

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost  
Sermon Text: Ephesians 1:3-14  
Date Preached: July 12, 2009

Grace to you and peace from God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Some of you know that Jordan is Amy and my adopted son. When Jordan was born on January 15, 2006 we didn't even know he existed. In fact, it was not until January 17<sup>th</sup> that we received the phone call that joyously changed our lives.

Amy and I learned a lot in the process of open adoption. Open adoption encourages the adoptive parents to be in contact through letters and photos with the birth parents throughout the child's first 18 years of life. Likewise in open adoption it is encouraged that children have an awareness of their birthparents.

One of the things we learned was that there were certain stereotypes about birthparents that are untrue. While there may be different circumstances in the life of birthparents that lead them to make an adoption plan, the common denominator is that they love the child they bore. They love them so much that knowing they cannot provide for that child, they are willing to entrust that child to a couple who can provide a better life.

Having heard from birth parents, I still have only a vague idea of the emotions that they go through in making adoption plans. Having yearned to have a child I don't know if I could ever fully relate to what it means to love a child so much that you are willing to entrust that child's entire life to someone I might know much less a stranger.

And while I may not be able to relate to that context, there is one that I and each one of us can relate to. We can relate to what it means to be chosen.

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the church in Ephesus states that God has chosen us to be his children. God has adopted us because he wants to be our Father.

Not only does God want to be our Father, but he has done what our human parents cannot do. God saves us. God saves us from sin's power to destroy our relationship with him and with each other.

Because while God loves us and holds us much as we would hold our toddler, it is we who squirm in his embrace. We get insistent on what we want. At times we think that we know better than God. We would rather explore things on our own regardless of

how dangerous those things might be and that is our sin.

Sin is not just a specific act we do against God or our neighbor. The power of sin infects us to the very core of our human nature and it is only God who can set us free.

God indeed sets us free and does so by joining us to the death and resurrection of his only Son, Jesus. Paul specifically states that God “destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”

For us, this adoption happens in baptism. In baptism we are welcomed into God’s family. He brings us in cleansing our hearts. He brings us in by making us a new creation. By adopting us, God gives us the keys to the car. He gives us a room in his mansion. He gives us the best food. He gives us a family who loves us and desires the best for us.

Yes, this has come at a great cost. The largest check I ever wrote in my life was the check I made payable to the adoption agency. But that cost is not even a sliver of price God paid to adopt us. The price he

paid was the flesh and blood of his son. That is the sacrifice God made for us, for our ancestors, and for our children and future generations.

Each baptism then serves as a reminder of our adoption by God. The remembrance of our baptism is the remembrance of God's great love for us, even when we feel unloved. When we find ourselves alone God reminds us that we are part of his family. When we are overwhelmed the voice of God invites us to moments of rest and refreshment be it at the communion rail, on our knees at the foot of our bed in prayer, or even in the beauty of creation.

Adopted children of God we have the greatest inheritance one could ask. It is the inheritance of an eternal life free from sin, death and the power of the devil. This new life is a gift. We have not earned it. We are not worthy of it.

But as was said to us in our baptism and repeated at the baptism of others, so hear again this promise. "Child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. AMEN."