Series: The Gifts of Christmas

Message: “04 The Gift of Adoption 1 John 3\_1”

Text: 1 John 3:1

Date: December 21, 2014

Location: Christ Community EFC

Am I the only one or is there anyone else here who has ever looked around the Thanksgiving table and thought, “Maybe I’m adopted?”

One of my brother’s used to torment me as a child by telling me that I was adopted.

Now as an adult, especially as a Christian I have a whole new understanding and appreciation for adoption.

And though I was not adopted into my earthly family I have been adopted into a new family, the family of God.

We have been looking at The Gifts of Christmas over the past couple weeks.

We started by looking at the gift of expectancy. The promise that if we seek Jesus we will find Him and the reminder that He is returning.

Then we look at the gift of grace. We have received grace, what we do not deserve from our Heavenly Father, His Son Jesus Christ and forgiveness of our sins.

Last week we looked at the gift of reconciliation and how we are united with God and each other.

There is a moment just before the mother in the video picks up her child. It is three words.

She explains that she and her husband had resigned themselves to a life of never being parents.

She said, “We decided that’s the way it was going to be.”

Then we see her smile and she says, “But it wasn’t.”

We accept things too easily sometimes.

We look at the news or we look out our windows and we see the world and think. “Yep, that’s the way it’s going to be.”

As some might say, “It is what it is”.

And then God whispers...“But it’s not.”

We might think: After the life I’ve lived...after the all the ways I’ve messed up...after the things I’ve done...I’ll never be a part of anyone’s family again...especially God’s.

That’s it. I’m out. Done.

“But it isn’t.”

Jesus came at a time when people, according to the scriptures, people were living in darkness.

Imagine living in a time where the government could demand “Everybody up. Everybody move! Now go stand in line and be counted.”

Imagine you were ordered to report to the Ohio Burro of Motor Vehicles but instead of driving across town, a trip like that would take MONTHS. And you had to pay the cost of travel, hotel, food, and gas, out of your own pocket.

(And that’s not counting how long you would have to stand in line once you got there waiting for your number to be called!)

On that first Christmas, in the middle of all this darkness and stress was a pregnant girl who knew differently.

Everything about that night and the Christmas story points to love and so does our video this morning.

There’s a verse in 1 John, 1 John 3:1...“ **See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are**…”

In this verse John openly tells you that God has given you a great gift of being a child of the God of the universe.

Because of His great love for you, you are now His son, His daughter.

How utterly amazing is that…the God of the universe would make you His own child.

Here in 1 John, the original language not only communicates this as fact, but also demands that you take a deep and joyful look at just how much God loves you.

That you are now part of God’s family as His child is cause for enthusiastic outward celebration with an inner peace that surpasses human understanding comes with such security of belonging to the God of the universe.

Last week Linda shared a little of her testimony of her time with her son’s family and how it touched her heart to watch them interact and love each other.

This, all in front of and with two foster kids who got the chance to experience love and what it means to be a part of a truly loving family.

I’ve been thinking about that image all week!

Unfortunately we see all around us broken families, families where love is conditional, families where there is no security, rest or peace but fighting and uproar—families who have not experienced or received the love of Christ nor learned to love as Christ.

Peace is part of the blessing of knowing that you belong to a secure healthy family that is based on unconditional and unwavering love, like God the Father has for you.

God demonstrated at Christmas by offering the Christ Child as a gift to those who would receive Him.

**If you turn in your Bibles to the Gospel of John, John 1:12.**

John begins his gospel here in chapter 1 by telling of the beginning of the Savior’s work on earth.

He shares about the relational benefits that come for all who receive this gift of Christmas.

In John 1:12-13 we read that “**all who did receive him** [that is Jesus Christ]**, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13  who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God**.”

John is talking about this great gift of adoption that is based on God’s love for us which is offered to us through His grace.

The word for “adoption” that the Apostle Paul uses in the New Testament describes your new relationship as a son or daughter of God our Heavenly Father.

This word adoption also signifies the change in your relational status as now being a part of the family of God, a child of God.

Because of His great love God has adopted us all. We are adopted into love. We are adopted into His grace.

His love protects you, gives you security and the inner peace you need to embrace love and joy in this broken and temporary world.

The first time we see Paul use the word for adoption is in his letter to the church in Rome.

**Please turn over to Romans 8, as we pick up in verse 14.**

Starting in Romans 8:14 Paul writes: “**For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.**

**15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”**

**16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him**.

Paul is reminding the Christians at Rome, and you this morning that when you became a follower of Jesus and receives the Holy Spirit into your life, you have received of the gift of adoption into the family of God by His grace.

Not only has your status changed to that of a son or daughter of the King, but also you have become a rightful heir with Christ.

That means you share in all the rights, privileges and inheritance that are Christ because you are now a part of the family of God.

The mother in the video reads the verse she found in the Advent calendar and it says “God has chosen me...”

God has chosen you. You are his adopted, chosen one.

This is who you are. This is God’s family. This is what it means to be a child of God, to be loved, given grace, and to be an heir with Christ.

Where there is God...Where there is Jesus...There is family.

God has an adoption plan...God’s says you feel unwanted, insecure, and in need of piece...

God calls to you, “Come here…I’ve got you.

God takes us all...and God takes you because God is love and He loves you.

Paul says this in Ephesians 1:4-6 “…**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 as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved**.”

It is God who has done this great work of adoption and making us His children. It is not something we have done on our own accord.

I found it interesting that Biblical scholars write at length about how this term and concept of adoption that Paul writes about is based on a legal term rather than a religious term.

This helped me grasp idea of the new status you now enjoy as a co-heir with Christ.

It likely was derived from Roman law.

In Roman law the one being adopted was removed from his previous family state and placed in a brand new relationship as a son to his new father and thus, new family.

If the son had any debts from his previous family, those debts were cancelled and a brand new life with a clean slate was part of the benefits of being adopted.

This adopted son was now under the control of his new father and responsible only to him.

A newly adopted son would be formally recognized as a new son in the family and a rightful heir to his new father’s estate just as if he were a blood relative.

Although a human father often times would adopt someone from a similar social status of his own, God the Father adopts believers in order to move them into a new status they could never attain on their own.

As adopted sons and daughters of God, we now are lifted up to a new family status and made co-heirs with Christ.

Paul sums up the idea of adoption well in Galatians 4.

In Galatians 4:4-7 Paul writes: “…**when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.**

**6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”**

**7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God**.”

In those verses to the church at Galatia, Paul captures the true meaning of Christmas.

When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a virgin, to redeem us and adopt us as his own.

When we receive the gift of adoption that came at Christmas and we put our faith, hope and trust in Jesus to forgive us of our sins as he becomes our Lord and Savior, we then have inner peace.

We have peace with God and peace knowing that we not only are saved from sin, death, Satan and hell, but also that we have peace knowing we are secure in a family with a Heavenly Father who loves us unconditionally and with a perfect kind of love.

That is the nature and character of our Heavenly Father.

He will never turn us away. He always takes us in as his own.

That’s why the Psalmist says: “**Even if my father and mother abandoned me, the Lord would take me in**.” Psalm 27:10

We think we are alone...

We think that a broken heart is a permanent thing...

We accept in our hearts that this is just the way it’s going to be...

But it isn’t. God calls, “Come here. Sit at my table. Hold my hands and be surrounded by your family.

The mother in the video reads the verse she found in the Advent calendar and it says “God has chosen me...”

God has chosen you. You are his adopted child and He wants you.

You don’t have to settle with the darkness in this world. You can shine for Christ and reach others with the love of Christ and tell people—It isn’t so.

This is who you are. This is God’s family. This is what it means to be a child of God.

Perhaps this is the Christmas when you acknowledge God adopts you into his family as one of his children.

Perhaps this is the Christmas when you consider following in your Heavenly Father’s footsteps and you move towards demonstrating the love of God to another by becoming adoptive parents of a child who needs a place to belong and family to call her own.

Perhaps this year you adopt a grandparent or an extra aunt or uncle who has no place else to go.

Perhaps this is the Christmas to celebrate your gift as an adopted child of the King as you also consider giving the gift of funding all or a portion of an adoption for a child who needs to experience what a healthy family who loves unconditionally is really all about.

How will you celebrate this gift of Christmas called adoption this year?

However you choose to celebrate this gift, do it with a heart full of love that leads to a deep and abiding peace for you and for your family...whoever they are.