our own parents did for us. In our relationship with God, we can only dimly perceive all that he goes through for our good.

We look to God in faith, as totally dependent on him. We are not self-sufficient. We trust him to provide our needs and guide us in life.

We have day-to-day security, knowing that an all-powerful God is looking out for us. He knows our needs, whether for daily bread or for emergency assistance. We do not need to worry, because Dad will take care of us.

As children, we are guaranteed a future in God's kingdom. To use another analogy, we'll inherit a fabulous fortune—living in a city in which gold is as plentiful as dirt, where we will have spiritual wealth of far greater value than anything we know now.

We have confidence and courage. We can preach with boldness, without fear of persecution. Even though we may be killed, we do not fear, for we have a Dad no one can take away from us.

We can face trials with optimism. We know that our Dad allows difficulties to discipline us so we will be better in the long run (**Hebrews 12:5-11**). We are confident that he is working in our lives, and he will not disown us.

These are enormous benefits. Perhaps you can think of more. But I am sure that there is nothing better in all the universe than being a child of God. That is the greatest blessing of the kingdom of God. When we become like little children, we become heirs to all the joy and blessings of the eternal kingdom that cannot be shaken.

Author: Joseph Tkach

THE MESSAGE OF JESUS: DISCOVERING ADOPTION

One night in 1975, while waiting for his meal in a restaurant, Gary Klahr struck up a conversation with a man seated at the table next to him. His name was Steve Barbin. By the time they finished their meal, Gary and Steve had pushed their tables together and were well on the way to becoming best friends. Over time, they grew so close that they finished each other's sentences and laughed at jokes that no one

else seemed to understand. Gary told Steve he thought of him as a true brother. He explained that his parents had tried for years to have a child before he came along, and they called him their gift from God. Steve, on the other hand, had been adopted.

Gary and Steve had been best friends for 23 years when, out of the blue, Gary got a phone call from a woman with the Connecticut Department of Children and Families.

"You should probably sit down before I tell you why I'm calling," she said. "Did you know that you were adopted?"

"Are you sure you have the right Gary Klahr?" Gary asked.

She persisted, "Believe me," she said, "I wouldn't do this if I weren't sure. One of your biological siblings needs urgent medical information from his family."

Gary was stunned. His parents had always treated him as if he was their own biological child. They never even hinted that he was adopted.

"In all my years in this work, I've never seen a case like this," the woman said. "Your biological parents lived in Bridgeport and they had 13 children. Nine of them were adopted by other families. Is there someone besides your parents that you can talk to about this? Perhaps, someone you are close to?"

"My buddy Steve is adopted and he is okay with it," Gary said slowly. "So I guess I will be too, once I have some time to get over it."

The woman from the Department of Children and Families asked, "What's Steve's last name?"

"Barbin" he replied.

"Gary," she continued, "Steve is your brother!"

Can you imagine it? How would you feel if you suddenly discovered that your best friend, the one you have been calling your brother, turns out to actually be your real brother? You don't have to imagine it, because this is the situation for every one of us.

In New Testament times, society had clear divisions. Jews would have nothing to do with Gentiles, whom they considered spiritually inferior. Many first-century Christians came from a Jewish background, so we can easily understand how Gentiles who became Christians may have felt like second-class citizens. In his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul sets out to correct this.

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision"... remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier.... His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace.... Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household. (**Ephesians 2:11-19**)

Paul had grasped what was, at the time, a revolutionary point of truth. The old divisions between Jew and Gentile had become irrelevant. Jesus as our elder brother included both Jew and Gentile in the relationship with the Father and Holy Spirit. Jesus knew that he had a unique relationship with God. Only he knew the Father well enough to reveal him to others (**Matthew 11:27**). Jesus called God by the Aramaic word *Abba*, an affectionate word that children and adults used for their fathers. Perhaps the best modern equivalent is "Dad."

In prayer, Jesus talked to his "Dad," asking him for help and giving him thanks for whatever he had. Although we are not children of God in exactly the same way that Jesus is the Son (we are adopted by grace), Jesus told us that God is also our Dad, and we can talk to him just as he did. Using the word *Abba* isn't required in prayers today, but the widespread use of the word in the early church shows that it made an impression on the disciples. They had been given an especially close relationship with God, a relationship that gave them guaranteed access to Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit (**Romans 5:2; Ephesians 2:18; 3:12**).

Like Gary and Steve, we learn that we too are adopted – by God. This is not some fuzzy spiritual idea. Our adoption is a real and practical relationship that God has established with us through Jesus. Just as Gary and Steve discovered that they were brothers, we see that Jesus, whom we may have thought of as a friend, is in reality a brother. This idea is as revolutionary today as when Paul first wrote about it to the

early church. How different our world could be if every person and every nation could grasp this wonderful truth!

Author: Joseph Tkach

GCI principle website and Moncton Websites—www.gci.org, www.worshipim.ca, www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton; For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website.

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