

Sermon Draft

Text: Romans 8:12–17

Sermon: “Adopted”

This Sunday, July 16, is the commemoration of Ruth, ancestor of Jesus. She is a wonderful illustration of one who **“received the Spirit of adoption as sons”** (*Epistle*, Rom 8:15) by faith.

In the *Old Testament Reading*, through Isaiah God promises that his Word will not return empty, but will accomplish his saving, loving, restoring, and everlasting purpose. The *Gospel* from Matthew 13 is the parable of the sower, the seed, and the soils. Here again, God’s Word *will* produce when it falls into the ground and dies, just as God’s Word Incarnate is the source that produced all that can be called good fruit when he died and was buried. Some will reject the Word, as most rejected Jesus himself, but his saving purpose will be accomplished.

The *Psalm* praises God for his great works of salvation and for his providence, illustrating this by continuing the agricultural theme: ***“You visit the earth and water it; you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide their grain, for so you have prepared it”*** (Psalm 65:9).

In the *Collect* we ask our Father for greater diligence in the use of his Word, so that ***“we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life.”*** This prayer for security and confidence in God’s grace to us in Christ is a tie between all these liturgical elements and the seemingly disconnected Epistle, where we also hear of security and assurance: The Spirit bears witness to assure us we are children of God (Romans 8:16).

Paul speaks Good News to the Church, using baptismal language (“in the Spirit,” “the Spirit of God dwells in you,” and “Christ is in you”). And the eschatological hope is renewed in 8:11 with the promise of the resurrection of our “mortal bodies,” the promise being sealed already baptismally: “through his Spirit who dwells in you.”

Luther’s hymn is titled: ***“Dear Christians, one and all, rejoice!”*** (LSB 556) But the reasons we Christians can rejoice were not always obvious to Martin Luther, and perhaps they’re not always to us. For years, Luther was tormented by the idea that the heavenly Father was anything but a gracious, loving Father, but rather a holy God whose righteousness could only punish our sinfulness. Our world is very good at ignoring the holiness of God, denying that he would ever punish anyone, but that won’t wash.

Sin is really sin, and if our sin still stands between us and God, then we aren't his dear children and he can't be our loving Father. Maybe our consciences have reminded us of that, and maybe sometimes we think that's where our relationship with him stands.

Well, eventually Luther learned the truth of God's Word, the very comforting truth that Paul writes to us in our text. Maybe that's why he wrote the hymn we are using today as part of our message. As we continue our celebration of the 500th anniversary year of the Reformation, Martin Luther's own life—and one of his hymns—serves well to unpack Paul's words: **“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!’”** (v 15).

The Holy Spirit, through the Word, assures us that by our baptism into Christ we are true children of our Father, forever members of His family. We did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. The hymn: "Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice" summoned up Luther's early life: **"Fast bound in Satan's chains I lay; . . . My own good works all came to naught;... My fears increased till sheer despair; Left only death to be my share; The pangs of hell I suffered"** (LSB 556:2, 3). Luther's mistaken understanding of "the righteousness of God" made him a slave to sin precisely in his efforts to overcome it.

This applies to the whole human race. Maybe we don't feel tormented like Luther because our society condones the live and let live deny that anything is bad or for that matter good. It's all up to interpretation.

Our society cultivates ignoring our own slavery, slavery to sin. America is "home of the free," but this is taken too far, to deny sin at all. Actually, denial shows we really have that "spirit of slavery"; inside, we're afraid. The flaunting of sin is evidence. We can all make a list of sins that our society condones and even promotes. We won't take the time here this morning. Sins are evidence of our sinfulness, our being born in slavery.

And the end result of sin, living according to the flesh: we will die. ***"But God had seen my wretched state Before the world's foundation, And mindful of His mercies great He planned for my salvation. He turned to me a Father's heart"*** (LSB 556:4).

But we have received the Spirit of adoption as sons. The Spirit, through the Word, "bore witness" to Luther that he was a true child of God, he had received the "righteousness of God" "apart from works."

Righteousness was accounted to him as a gift received by faith, apart from works of the Law. He was made a son, through his Baptism into the death of *the* Son, declared by the Father, "my beloved Son." The cross and resurrection are both there in Baptism (SC, Baptism, 4).

And this, too, applies to us. We are adopted by the Father, so that he is our *true* Father, and we are his true children, so that we know we remain in his family and household forever. To know that we are forever a child of God comforts us each day as we face the trials and struggles of this sinful world. To know that God is with us in sorrow and in times of joy bring happiness and peace.

Luther reminds us to remember our baptism daily. In our baptism, or our adoption ceremony God washes us and claims us as His own, sons and daughters forevermore. The deeds of the body are put to death and we gladly "suffer with Christ" (v 17).

This is "in order that we may also be glorified with him" (v 17).

What we know by faith is true even now as we eagerly anticipate being fulfilled and perfectly shown in the resurrection. "Dear Christians, one and all, rejoice!" And with good reason! We are children of God! After a lot of the hymns they included Bible passages, mainly to fill in empty places. The verse following hymn 556, "Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice" is from Romans 5:1-12 and is a fitting end our message today: ***"Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God."***

Amen