

Foreign Love. All those songs this morning about being children of God. That's sort of our theme this morning as we get into our scripture. We're in the book of Romans, if you're joining us for the first time. And we're right smack dab in the middle of Romans, Romans chapter 8, which A pastor has described as the heart of Romans, literally and figuratively.

Just. There's so much good, good stuff in chapter eight of Romans, and that's where we've been focusing our attention. So we've been going through and. And we've been memorizing some memory verses. How many of you guys have been making some effort at this?

Okay, okay, very good, Very good. If you. You couldn't raise your hand with full enthusiasm, it is not too late. We're going to help you do that. So Romans chapter 8, verse 1 begins with this extremely powerful verse.

And let's just read it together. Now. If you know it, you can close your eyes and you can prove to your neighbors that you really know it. But if you don't know it, just keep your eyes open and read from the screen. Therefore, there is.

Now can we just say a collective amen to that? And our second memory verse was this from last week. Romans 8, 6. And it goes like this. The mind.

Hold on. Are we not there? Do we have it? We got it. Romans, Romans 8.

There we go. There we go. There we go. Stay with me. I'm moving fast today.

I'm moving fast today. The Romans 8, 6. The mind.

But the mind, we're finding that to be true as we follow the Spirit that focus on Jesus, that focus on the Spirit who brings life instead of the Spirit of the world, which brings death. It's this shift in focus. It's so powerful. We talked about what that looks like in our lives, but it brings life and peace when we focus on what the spirit, spirit is doing rather than the things of the flesh. Amen.

So that keeps us in beautiful connection to our heavenly Father, who. Who not only forgives us, but brings us into his family. We've sang so many songs about that today. And he does it, Paul will tell us, through this process called adoption. That's what we're going to look at today.

But our memory verse is this. Romans 8:14. Here we go. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. Let's say it again.

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. So today we're going to unpack. What I feel like is Fascinating cultural history about what this passage would have meant to the first readers of this letter. Some of you are. Are all in on history.

Some of you are like, oh, I hope he moves quick. I will. And I hope it's as interesting, fascinating, and inspiring and encouraging to you as it was to me. So we're going to be in chapter 8 of Romans. If you've got your Bibles, I encourage you.

Open those Bibles up, go right there to chapter eight. Because as we go through this, I really believe this is how the Holy Spirit works. You may be following along with me up to a point, and then something will catch your attention. Maybe it's a scripture in Romans chapter 8. Maybe it's something else and you just.

I'm going to go check that out. That is perfectly all right. You can catch up with me later. But you follow the spirit as we lead. I'm going to lead you through this passage here, but if you get distracted by it, just follow where the Holy Spirit leads.

Because those who are led by the spirit of God are the children of God. There we go. So Romans chapter 8. Here's where we're at. We're in Romans chapter 8, and we're going to be focusing on verses 12 through 17.

Heavenly Father, as we open your word, encourage us by it, instruct us, teach us from your word who we are in you. We are children of God. What does that mean? Lord, we want to leave here empowered and encouraged, challenged and deeper in love with you. In Jesus name, amen.

So let's do this. Let's stand together. I see a few people looking for seats. There's some right up here in this section where, weirdly, here. But if you need a seat right here, some right there, and there's four up here, and there's a whole bunch right here on the front row.

And look, William has already abandoned me. He's already left William. Did. Did he spend the night? All night long?

Yeah, they spent the night. Intense. What's that? Most of the. Both of them.

Oh, Arabella did, too. How did they do? Okay. He did all right. We won't.

The girl is not designed for camping. She's like, I'm more of a Hilton. I'm more of a Hilton camp outer. I get it. I get it.

Let's do this. As we're reading Romans, chapter 8. Let's stand

together and we'll read this from. From the Scriptures, verse 12. Let's read it together.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it is not to the flesh to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. Now here's our memory verse. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.

The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear. Again, Rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, abba, Father. The Spirit himself testifies with our Spirit that we are God's children. Now, if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and co heirs with Christ.

If indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. You can be seated. So right away in this passage from Paul, we're introduced to two groups of people. There are the fearful slaves on one side, and there are the adopted children on the other side. These two groups of people.

Now if you love history, you. You probably studied about slavery in a historical sense. So slaves in. There were lots of slaves in Rome. In fact, Paul writes a letter to a slave owner in the New Testament called Philemon.

And Philemon is a slave owner. Lots of Romans owned slaves. There were so many slaves. Slaves were acquired through war, captives in war, through birth. You were, your parents were slaves, you were born, you were born into this system, perhaps through indebtedness.

Some people sold themselves into slavery to pay off debts. Slaves, of course, did menial work, worked out in the fields, did some household chores, Some were higher up the household ladder, some were physicians, some were accountants, some had professional jobs, some were doctors. And so when Paul is writing to these Romans, many of their doctors and the places they, they bought their bread, places they got their, their wheels re. Re ironed. However, what you say that these would have all been slaves who would have done that work, and they would have, they went to those slaves to get those jobs done.

It was a key economic driver in Roman culture. And there were hundreds of thousands, thousands of slaves working in various fields throughout Roman society. The Roman Senate at one point in time considered making all slaves wear some sort of uniform so that the free men would be able to identify themselves as different from the slaves. But they thought better of it because they realized that if the slaves knew how many of them there were Rome, there would be an uprising. If you've ever saw the film or studied Spartacus, you know that slave uprisings

were a very big issue.

So while some slaves worked in less arduous jobs, the fact remained that every slave belonged to someone Else, therefore their life was not their own. They were unable to make any decisions apart from the master's consent or approval. And their lives could be cut off from livelihood or from life itself if the master was displeased with them in some way. And that pervasive sense of like, doom and fear and like a cloud over you all the time is what Paul describes here as that spirit of slavery. And he says, that is not what we have received from, from God.

Let's read this together. 2nd Timothy 1:7. For God has not given you a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. You guys are excellent students today. So instead of slavery, the Holy Spirit makes us sons and daughters.

And this is our memory. Verse again, Romans, chapter 8:14. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. And this, this change from slaves, we're no longer slaves, we are now sons and daughters of God comes by way of adoption. We have families in our congregation who have adopted.

We've got families who are in the process of adopting there. It is a beautiful, beautiful thing to welcome into your family someone who has no family to become part of this new thing where they are loved and nurtured and given a place to belong. And it beautifully reflects the nature of God. The psalmist writes this. In Psalm 68, 5 through 6, he goes, God is a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows.

This is God in his holy dwelling. This is who he is at his, at his most elemental. He. And he sets the lonely in families. So to welcome into your life the solitary, the forgotten, the abandoned, whether through fostering or adoption or mentoring or just widening your circle enough to bring others into it and they become your closest friends and family.

This is the, this is a beautiful, beautiful picture of, of the character of our Father in heaven. It's a beautiful thing. But this is not what Paul is talking about in this instance. Adoption in, in the Roman culture was, was slightly different. So Roman adoption was less about providing like, emotional and relational connection and more about legalities.

It was about the legal process of continuing a family name, of ensuring the continual, well, management of family wealth through inheritance. And it also had a lot to do with fulfilling religious obligations. So having someone that you bring into your life to manage all of those things was very important primarily, almost exclusively to people in the upper echelons of Roman society. So this wasn't your

average shoemaker who was adopting. This was your senator, this was your Caesar, this was your rulers and the higher, upper class people would do this.

So a wealthy, high ranking man with no children or no children he was willing to entrust with his family wealth and position, could look among his friends and associates and find a young man, usually over the age of 20. So this is a young man who has somehow demonstrated to the adopter that he is worthy of the adopter's interest and patronage. And he would look for someone who had demonstrated good character and prospects, and he would legally adopt him. Now, this could be a young man with no family. This could be a young man with a wife and children of his own.

It was, it was unlike what we think of today in many ways. So there's two different aspects of this. Are you still with me? Are you still with me? Okay, there was a word, there was something called adoptio that sounds very familiar to us, doesn't it?

Adoptio. And this was the adoption of a young man who was still under the authority of either a biological father or someone he was biologically related to, an uncle, a grandfather, someone who held ultimate authority. Think of a mafia boss, if you're Catholic. Think of the Pope, the papa. So this person, Paterfamilias, paterfamilias, would be, this is a term you may be familiar with.

This would be the ultimate head of the family. So this would be a young man who was under the head of an ultimate family lead. And so he would be approached by the adopter saying, I think this young man would be a great person to entrust my wealth and my position and my legacy to. And he would approach the paterfamilias, he would say, I, I would like to adopt this young man. And this ceremony, this is where it gets really cool, folks.

This ceremony would involve the transferring of funds. Ceremonial, ceremonial, ritually, he would buy this young man, then the family would buy him back, then he would buy the child again, or the young man again, and then the family would buy him back. And the third time this happened, that would be considered the final transaction. And the young man was officially adopted by this, this older, wealthier man of high standing. Now this is, this is interesting.

This is interesting because this all takes place in front of someone. This takes place in front of a committee of religious, political elites. Think senators. Think, think the, think the temple, temple leaders who would act as witnesses. Are you taking notes?

They would act as witnesses to this adoption. And after that process, where there's a payment exchanged, ceremonial. And the witnesses who would be observing this and writing it down, that would effectively

erase the old life. His name is gone. His legal connection to that Old family to that old way of life is gone, including any inheritance he might have received from his biological family.

That is gone. And now he is under the full patronage, the full care of his new adopted father. That's the first one. That's adoptio. There's a second word.

You see the word here, Adragatio. And this is a different. This is slightly different because this is the adoption of someone who doesn't have a pater familias. He doesn't have the big mafia boss. He doesn't have the great granddaddy of all who's overseeing his life and helping him, making decisions or keeping him from making decisions.

He is fully. The word we would use today is emancipated. He has no one that he answers to. And in this instance, it would still be witnessed and legitimized by these influential members of society, this, this, this committee of witnesses. But instead of paying his family any debts or liens against his property, any outstanding things that he owes would be paid by the adopter.

And after that, anyone who could come and try to make a claim against that with those witnesses, all that was wiped from his legal record. There was nothing there. So he was considered. He was freshly newly born with nothing in his past to claim against. He would thereafter be known by his new name and his fresh and untarnished status.

Are you tracking with me those of you who have followed along? You know what I'm talking about here. So in both cases, those witnesses are pretty important. They are key because they're there to ensure that any later accusation that this adoption was in some way not legitimate or were quickly addressed and dismissed. It's like taking.

Going before the judge and saying, we are legally adopting this child. The judge signs the papers, it is recorded, and anyone after can say, sorry, sorry, any claims against this child. We've done due process. You cannot come back and undo this. I love that.

And I think it ties in to this, our first memory verse. There's therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Jesus, Sorry. Any old claims against you, wipe clean. And if you, if you are one of my once saved, always saved friends.

Anyone out here, once saved, always saved. You know, it's all right, it's all right, it's all right, it's all right. I don't personally subscribe to that in its entirety, and that may scare a bunch of you, but. But that's irregardless, because if this is, if this is how you understand the grace and redemption of God, I'm throwing you a bone this morning because here's the deal. This adoption, once it was signed and sealed, could never be taken away.

You could not undo that legal adoption, no matter how badly you regretted, was done. It was done. So Paul's use of this Roman adoption process to describe to Roman Christians how the salvation and redemption of God looks in is absolutely beautiful. So if you weren't paying attention, I'm going to catch up. Here's the deal.

God chose you. Now, was it because you were of such fine, upstanding character and showed such enormous potential? They said, oh, yeah, I want that guy on my team. No, no, no, no. You were chosen because you were loved by God.

That's it. God so loved the world that he gave his son for you, not to condemn you, but to save you and bring you into his family. You were chosen because you were loved by God. And then on the cross, he paid the outstanding debts that were held against you. That debt of sin that is paid and covered for it is.

That is gone. That is gone. It is over. You never have to look at that debt again. Colossians describes it this way.

In Colossians, chapter 2, 13 and 14, God has forgiven us all our trespasses by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside and he nailed it to the cross. Can I get another amen?

Third, he changes your name. He changes your name.

He changes your name, and he changes the complete trajectory of your life. That old path, that's over. You are on a new path. Your future is set in a new direction. And while you may say, but what about that old inheritance from my.

From my Bio family? I'm telling you what, you are appointed as an heir to a greater inheritance than anything you can imagine from that old life. I'll give you a scripture on that in just a little bit. Now, because of all this, we should be living with so much, much confidence, shouldn't we? And yet, I tell you what, I don't know anyone who has not wrestled with the idea or the question, am I really saved?

Anyone here had that thought ever cross your mind? Now, am I really saved? I see a few hands. I see a few hands. I see a few more hands.

I see a couple of hands. I see some of you trying not to put your hands up. I see it. I see it. Listen, if you've never wrestled with that, oh, I'm so jealous.

Most people I know, that thought crosses their mind, am I really saved? Usually after we've Done something that we know we shouldn't do

in life. If I really was a child of God and led by the Spirit of God, why did I do that thing? Oh, so what do we do when Satan brings that accusation to us? Are you really a child of God?

Did that adoption really take place? Well, if you're a Roman adoptee, you take it to the committee of witnesses, you take it to the Senate, and they'll say, oh, no, no, no, no. Look, right, here's the paperwork. Here it is. We signed it, we sealed it, it's done.

Paul says, with believers, we take it to the Holy Spirit. Those accusations are taken right to the Holy Spirit. Verse 8. 16, chapter 8, verse 16. The Spirit Himself testifies with our Spirit that we are God's children.

Now, how does the Holy Spirit testify that we are his children? I grew up Pentecostal. Bo just brought this. This question to my mind, so I'm going to throw it out here. I grew up Pentecostal.

And so the way we thought we knew for sure that we were children of God, that we had the Holy Spirit, was that we spoke in tongues. Anyone familiar with that, that testimony? I'm not dismissing that testimony at all. But Paul doesn't bring that up as a testimony and a witness of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. Instead, he gives us two other things that he says he says are the witnesses, the testimonies, that we are children of God.

He says, first, the Holy Spirit provides evidence. That's what a witness does, after all, don't they? They're called into court. They provide evidence for a particular case. So like any other witness, the Holy Spirit provides evidence that you are indeed being led by.

By the Holy Spirit. So In Galatians, Chapter 5, 22 and 23, anyone know what Paul talks about there in that passage? He talks about the evidence of the Holy Spirit, and he calls it fruit. The fruit of the Holy Spirit. So he's looking at evidence that looks like this.

Are you experiencing increasing love? Are you experiencing joy? In the midst of adverse circumstances? Are you experiencing peace? And in the midst of troubling situations, are you experiencing patience with the people that you love and God loves but you sometimes have a hard time with?

Are you experiencing goodness? Is your heart inclined to doing the right thing? Are you experiencing an increase in kindness? Do you care about others more than you used to? And Paul says, if this is what your life is looking more and more like, then this is the evidence that the Holy Spirit is present, that you are a child of God.

And God is changing your heart and your mind and producing new attitudes and desires that are in line with the spirit of Jesus. This

is the fruit, the evidence that you are a child of God. Now, this is not perfection. For those of you go, oh, this is why, Tim. This is why I doubt I'm even saved, because I got mad at my kids the other day and I kicked the door.

Well, don't kick the door. That's just destructive and decreases your property values. Don't do that. But if you. If you find yourself.

Yes, there's always a little. Few weeds in the field. If you missed that sermon, it was last week. There's always some weeds in amongst the wheat. What we're looking for is the trajectory.

Are you kicking the door less? That would be a good sign right there. Are you kicking the door less? Are you less impatient with people around you? Are you flipping people off on the highway only once a week instead of four times a week?

That would be a good indicator, Bode. You might have to strike that from the. From the sermon. No, here's what I'm saying. I'm glad we're laughing about it, but here's the truth.

In our carnal nature, we behave certain ways, but when the Holy Spirit takes residence in our hearts, we begin to see changes. And that is evidence that, yes, you are a child of God. The second thing is this. Paul says, you've received the spirit of adoption of sons, by whom we cry, Abba Father. And the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit.

This is the second testimony that you belong to Jesus. Is Abba Father the first response of your heart? Do you know that you are loved and protected by God? And when troubles come, when you're scared, when you're excited, when you're happy, when you're nervous, when you're overwhelmed, when you're jubilant, is your first response. I must tell Jesus all of my troubles, all of my joys.

I need to. I need to take this to Jesus. I need to take this to the Father. If that's your response, you belong to God. I love this Abba Father.

These are interesting terms for God. So the Hebrew word for father is av. You got it up there, av. And that's simply the word for dad. When you look at the genealogy of in the Old Testament, this word of is just to denote this man had this child.

This child is the son of this av. So if you're visiting, if you're at a party and someone comes up and says, who's this gentleman you're standing with you say, oh, Bill, this is my Av. This is my. This is my father. There's a second word here, though, and this is the word that Paul uses, Abba.

Abba is not a Hebrew or Aramaic word. It has its roots in the Chaldean language. Now, who are the Chaldeans? You might understand them better if I were to say the Babylonians. It's not been several months ago that we talked about the history of the Israelites with the Babylonians.

Remember, they were captured, they were conquered, and they were removed from their home, their Jerusalem and Israel, and taken into captivity into Babylon. And the Babylonians were Chaldeans. So when they get to Babylon, they're learning a new language. They learn this word abba, man. Now, you might think, why are they using the language of their oppressors?

Why are they using the language of the people who took them into captivity? You might choose any other language, but here's the word they chose. I think it. It just comes back to the fact that this was a very difficult. This was a very challenging period in their history.

And. And instead of a Hebrew word that has very factual meaning, they chose a foreign word that has an emotional meaning. It carries emotional weight. And this speaks to sort of this. This beautiful father, son, daddy, child relationship that we have with God our Father.

This is the word that Jesus uses when he's praying in the garden of Gethsemane and he's facing down the cross, he's facing down death, he's facing down this incredible challenge. And he says, abba, father. It speaks to his intimate trust, his courage, and it speaks to his submission to his father's. To his dad's will that we, I think, experience maybe especially the most in emotionally intense times, like being in exile in a foreign country against our will, like being facing down some horrific challenge that may require terrible sacrifice. Maybe it's just man, it's dark and the lightning and thunder are really loud, and I need someone to run to.

And we run to Abba. And then there's this last word, pater. It's translated father. Abba, father. But this is.

This is a Latin word, and it. And it means father. But it goes back to this idea of paterfamilias. Remember that concept I talked about earlier? This.

This overarching Big Fred, the head guy? Yes. He is the ultimate authority in your life. He may not. In Roman culture, he would be considered the ultimate authority over my life, even if I'm 40 years old.

If Potter is 82 and on his deathbed, he still can say whether I marry this girl or don't marry this girl. He has the ultimate authority over my life. It's almost like saying, Lord. And so for Pater, this is a

Greco Roman word, a Latin word meaning they have legal standing, they have legal power. They have legal, legal authority.

And I must run things through them before I do anything. But the beautiful thing is this authority, this power, this legal standing against our enemies and our bullies is that when, when, when the bullies come after us, who do we go to? Who do we appeal to? We appeal to the potter, we appeal to the father, to the dad who can beat up every other dad, the pottery, patria potestis, the power of the father.

Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. And who does the Spirit of God lead us to? The Spirit of God leads us to our Abba father, our all powerful and our all loving dad. So if your response to trouble is, I got to pray about this, I got to take this to the throne of grace, I got it, I got to talk to God about this. Jesus, I need your help in this situation.

Then that is the Holy Spirit's testimony that you belong to Him. It is a beautiful thing to be adopted into God's family. We become heirs with Jesus through Jesus. We have rights and we have privileges that come through that adoption, but we also have responsibilities. Paul talks about this as obligations.

In fact, that's sort of what he starts with this passage. Paul says we have an obligation, but not to the flesh. A couple weeks ago we were talking about this in our sermon content meeting and Allen said, so we have an obligation, but not to the flesh. But Paul just leaves us hanging. So what do we have an obligation to?

If our obligation isn't to the flesh, what is it an obligation to? And I think it's an obligation to, to our adopted father to represent his interest, to represent his family name and to represent him spiritually in the earth that he's left us to. It's an obligation to honor our new standing, to honor this new position that he's elevated us to. And not to look back on the old life and the old name and the old stuff, but instead to put our face and our will firmly towards God. Paul says it this way.

He says, by the Spirit, you must put to death the misdeeds of the body. In other words, you got to live a new way, you belong to a new dad, you've got a new name, you've got a new inheritance, you've got a new home. You've got a new family, you need a new life. So you got to put to death all that past stuff. If you're walking in sin today, if you're living a way that, you know, Jesus doesn't, doesn't like, you got to turn from that and walk in a new way.

You got a new name, you belong to a new family, you got a new dad. Live a different way, man. I get it. It can be challenging as we begin our new life being led by the spirit. I totally get it.

The life of a slave is traumatic. And if you've studied trauma, you know that it shapes our brains in very destructive, very damaging ways. And how it does that. It forms what my friend Claudia calls goat paths in our brain, where we instinctively respond and feel and. And.

And behave according to patterns that we've learned time and time again through trauma, ways that we've learned to behave. Because this is the way we survive in the old world, in the old life, in the old family. The challenge is that we come into a new family and God gives us a new name and a new spirit who's wanting to lead us to God. But we've got goat paths that we just insistently run back to time and time again because it's comfortable, it's familiar, and it's places that we felt safe, even momentarily when we've gone that way. But I tell you, when we are adopted into God's family, we agree to surrender all the goat paths to the Holy Spirit.

And the Holy Spirit will replace the old patterns of thinking. The Holy Spirit will replace the old ways of responding. The Holy Spirit will replace that old life with a new life of peace and joy. And the Holy Spirit will remind us. Listen, it's hard.

It's hard, but look at the inheritance that's waiting for you if you submit to your new father. Look at the inheritance. First Peter, chapter one, verse three, says this. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that's incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away. It's not like crypto that loses its value overnight.

No, it holds its value. And it is reserved in heaven for you. And at the right time, the Father will say, it is now time for you to come into your inheritance. Step up to it. Step up to the plate.

It's reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God. Through faith, for salvation, ready to be revealed. When? In the last time, between today and the last time, that final reveal of our inheritance, there may be a period of waiting. I think we're in it where we can be impatient, we can be defiant, we can be sad.

When we think about situations like Matt's, we go, we're just ready for the inheritance now. And God says, wait, I'm doing good things in these hard times. Endure it. Don't give up. Because I am training you to think like my son, needs to think, to think like my daughter and needs to think.

And if we can submit to the training and the discipline of our Father in heaven, who has plans for us that no eye is seen or mind is imagined, then Paul says, if we're children, then we are heirs. Heirs

of God and coheirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. Glory is coming. We're not here yet, we're not there yet, are we? But glory is coming.

Listen, these kinds of sermons always call into my mind some questions. So, one. Have you been adopted as a son or daughter of God? Is the Holy Spirit leading you? Are you increasing every day in becoming more like him again?

This is not perfection. This is just movement in the right direction. Are you moving in the right direction? And is your response when troubles come, is it to run away from God or run to God? And I'm going to tell you, run to God.

This is the evidence that you belong to God.

Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. Follow the Spirit, follow the Spirit. He will lead you to that glorious inheritance. In just a few moments, we're going to gather as sons and daughters of God around His table. We're going to give thanks for the new life that he has brought us into through this adoption and the new hope that he offers and the great inheritance that he promises.

But if there's someone here who says, I don't know that I've ever actually done that, then, then, then today is a day you can respond to that. I believe that God has brought some of you here so you can hear, and you can hear the invitation of the Father to you. And you go, I don't know that I'm worthy. I don't know that. I don't know that I'm deserving of God's grace.

And I will tell you, no, you're not. You're not. I know you. You're not. But God is so good and he loves you.

So much you don't understand it. You may. You may someday. I don't know that I fully understand it yet. You may someday.

I hope we all do. But you just need to know this. God has said it. God has declared it. And God, we take him at his word.

And if he says he loves you, he loves you. Just accept that. Say, I want to be a child of God. Today. At the back of the room, there are people who are willing to pray with you.

You've never made a decision to follow Jesus, be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit and be led by the Holy Spirit. There are people at the back who want to pray for you. But at this time, those of us who have said yes to Jesus, who are part of his family, who are being led by his spirit, sometimes faultingly, sometimes running in the right direction, we're going to share in a time of communion where we get to celebrate the fact that Jesus has said, come, come into my Father's

house. Be part of his family. Be a co heir with me.

Sit at the table and enjoy this meal that I've prepared for you. Heavenly Father, this bread and cup signify this great gift you give us through the cross of Jesus. We are adopted in your family because of Jesus. So we're thankful. Our brother in a sense, who is also our Lord, who is also our Savior, who's also our King, our soon coming King, preparing for us and then sharing with us this glorious inheritance.

As we take the bread, as we take the cup, may we do so with just a spirit of such gratitude and thankfulness and peace and confidence in Jesus name. Amen.

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