

Title: Adopted children

Mar 1:8

As a pastor I am privileged to enter into hospitals, at any time, to render spiritual comfort to people in need. However, there has been one place where I have not been allowed to enter. I am not allowed into the recovery room to meet with the new mother even if the family asks for me. After some research I found out why. According to GITNEX MARKETDATA report, 28k babies globally are switched at birth annually. In the US alone, there is around 3500 switching mistakes annually. The cost in legal fees of such mistakes are enormous, some large fraction of a million dollars. More than that, the hardships placed upon some families due to babies being accidentally switched at birth is enormous. You see a relationship is created with the baby while it is yet still in the womb, hence the families desire to have the correct baby. Yet a relationship is also created with the baby that is taken home and the loss to the family in returning it can be devastating. Thus, the need for security and accuracy in matching biological parents to their children can be of utmost importance.

Just to give you a flavor of how serious this commitment to security and accuracy is, I have to tell you a story about my birth. I was born in Mercy Hospital in Urbana, Illinois, a hospital run by nuns at the time. When the nurses first brought me to my mother, she took one look at me and said to the nurses jokingly “that’s not my baby”. She thought it was funny because out of the 15 newborns in the nursery of that small Midwest Hospital, I was the only Asian looking baby. However, before she could say anything more, the nuns quickly took me back, and scurried out the door. Minutes later, the Mother superior actually came down to check. She asks very seriously, “Is this not your baby?” My mother said “yes” and very sheepishly “I was only joking.” For those of you who know, Nuns in positions of authority do not have “senses of humor” You could just see the Mother superior looking down over her horned rimmed glasses. “I see” “Very funny.” Suffice it to say that security and accuracy in matching biological parents to children was of utmost importance even back in the 50’s.

Yet at the same time I wonder if the interest in biological parents might be, in some ways, taken too far. Take the example of adopted children. Sometimes when adopted children get older they go through identity crisis. They struggle with the question "to whom do I belong, my biological parents or my adopted parents?" Some are able to come to grips with this and live in peace with their adoptive parents, while others are literally driven to locate their biological parents. Now I wonder how many of these adopted children fully realize the unique status they have. They were chosen. Their adoptive parents CHOSE them! Not only chose them, but chose to endure quite a bit of hassle just to get them,

- the waiting,
- the money,
- the paperwork,
- the emotional pain.

I wonder how important is the fact that when you are adopted into a family, you are legally a full member of the family, with all rights and responsibilities. Legally no distinction made between the biological and adopted children. If the adopted child, in its identity crisis, chooses to reject his adoptive parents, chooses to reject the ones who nurtured him and loved him, then the separation which occurs causes pain and damage far worse than any mix-up of babies in the hospital.

Now this has a spiritual analogy. As the body of Christ, the church, we too are ALL adopted children. Consequently, we are special as we too, were chosen... chosen by God. We all have the unique status of being chosen. It is very important that we realize our life, our eternal salvation, lies in the status we have as adopted children of God. Moreover, it is important to realize the nature of our "being chosen". God chose us before we were born! We were chosen to be His sons and daughters before we were even conceived. He chose us not because of something we did or because of any merit we have ... but because He first loved us. He chose us because it was his pleasure and will.

And just like a parent he had plans for us too. For those of you who are parents. Remember the day your child was born? Did you look down on your baby and say "well, he'll probably be not amount to much in this life." Of course not! Rather did you not hope for the best? Do you not still imagine all the possibilities? Did you not wish upon your new baby all the good things which they could be. So it is with God. He chose us, and he wished upon us all the good things which we could be, to be holy and blameless before his sight. To live life according to the way he designed it to be lived, to live life to the fullest. That's what He wanted.

But there was a problem! Because of our sinfulness we were unable to live out the perfect life which God had planned for us. Since the Fall of Adam and Eve, our Human nature has been corrupted separated from God and became sinful. Our sinful nature, our human nature is to never do God's will, never to follow the Law by which God created His universe. By our original sinful nature, scripture says we became enemies of God For all this all mankind deserved Hell. For all this all mankind deserved death.

Yet God, our creator, loved us so much that he wanted us to live. God had a plan. Luke 3:21, records a most significant event. He records the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist.

<sup>21</sup> When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened <sup>22</sup> and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Let me point out the significance of what has just happened. For the first time since the fall of Adam and Eve, God was pleased with a human being. Not simply pleased with His Son, the divine Jesus Christ, but pleased with man! The Holy Spirit, like a dove, descended upon Christ and God publicly acknowledged that he was well-pleased with his Son. For the first time since the fall of Adam and Eve, the separation between a human and God had been bridged. The relationship with God which Adam and Eve had at the garden of Eden before the fall, was restored.

What's more is that when Christ died on a cross and paid for our sins, that restored relationship with God has been offered to us. That special gift was given to you at your baptism. At our baptism a saving faith was planted in us. At our baptism He looks down upon US and says to US "you are my sons and daughters whom I love." "In YOU I am well pleased." Because of what Christ has done, we have been adopted into God's family as his children. As we recall our baptism, it becomes a reminder that God has adopted us as his children. If anyone here wonders if God wants them in particular, know that because His love is for all mankind, this offer of salvation, this promise of

eternal life has also been offered to all. Not only has our status before God been changed but we have been spiritually changed, too. Our baptism comes with power the power to change what we are. At our baptism, God sends his Holy Spirit upon us. God is at work in us.

Now this doesn't mean everything will go honky-dory. Like the adopted child who struggled with the question "to whom do I belong", a Christian may sometimes be faced with similar questions about "to whom does he really belong?" God or this world. The doubt may come from the outside as well. The world, will look at the lives of God's people and doubt them. They say: "Those Christians don't look so perfect" "I know so and so who says he is a Christian, and he cheats on his tax return "I know so and so over here who says they are a Christian, and I they frequently lose their temper. "Why I have even heard pastors, leaders of the church committing adultery. "How can you say God is working in you? The challenge may come from within. We have frequently seen people who were baptized but as they grew older walked away from God. What happens to them? The question that comes before all adopted children - To whom do they really belong? "Do they belong to the God who chose them, or to their sinful nature?"

But God has provided for that challenge. God has provided for our doubt. First it is important to remember that while we are on this Earth, we still carry around our sinful nature. Even after we were adopted into God's family the sinful nature still shows itself. Like a willful child our sinful nature desires us to do things our own way and not God's way. But God has also remade us into a new creation, one which desires to do God's will. The new man created by God and the old nature battle within us. For this reason, though we are saved, though we are adopted children of God we still sin. But what God HAS done for us is He has FREED us from our sinful nature.

What does that mean? A good analogy is a bird in a cage. The cage keeps the bird from flying. Though it may chirp cheerfully at times, it is really being kept from doing what it truly was made to do, which is to fly freely. It may not even realize that it is in bondage. For those who do not know Jesus' salvation, they are like birds in a cage. Sin holds them in bondage. Sin keeps them from doing what in the long run would make them truly happy. They may sing like they are happy in the cage but inside they are dying. And many are not even aware of their bondage.

Imagine now the same bird, the same situation, but someone has come by and opened the cage door. Now she is truly free to fly away. She has been freed from the bondage of the cage. This is what God has done for us. When He baptized us he opened the door to our cage. We are freed from being slaves to sin. We gone, bye-bye! Now even though we are freed, every once in a while because of our sinful nature we may be tempted to go back into the cage. In fact we know, sooner or later we will go back. It is not "if I sin", what do I do? but "when I sin, who do I turn to"? For the Christian "when I sin I turn to Jesus. For the Christian we always desire freedom and we turn to Christ to let us out. Martin Luther calls that a life of daily repentance.

But let's continue the story, because not everyone act on their freedom. Suppose for some reason though the cage door is open the bird doesn't notice, or doesn't quite get the idea that she is free. Maybe because of some kind of blindness or perhaps for her life has just become habit. So, she continues to live her life as though she still lived in a locked cage, never attempting to fly. So, it is

with those who have been baptized chosen by God, saved by Christ, but haven't acted upon their state as a new creation, or have forgotten that they are a free person in Christ Jesus. They live life according to the old corrupted ways. It will be sad that if at the end they are no longer slaves to sin by bondage, but rather slaves to sin simply by choice.

Back to the story again, perhaps with good news for the entrapped bird. So then, one day, the bird looks out the window and sees a flock of birds flying by and her heart soars out to them. In an instant she acts upon her freedom and takes off to join them. Imagine the joy of finally flying, soaring through the air, finally using the wings which God had given her. Imagine the joy of flying with the flock, sharing the exhilaration of flying with the other birds, the joy of dancing with the flock. For all those who have come here to worship God today we have acted upon the freedom Christ has given us. Instead of spending Sunday in a self-serving manner, we have chosen to respond to the love which our Lord has shown us. We have jumped up and taken wing with others, to gather together in "worship in the House of the Lord."

I am going to leave you with a thought. Our Gospel lesson from Mark 1:11 is <sup>22</sup> and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased. I would like you to know that because of Christ, Mark 1:11 also applies to you. At your baptism the Holy Spirit descended on YOU and a voice from heaven said "You are my child, whom I love; with YOU I am well pleased." Amen.