

Co-Heirs With Christ

August 21, 2022

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ Online Ministry. Services are presented on YouTube, Facebook and our website one week following recording. This week's message is titled Co-heirs With Christ. We were honoured to welcome Justin and Alicia all the way from Cologne, Germany, on furlough. Thank you to Earl and Dave for being part of the video as well. The scripture reading is Romans 8:12 to 17.

Welcome, Announcements, Prayer

Well, good morning, everybody. Our numbers are a little depleted this morning. Summer holidays and people coming and going. But we're glad that each of you here are actually here. So we'll start with some birthdays this week. Wayne and Robin, how old are you, Robin? Almost, almost nine. Going on. Going on 19. According to your mom and dad. Anyway, happy birthday anniversaries this week, Bonnie and Chad. Lynn and Dave. And that means Kathy and I, we share the same date. How many years? Don't ask me tough questions, I'm sure. Okay. Just Justin and Alicia are here. And Justin will be bringing us our sermon this morning. So we welcome them. Alicia's sister, however, is undergoing an appendect- appendectomy this morning, even as we perhaps are sitting here. Jack is still in hospital. Marie has been unable to visit him due to a COVID outbreak there. So we ask that you would keep them in your thoughts and prayers. He's able to get up and around, so he seems to be on the mend, which is good. I think that's it. Yes? Jo-anne's daughter has stage four cancer. Oh, no, this is this is sorry. Joanne's daughter. Okay.

Our father, we thank you for the opportunity of being together as your people this morning. We pray that you will help us to listen attentively and to participate this morning as we offer praise to you. We thank you for your love. We thank you for your concern for mankind. We thank you that you were prompted and that you sent Jesus, your son, into this world to offer us a living example of how we should behave, how we should treat others. And we pray to Father that you will help this world to follow his example. In so many aspects, we pray for others to help us individually to follow that example and live it out in our daily lives. So we pray that just as Justin will bring us the message this morning that you will guide his thoughts as he directs us to your word. We pray, Father, that you would be with those who are undergoing difficulties. We think of Grant Smith's family. Yesterday, we had a celebration of his life. We thank you for his example among us, for so many years. We pray that you will guide the family with peace. We think of the Whitfield family at this time with the passing of Glen suddenly and all the repercussions of that in so many lives. We pray that you will bless his family with your sense of peace, your sense of presence, and with your love. We pray that you will help them through this difficult time. Father, we pray that you will be with Jack. That you will be with his recovery. We pray that you'll be with Alicia's sister as she's undergoing surgery. We pray for a speedy recovery in this regard. We pray, Father, that you will help us this morning to concentrate on you and your love for this world in Jesus' name. Amen.

Communion

Perhaps it's the frequency of the funerals and memorials that we have been able to attend in the last few months. For dear friends and acquaintances that bring back the memories of the connections we have with those who have passed on. Memory is a strange capacity that we have. We have the ability to learn, which is the retention of action, words, instruction, and to retain it. And this allows us to create art, music. We can learn a language. We have this capacity. We can remember complex arrangement. Sometimes, as we get a little older, the memories fade. I'm putting it kindly. I guess we forget and we need reminders. Our recall is not what it used to be. Now, if we had a computer for a brain and we could just access our random memory or ram, we could recall everything more or less. Not quite the way our mind works.

We recall the way we were. And again, the older you get, the more you remember things in your past. And sometimes those fade. Sometimes they become a little distorted and reach epic when there really weren't that big of a deal. The words the song came to my mind. The way we were. Memories light the corners of our minds misty water colored memories of the way we were. Scattered pictures of the smiles we left behind. We can recall an event and with it associate where we were when it happened, whom we were with, and then an explanation from neuroscience on how a memory works. If you really want to remember something, it is best to try to connect it to some part of your life Oh! That's, that's pretty deep.

So here we are around the table of Remembrance, a continual reminder. Do this in remembrance of me or do not forget what God has done for you through the sacrifice of His only son. How deep the father's love, the embodiment of his great love for us in these simple emblems. Help us remind us, remember, and make a connection to this supper, this commemoration, not just to some part of our life, but all of your life. Let's go to him in prayer. Heavenly Father, we are indeed thankful for all of your gifts. Your Grace and mercy in abundance. We are especially thankful that we can remember your love to us through Christ in this way. In these simple emblems of the bread and fruit of the vine. Help us to make this connection with you, with our lives, in our service to you through Christ and in His name. We pray. Amen.

Reading

This morning's Scripture, reading is Romans eight verses 12 to 17. 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'll die. But if by the spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live for those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The spirit you receive 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 coheres with Christ if indeed we share in His sufferings, in order that we may also share in His glory.

Message

Dear brothers and sisters. Good morning. Good morning. I think given our topic this morning, there's not a more fitting greeting than to call you my brothers and sisters in Germany. I would have started my sermon with dear siblings. Good morning. The idea that God is our father is an idea that's very

familiar to us as Christians. It's something we're very comfortable with. We call God our father when we pray to him. We call each other brother and sister, as I just did. It's an idea that's very, very comforting because it expresses how much God loves us. God is not simply our friend. He's not only our Lord. He is also a loving father. And for years, I was very comfortable with the idea. And a few months ago I was preparing a Bible study about this very passage in Romans eight. And it happens all the time. It shouldn't surprise me by now, but the more I, I researched this passage, the more I researched what it meant to be adopted in past time, the more I discovered the depth that this passage has to the Christians in Rome that received this letter from Paul.

Being adopted was not simply a question of being loved by God. Of course, that was part of what Paul was writing to them. I'm not saying the idea is wrong, but the image does not only imply that the Christians are loved by God as their father. There's a whole world of meaning behind this word. And I think sometimes we take this idea for granted and we miss somehow the depth of what Paul is saying to us in this passage. And in Roman times, adoption was a very common occurrence, but it wasn't always used in the same way it is. It is used today nowadays most of the time when you adopt a child. It's because you they don't have a family, a biological family, or their family is not able to take care of them. And you want to offer a home to that child. You want to care for it. You want to show it love. You want to try to make sure its needs are provided for. At the time that type of adoption existed. But that was not the only reason people in Roman society adopted somebody. A lot of times it was used in the political context. Members of the nobility, especially in Rome, members of the Senate, would often adopt someone as a sign that that person was going to be their heir. That person was going to be their political successor. They would inherit not only their wealth, but also their political clout.

And so it was not rare for somebody to adopt an adult. Some adult would be fully self-sufficient, would not need a home or parents to take care of him. But the adoption was not simply intended to provide that person with a family. It was also a public statement that this person was chosen as your successor. It was also a comment that people would be adopted even though their biological parents were still alive. I'll have an example of that in a few minutes. And so there was an idea behind the concept of adoption of honor. When you were adopted by somebody, that person was going on record in stating that you had been chosen. You were the person they approved. You were the person they wanted to have as an heir. If you were to be adopted by, say, a rich senator, you were being given a status that you did not have by birth. You would be given an honor that you did not deserve. That person is reaching down and pulling you up to their level. They are making you their child. And I think that's the first idea we shouldn't miss when Paul says God has called us to adoption to Sonship. God is calling us his children. He is giving us an honor that we do not have by nature. Who is the one person who by nature deserves to be called a child of God? It's not a trick question. And in Jesus Christ, He is the Son of God. And yet God reaches down and gives us the honor of of this title. He shares with us the title that belongs by right only to Christ Jesus. And so the readers, the Christians in Rome reading this letter, what they hear is passing the spirit is a public statement, by God, that he wants to honor you. He wants you to be his his successors, his followers.

It was also an important point in Roman law that the person who was adopted could not be distinguished from the biological children of the person who had adopted them. If you if you were adopted into a family, your adoptive parents had to treat you exactly the same as they did their biological children. I don't know how the law works in Canada, but that's the case in France. At least if

you adopt somebody, they have all the rights that a biological child would have. And it is not ethical, of course, but it's also not legal to discriminate between your biological children and your adoptive children. The person has become your child. I have a quick quote here by a historian. He says, In Roman civil law, adoption was interpreted broadly. It being held that by adoption, the person adopted became, to all intents and purposes, a natural son. There was no distinction between the natural children and the adoptive children. That person lost all that had been his by birth and passed forever and a day out of the family into which he had been born. That person has to leave behind their bio-biological family. They have to give up whatever honor or whatever position they had formally and and become one with the family they're adopted into. And I think that's the idea Paul is mentioning when he talks about putting to death the works of the flesh. I don't think this is a legalistic idea of treating ourselves harshly.

I think the idea and I'll come back to that in a minute, I think the idea is that former self no longer exists. You've cut ties with that spiritual family that you used to be in. You've cut ties with that former self he was buried. When you were brought down into the water at baptism. And you are a new person. You have nothing in common with that former self. You can consider him dead. That person is no more. And you are now in a new family. You are now a new person. In fact, the Greek word that Paul uses here and in this passage is 'huiothesia'. It's not correct English. My wife is cringing right now, but if you translated it word for word, it would mean son-making. God has called us to be transformed into these children. The focus of the Word is not on the legal process of being adopted. Signing the paperwork and so on. The process is on this new identity you've acquired. You are a new person. You lead literally a new life. And that's what God is calling us to. Not just the transformation of how we think and not just the transformation of our behavior, although these things are important, but a transformation of who we are.

Deep down, God calls us to be not just his followers, but his children. He wants us to become Christ like, to become like his actual natural son. And He wants us to become so Christ like that, just like an adoptive child. In Roman times, we cannot be distinguished from the real Son of God. Jesus Christ. I promised you I'd have an example. We have one historical example of. Of this process of adopting someone by Julius Caesar who was, as you know, a very powerful, influential politician in the first century before Christ adopted his great nephew, who was called Octavian at the time, and later became, after he inherited the political position of Julius Caesar, became the first emperor of Rome. In Roman culture, it would not be out of place to, say, Augustus or Octavian looked like his father in reference to Julius Caesar. Now, biologically, that makes no sense. If they look if they look like it's random chance or it's because they're distant relatives biologically, Julius Caesar is not the father of Octavian, but in Roman culture, the choice that Caesar had made, that he would love this great nephew of his, that this great nephew would be his heir, would be the one who would continue his work. This choice overrode the biological reality, the the the physical fact that Octavian was not his son no longer mattered. It had become irrelevant because Caesar had made an official public statement. This is the person I want as my successor. And so you were required to dismiss the reality. And we're going to see that's what God does for us.

We are sinners and God overrides with this divine power, this reality, and makes us righteous. We are far from God and God. God overrules this reality and makes us His children. We also have a biblical example have adoption, one you're fairly familiar with. I hope Jesus himself was an adoptive child. His his father, Joseph, was was an adoptive father. He was not biologically the son of Joseph. And Joseph

agrees to marry Mary and to take care of the child as if he were his. And a lot of early church fathers liked to point out that Jesus was adopted by his father so that we could be adopted by his heavenly Father. Jesus takes on the position of ever of of mankind. He He lowers himself to a lower status so that we can have the honor of being called his brothers and sisters. So when the New Testament authors say that we are adopted by the father. When Paul writes, We are heirs with Christ, we are called to share in his inheritance. Yes, it does mean God loves us. By all means. God has chosen to love us and to draw us so close to Him that we are members of his family. But even more than that, what these what these apostles and servants of God are writing is that God gives us an honor that we would be unable of having on our own merit. God accepts to not discriminate between us in Christ Jesus He attributes to us, although we are sinners, the righteousness that only His son could fulfill. He gives us the promise that we will share in the blessings that his son has by right in heaven. And we are called not just to be servants of God, but to be His children. When I when I got to this point in my in my May in preparation for this sermon, I realized how much this influences our whole whole view of ministry when we are preaching to the world.

The good news, we're not simply inviting the world to accept a new teaching, although a deeper teaching, although the gospel is the living word of God. We're not simply calling the world to repent, although if they want to follow, if they want to come to God, repentance will be necessary. But while we are offering them, first and foremost, is an honor, a position that they will find nowhere else. There is nowhere else in this world where our world will find that sense of being called sons and daughters of the creator of this universe. Only in Christ is that made available to us. Jesus accepts to lower himself and become one of us. And the next passage is one I really love. Jesus is not ashamed of becoming one of us, and He is not ashamed that we are his adoptive siblings. This is in the letter letter of Hebrews, both the one who makes people holy so Christ Himself and those who are made holy. All of us here today included, are of the same family. There is no longer a separation between us and Jesus Christ. If I am an adoptive child of God, Jesus Christ is my big brother. He is my sibling. So Jesus and I highlighted the verse because I think this is extremely important. Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters. Jesus is not ashamed that we are his siblings, that we are in the same family, that we share in the honor. He has to be called a child of God. And this is very clear in our passage in Romans. When Paul calls us co-heirs with Christ, we are given the same promise that Jesus has. We are called to share in the same inheritance. We are called to have the same. This sounds almost insulting to Christ, but we are called to have the same standards, the same honor that Jesus has as the Son of God. This is a whole new way of looking at the Gospel. God is not calling us simply to a new life. He's not calling us to follow a new religion. He's calling us to become different people, to become Christlike. He offers us this title of being Sons and Daughters of God and then expects us to become sons and daughters of God. In fact, to become, in fact, so much like Christ that we can't be told apart. He offers us. And I'll be speaking a bit more about this later. But he offers us the chance to share in the same inheritance Jesus has, the same blessings Jesus received when He ascended to his father's right hand are saved up for us in heaven. We are going to share in the same glorious presence of God. I had a few a few practical consequences of this that I wanted to highlight.

This is not simply a happy idea that we have, that God loves us and that we are his children. This very down to earth, very practical consequences. If God has chosen the US as His son, if He's chosen you as His sons and daughters, if he's chosen us to be his family, that has an impact on a daily life here on Earth. It is not simply something to fondly think of when we think of heaven. The first one is this

changes our whole approach to morality. It changes the whole approach to the sin and to righteousness. To put it very simply, righteousness is not simply checking all the items on the list of Divine Commandments. Have I obeyed all of the Ten Commandments today? Have I served sufficiently in the church? These things are important. God. God calls us to be righteous. He calls us to honor him with our lives. But our morality goes beyond that. We're not simply called to obey a set of rules. Rather, we are called to live a life that conforms to our new identity. We are called to undergo it with our lives because we are now his children. And a well-behaved child is something a parent can be proud of. A few months ago, I was corresponding with somebody I know in France who was struggling with addiction, and I found one of his comments very interesting. He said when I focused on changing my behavior, when I focused on giving up this addiction, it was incredibly hard. I was always focusing on what I should do and not do, and it was always a struggle to force myself to do the right thing, he said. The thought that helped me the most was to change my perspective on this, and the phrasing he used is when I am tempted to give in to the addiction, I told myself, This is no longer who I am. I'm better than this. And I think this should be our approach to morality. This would be our approach to serving God.

We serve God not because we have to, but because now we are called to a greater honor than that. We do not want to do anything that would bring shame to God's name because He has made himself our father. This is what Jesus himself says in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew Chapter five. If you have heard that it was said, love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you. Why? That you may be children of your father in heaven. We follow God's commandments because he is our loving father, because we want our lives to show this new relationship we have with him. Not simply because we're afraid of punishment or because we want to check out the correct items on our to do list. We do that out of love for our father. The whole reasoning behind the commandments God gives us is not to arbitrarily dictate how we live our lives. It's to give us a chance to live out in real life. Our new identity of children of God. To be consistent with what God has said about us. If God calls me His son, I want to act like God's son. This does not cheapen God's grace. This does not this is not lowering the bar for being a good Christian. In fact, I think it's the opposite. There are many things that we will do out of love for our family that no law could force us to do. There are many sacrifices that we would make for a parent or a sibling or a spouse that the law would not simply not bring us to do. It is more demanding to expect us to do everything we can out of love for God than it is to simply give us a set of rules to follow. God calls us to this responsibility. We are His representatives on Earth Square, his children. People look at us and they will see us as children of God. And our lives are coming to honor Him in the way we act.

I think that's deep down the goal of our righteousness as Christians. God associates his name with us. We are we are named after his son. We are called Christians. We are. People see us and they will in part judge God, by the way we act and the way we live out this new identity. God makes himself vulnerable to criticism by calling us His children, and he gives us this chance and also this responsibility to honor him in the way we act. This is what Peter says in his first letter. Lives such good lives that the pagans, though they accuse you of doing wrong, that they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. The calling here is to do everything we can out of love for the father who has shared with us his very honor.

The second consequence, and this one was a bit harder for me to struggle with when I was preparing this study. The second consequence is a new type of relationships within the church. When I walk into

a church, the people I am encountering are not friends. They're not well, they are. But they're not only friends. They're not simply people. I share a common interests with in reading Scripture. They are members of my family. And just like any family, that means I share a loving relationship with them and I also carry a certain responsibility for them. When we call other members of the church our brothers and sisters, this is not simply a term of affection. It is. I call people my, my, my brother or my sister because I love them, because I want to express this this affection that. I have for them, but it's so much more. There's there's a reality behind that title. The person I am calling my sibling is is a brother or sister of Christ is somebody God has called to be their adoptive child. And this is really important. If God has called these Christians his children, if he has chosen not to discriminate between them and Jesus Christ, I owes them the same love I have for Christ. I cannot I cannot love my brothers and sisters with any less love than I have for Christ without contradicting God. If God had said, These people are your siblings and I do not treat them the way I treat my Heavenly Brother, then I am standing up to God's will. There's something very, very central to our faith here in these new relationships.

And now this may make you uncomfortable. You might be thinking, it sounds like I'm making our love for God dependent on our love for one another, a contingent on our love for our brothers and sisters. Don't worry. That's not what I'm saying. That's what the apostle John is saying. John writes, Whoever claims to love God hates a brother or sister, is a liar. Whoever does not love their brother or sister whom they have seen cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And it makes sense when you think about it. If I want to draw closer to God, I have to be willing to draw closer to the people who are in His presence. If I push these people away, I cannot get closer to God. I cannot come into His presence without being with the other people He has called to him. There's a very, very simple explanation to that. And so I need to love my brothers and sisters with the same passion I have for my Lord Jesus Christ. This has very, very practical consequences in our life as Christians. I don't want to get carried away with a long report on our work in Germany. But there's one example in our ministry in the past few months where this has been very clear, this idea that we owe other Christians our love. And so I want to share a few pictures with you if you'll bear with me for a few minutes.

A few months ago, we had a flood of refugees from Ukraine coming to Germany, and many of those are Christians from the Churches of Christ in Ukraine. There were a few dozen churches in the country and suddenly there was this challenge. How will we help them? And a lot of churches made sacrifices for those methods. This is the picture you have here is 30 refugees, mostly women and children who are currently living and are in the facility we use for our Bible camps. They were moved in there indefinitely until they can return home or somehow find housing in Germany. And the churches in Germany made that decision knowing that it was a sacrifice because these people are using that facility there. All the camps this whole year, all the retreats have been canceled. There is no way, no place for the churches to meet. But we owed to these people the love of caring for them and many churches. This is a picture of our church in Cologne, but we are by far not the only church to do this. Many churches have opened their building and helped refugees who were who were fleeing the war. A lot of churches have sacrificed Sunday school rooms changing into bedrooms to give these refugees a place to stay. I'm not wanting to sound melodramatic when I speak about a sacrifice. In the end, it's very straightforward. Would I do the same for Jesus Christ if were Jesus fleeing the war? Would I be willing to sacrifice my Sunday school classroom for him? Would I be willing to cancel the retreat for Jesus? Of course He's a son of God. Well, I owe the same love and the same respect to my brothers and sisters. [ahem]

The third point and this is, I think, what Paul is trying to focus on in this passage. The third consequence of our adoption concern is our hope for eternity. What I am looking forward to in heaven is not simply living out eternity with. Other people who have led righteous lives. What I'm looking forward to is God completing this process by which He makes us his children. Here on Earth. I am called a child of God. I am adopted as a child of God. Unfortunately, in my daily life, that's not always visible. Sin gets in the way. Sin blurs this image of God in me. But when I reach God's presence here, He will make this this process of adoption perfect in me. And just as he intended, it will no longer be possible to distinguish between us, his adoptive children, and his son Jesus Christ. This is why John says, Dear friends, now we are children of God. Now, already we are adopted into his family. And what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him. He is. We will be made exactly the spitting image of Jesus Christ. Right now we carry that name, a son of God in heaven. We will share in that very that very identity of Son of God. God's will for our life is not simply to get us into heaven, to fill up the heavenly mansions with as many people as possible. He intends on completing this transformation that he has begun in our lives. He intends on making us perfectly, his children completely, his children. God wants to make us perfectly Christlike. And the phrasing that the New Testament uses is almost jarring in this regard. I will leave you with one last passage, but the New Testament says we are called to share in the glory of God. We are called to share in his fiery radiance.

Here, in the second letter of Peter, Peter writes, Through God's glory and goodness. He has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them all, this is a tough verse through them. You may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. This is what God intends for us that we may share in His very glory, his very nature. It almost seems wrong to say that, but that is God's will for us. One day we be united in heaven and there will be no more visible difference between us and Jesus Christ. And my prayer is that God will keep us under His wing until that day. Amen.

Closing & Prayer

Thank you, Justin. Very thought provoking lesson. Yes. Multiple faceted in terms of its application. Now, some of you know, I was adopted. Maybe you don't. There's another side to the story someday. But the truth is, I've often thought I was chosen. I was chosen my say randomly. My parents in, Toronto, they came along. You know, my joke is that I was curled up in a fetal position, crying uncontrollably for several months in an orphanage. That's not the case. That makes for a good story with the kids. But the truth is that I have often looked at that verse and said I was chosen. How different would my life have been if? Those two people had not had compassion on me and chosen me. And how different would our lives be if our Heavenly Father had not sent His Son into this world to redeem mankind? He chose each of us to be his children and co heirs with Christ. And so the whole thing about the Roman system of adoption and what that meant is profound. And yet the lessons of that time in terms of using that as an example, to say we are adopted children, we are coworkers with Christ, we are in some sense the this divine control of this world. We're in some regards, equal that's mind blowing. And so we thank you, Justin, for your study and for your your delivery here with us today. Much to think about and must be thankful for. So let's go to God in prayer.

Our father, we thank you for the great love that you had in prompting your plan of redemption for mankind. We thank you for Jesus. We thank you for His sacrifice. We thank you that we were called to

become sons and daughters of yours and heirs of the promises that he has given us. So, Father, thank you for the love that prompted this. And we pray that you will help us to live as Justin has encouraged us in ways that would bring honour and glory to you. This week is our prayer in Christ's name. Amen.

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