

Pastor T.C. Arnold
8th Sunday after Trinity
Romans 8:12-17
August 10th, 2014

Many of you know that I was away this past weekend in San Antonio, Texas, at the Annual Doxology Grand Reunion—a conference for pastors and their wives built to strengthen and support the ministry of the Gospel. I've been to four of these Grand Reunions and they are not only informative, educational, an opportunity to see old acquaintances, but also spiritually and mentally recharging. There is a sense of renewal that takes place during and after these reunions, and for that reason, among many others, Doxology remains close to my heart. I've heard pastors say that Doxology has saved their ministry. I've heard it said, "Doxology has saved my life." I have on several occasions informed our parish family on what Doxology does exactly – and I will continue to share more – but in a nutshell, Doxology provides pastors and ministries with strength and encouragement found in the giving word of the Gospel of Jesus, support from fellow pastors and their families, and education to help pastors and families cope with struggles, gain a further understanding of how to minister to their churches, and the list goes on and on...

For me, a real "recharge" is always realized after these Doxology opportunities. I'm privileged to say I have a great family and parish-family, my hardships are few and far between, my blessings abound in all of you in so many glorious ways, and, simply put, I'm fortunate that I have not had to endure some of the many struggles that fellow brother pastors in the office have faced.

Actually, I've been asked by Doxology to become one of its inaugural members of what is called a Collegium. The Collegium has been tasked with being an advisory sounding-board, produce research to further the body of knowledge for the sake of Doxology, and a slew of other duties. The Elders of our parish family urged me to take this on because it will also sharpen me as I hope to help sharpen others. I'm so glad they did.

The Collegium is made up of "Fellows" of which I am one. And that is a perfect name for these pastors with their commonality in work and faith. It's what we share in and what we are placed into. Beloved, you are "Fellows" as well. It says in the Epistle text, "*The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 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.*" Well, one is a noun and the other an adjective but it means all the same. We are FELLOWS together, you and me, in the faith that God has gifted us with in our Savior Jesus Christ.

We have the same spiritual Father – God our Father. Paul calls him "Abba" because there was no more of an intimate name than what a little boy or girl would call his dad. And we as a "Fellow" family, who are called "Fellow" heirs, have this same dad. And even more. We have the same brother – Jesus. You see, as brothers and sisters of Christ, and WITH Christ, we inherit, we are "heir apparent," to the same things of Jesus. What He has, we have. Beloved, I hope to be able to paint this picture in your mind of how close we are to our Lord through this gift of family – Father, brother – co-heirs WITH Christ. Look at what you have in Christ. Such a precious gift to live for, to share with others. We have an identity. We have found a place, a family, a home... We are "Fellows" in Christ.

But then there is something that also separates us from one another – and drives a wedge between us and our "Fellow" family of heirs – and our inheritance as well. Very simply, it's sin. It's an unholy life that distracts us from what God truly wants for us. There is so much that clogs our lives. You know how you have said to even your best friends, "we should get together

sometime. We really need to make time for one another. We need to sit down and catch up on things. We need to spend a little time together.” Yet, it never happens. There’s a wedge that gets driven in between your good intentions and the actual carrying out of what you wish you could do. That wedge is life – its busyness – or it could be indifference.

That also happens with our relationship with our “Abba” Father. Good intentions abound in our relationship with “Fellows” who are “fellow” inheritors of God’s kingdom. We have a Lord, a Father, and a Brother, Jesus the Son, who we, so many times, have good intentions to visit. But, life gets in the way. Or, we should say, we let life get in the way. Beloved, let your friends and the people you at times need to be with, to hear a comforting word of encouragement – for you to be able to give a comforting word – or a word of witness of Jesus, take priority with a plan to get together with them and not just a “we might/ should get together.” How it would benefit you and them.

ALSO, let that plan of connecting with your “Fellows,” your fellow inheritors with the same heavenly Father, be those you connect with – right here – right here with your Lord. Do not stay away and drive a wedge, getting out of a good habit of attendance at worship. Don’t keep on saying, “I should get together with my fellows along with our heavenly Father in His house.” Make it a thing that you do.

Why? Well, Paul says why right here in the Epistle text appointed for today. It says, *“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.”* Make it a thing to suffer and be glorified. Let me put it another way. You have suffered – you will suffer. You know that. And sometimes by your faith in Jesus have suffered. They are executing Christians in Iraq one by one in some places, and its being reported that’s not the only place. Others are, here where we live, executing our hearts and faith through trial and temptation in other ways. Our conscience suffers from guilt and shame because of sin. We suffer as “fellows.”

But the best part is that second part. We have a God that suffered all, on a cross, so that part where Paul says, *“... that we may also be glorified with Him,”* comes through what God provides for us in the place where our “Fellow” believers gather and God, our Father, dispenses gifts. If God is our Father, Jesus our Brother, and these – you – are His adopted daughters and sons, then we are home in this place. We are with the people God loves and we are with the people that love us. We are where God provides for us – all that we need for this body and life – and the life to come.

At times, when we are with our friends, family and fellow adopted daughters and sons, we are providers with an encouraging word or maybe even a prayer (I would encourage you to pray with and for someone who is in need). But all the time, our Lord is that provider to the “Fellows”. The Father provided His only begotten Son to die for us and pour out His forgiveness every one of our days in faith. Notice, we don’t say “only Son – Jesus”. We say, “only *begotten* Son – Jesus.” The reason: we are His daughters and sons. And this is where you belong. This is your family.

Beloved “FELLOW” heirs: You belong to your Lord. And because you belong to Him, you are precious to Him – just like your family is precious to you. He does all He can, No... He does it all. By giving His Son – by the death of Jesus – we are glorified with Him. We have heaven as our eternal home. May God richly bless you and keep you in His precious grace as this our family-home is used by our Father to pour out that richness of grace on you. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.