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An Initiative of
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& The Cry of the Orphan**

God's Gift of Adoption

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Together for Adoption

Introduction: If you've had any time to look at the texts that are listed for today's sermon, you'll easily see that the sermon is about adoption. What's the first thing that comes into your mind when you hear the word "adoption?" Hopefully, your mind first goes to the work of God to adopt us. If it does, it will change the way you view orphan care and the ministry of earthly adoption. Why? Let's see. *Read 5 adoption texts below and pray.*

Romans 8:15 For 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!"

Romans 8:23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for *adoption* as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Romans 9:4 They are Israelites, and to them belong the *adoption*, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.

Galatians 3:3 In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. 4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive *adoption* as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Ephesians 1:5 he predestined us for *adoption* through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will

I. What is Adoption?

- A. *Opening Illustration: Buddy & the movie Elf.* As we are on the cusp of the holiday season, there will be several movies that play on a loop. *The Christmas Story* is on TBS, *It's a Wonderful Life* is on NBC & Of course, *Elf*, is on USA. In this movie a child who is put in an orphanage sneaks into Santa's bag & is reared by elves. In the beginning of the movie, Buddy finds out that he's not a cotton-headed ninny muggings & that he's not an elf. Of course he's not an elf; he's 6'3." Unfortunately, just like in the case of the elves adopted a human, most folks think adoption is weird, but that's not the case. Our own doctrinal statements talk about adoption. For example:

Westminster Shorter Catechism 34 asks "What is adoption?" "Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby, we are received into the number & have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God." Just like earthly adoption, it's the act of God's bringing into his family, those who weren't naturally His & legally making them to be just like his Son. It's where we are brought into a new family, & totally divested of our belonging to our former family. God totally changes who we are & what we get.

We are no longer children of wrath, but children of mercy. We are no longer out of sorts w/ God, but we are seated at His table. We no longer have to scarp for & cling to our stuff because we have been given everything Jesus has been given & have every right to it.

- B. *It's the apex of redemption, different from justification.* Justification is a legal term whereby the judge declares us as having fulfilled our responsibilities & living up to the law, based on the works of another. It's God the Judge declaring us right with Him. Now picture that same judge going into a another room in which different legal documents are signed & then he takes that same defendant home in order to be his son. Justification is a legal term only, but Adoption is a familial term. It's God giving us the full rights and privilege of being His children.

Application: When you understand God's gift of adoption to us (bringing us into His family), it changes the way you look at earthly adoption. If we first think of God's adoption of us when we hear the word "adoption," we will see the practice of bringing children into Christian families as a reflection of God's work of adoption. Bringing orphans into our families is a beautiful picture of God's bringing us into His family.

- C. *Biblical Illustration of Israel.* To see how important this is to God, we have but to look at the children of Israel. In a list of important things given to Israel in Romans 9:4, the first thing is adoption. What does that look like? In the book of Exodus we find the children of Israel in slavery to Egypt. They've been there for 400 years. But what does God do? He sends Moses to Pharaoh saying, "Let my people go that they may worship me." So God sends the plagues, Pharaoh lets them go, they pass thru the Red Sea, Pharaoh chases them, & Pharaoh's army is drowned. Later in the Old Testament, the prophet Hosea makes reference to this in Hosea 11:1. "When Israel was a child I loved him; out of Egypt I have called my son." This is adoption. Before the Exodus Israel was enslaved to Pharaoh and had to do whatever he said. Now they were free to worship God, no more being forced to make bricks w/o straw.

II. Why do we need Adoption?

Illustration: Gollum & the Return of the King - In Peter Jackson's cinematic depiction of the Lord of the Rings the viewer comes across this creature Gollum. When you first see Gollum, he is a strange creature indeed, and you're really not sure what he is. But you find out a bit later that he used to be a hobbit named Smeagol. In the midst of catching the biggest fish ever with one of his friends, he finds the one ring. The ring exerts it will, the two friends start fighting and Smeagol kills his friend, Deagol. He is then driven out of the Shire and into the hills where he undergoes a hideous transformation. Little by little the image of the hobbit is marred so that now it is almost lost & he is simply a hideous creature. At one point he even says, "We forgot the taste of bread; we even forgot our own name." This is much like what happened to us in Adam.

- A. *Genesis 5:1* When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. 2 Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they

were created. We lost sonship in the garden. The image of God, sonship in us, was marred & fractured, just as this image of this building was marred & needed completely transformed. We were kicked out of the house, as it were, & now are children of wrath. It affects all of creation & it groans with the pains of childbirth.

- B. We are by nature children of wrath. Now the punishment is alienation of God & we are objects & children characterized by being recipients of wrath, punishment & revenge.

Illustration Russell Moore & adoption of his sons. Dr. Russell Moore, pastor of Highview Baptist Church in Louisville, KY, has adopted two children from outside the country. He states that when after all the paperwork was signed, he picked them up & was carrying them away. He said that as he was carrying them out, his sons were clinging to the orphanage crying out for the rat-hole, not knowing the life of love & plenty that awaited them. That's the way our hearts are naturally. We cling to the rat-hole of this life. We are addicted to the Egypt of this world.

III. How are we adopted?

Illustration: Little Orphan Annie. Most people view adoption like the musical, *Annie*. We think we are this cute, adorable redhead, but, in order for us to get into Daddy Warbucks family, we have some sort of trial basis. We think we have to be on our best behavior, we have to thwart the plans of someone or something else trying to sabotage us. We think we have to somehow overcome our orphan-ness and God will adopt us. This is far from the truth. This is not the way God adopts His children. In fact all three persons of the Trinity are involved in our being adopted into God's family.

- A. *It is by the Father's Choice*-In 1st century Greek times, parents adopted children in their adolescence, after they had proven their worthiness to carry on the family name. Not so in God's economy; He chooses His own children before the foundation of the world. The Father predestines. He decides beforehand to lift us up out of our hopeless estate and place us in His family. It's so important to Him that it was dear to his heart before time even began. Adoption is bigger than creation. In fact, it's so important to him, that (Eph 1:6) it's how he chooses to heap praise upon himself. He's so passionate about it, he sends his Son to be rejected so that we can be in His family. The point of God's redemptive mission is to adopt people to Himself in order to heap praise to Himself.

- B. *It is by the Spirit's inhabitation*

1. The Spirit makes us feel our adoption, our sonship. Adoption is so important that the Spirit is called the Spirit of adoption.
2. The Spirit assures us of our adoption. He causes us to groan along with the rest of creation (Romans 8:22-23). It is precisely by this groaning that we receive the assurance that we are sons. We groan for deliverance from this fallen world; we groan for our Father's house and for the experience that comes with the Father's summing up all things into Christ and making everything as it should be. The

Spirit of adoption is the down payment of the full reward that is to come: the renewed creation.

C. *It is by the Son's merits*

1. Jesus was sent under the law to redeem those under the law. Jesus subjected himself to all the requirements of God's law so that he might deliver us from the burden of that law's overwhelming requirement & punishment.
 - a. Heb 2:17-He had to be made like his brothers in every way
 - b. Rom 8:29-God predestined those to be conformed to his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers (the birth certificate of a free man).
2. Jesus cried, "Abba, Father" in the Garden-This "Abba, Father" is not an infant asking for a cookie at the wrong time of day. It is a cry for deliverance. Jesus was the first to cry "Abba, Father" in the Garden. In Matt 26, Jesus Christ says, "Help me, Father. Take this cup from me, if you will." The Father's answer is seen in the next half day. His answer is definitively, "No." You must drink this cup to the bottom and be, as it were, disowned, forsaken, so that my people may be my sons and daughters.
3. Jesus is The Beloved Son - Luke 3 makes reference to Jesus' baptism, at which, the Spirit in the form of a dove rests on him. The Father's voice is heard, saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Here we have the confirmation of His sonship. In Luke 4, Jesus' is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil. In two out of the three temptations, the devil doubts the sonship of Jesus, saying, "If you are the Son of God...." Jesus soundly defeats Satan and dominates him, easily passing the temptations with Scripture. Do you see what's happening here? Whereas Adam, a son of God, failed the temptation when asked, "Has God Said?," Jesus passes. God has just said, "This is my beloved Son," and when Jesus' Sonship is questioned by Satan, Jesus responds with the word of his Father. Whereas Adam lost our sonship for us, Jesus gains it back by his withstanding the temptation for us.

IV. So what?

- A. *This affects our Personal Prayer & Sin* - Some of us still view God like the elder brother in Luke 15 viewed his father. We think we've been slaving away for him & he owes us something. So we get frustrated praying. Or we come to God & think we've not done enough penance or we're not clean enough & we come timidly or don't come at all. Have you observed the way a child interacts w/ his dad, like asking for Coke at 9pm? We don't think of the heavenly Father's love naturally. So I encourage you to take baby steps, especially in your prayer life. We don't have to be people who get up at 4:30 am & pray for 4 hours. Simply remember that God is your Father when you approach him in prayer.
- B. *Brothers & Sisters*-this is why we bear w/ each other in the church. We don't simply put up with people that annoy us. We enjoy & love & serve those in the church

because we are all brothers & sisters. None of us has a higher standing than another. None of us earned our way into the family. We forgive & forbear b/c we are all in the same family. God loves His children and so do we.

C. *Vertical Adoption motivates horizontal Adoption*-When we adopt, we imitate our Father. As one writer has put it, adoption isn't "infertility correction; it is Great Commission faithfulness." Some of you are seriously considering adoption & some of you should be. Adoption speaks volumes to a watching world & illustrates the Gospel to that world. God doesn't call every Christian to adopt, but He has called every church to care for orphans in some way.

Closing Illustration: Michael Oher was born in Memphis, TN. He dad was murdered & his mom was cocaine addict. He didn't have a permanent address until he was 16 & went to 11 schools in 9 years. At the age of 16, he had a measured IQ of 80. Michael was staying with a friend whose son was going to Briarcrest Christian in Memphis. The friend decided he should go as well. While at the school, Leigh Anne & Sean Tuohy, saw him, due to the fact their daughter went there. They also saw him again on Thanksgiving break. He was walking to the gym, even though he wasn't on the team. He just wanted to stay warm. They took him into their home & he lived there for most of his high school career. The Tuhoys owned about 60 Taco Bell franchises. One day they went into Michael's room & found a bunch food stashed in his room. Naturally he was stashing food b/c he was accustomed to not knowing where his next meal was coming from. They told him he could go into any one of their restaurants & get something any time he wanted. Interestingly enough, Michael was the first round draft pick of the Baltimore Ravens.

Isn't that what God does for us? He chooses us to be in His family; His son earns that right for us; the Spirit assures our hearts that we are children of God. Our Father's provision for us fully provides all that we could need or want & causes us to embrace Him.

Let's pray.