



One Page Sermon

By Pastor Robb McCoy

October 8, 2023

Adopted by God

Recap of sermon from October 8, 2023

Scripture: Galatians 4:1-7

Every family comes with its own customs, stories, rights, and responsibilities. There are expectations that come along with being a part of a family just as there are certain rules that are expected to be followed. Most of these things are never legalized or written down, but they are known nonetheless. You don't sit at Grandpa's spot at the table. You don't talk about a certain uncle's past. Everyone waits for Mom to sit down before eating. Stories of the childhood dog or the family trip to the Grand Canyon are told, and retold, and retold.

Every family has a canon. There are stories that everyone must know. There are foods that have to be eaten. There are rules that must be followed, and there are initiation rites that must be performed when someone new comes into the fold.

When someone new comes into a family, there is a trial period. Is the person worthy of this trust? Will they learn the rules? Will they cherish the stories? New families are formed as couples get together, children are born, and friends are made. Chosen families, families of origin, and families of procreation are constantly shifting. New stories are being formed. New memories are being made. New customs are being shaped. People age, mature, die, and it all keeps happening.

Paul's letter to the Galatians was written to a people struggling with the way they understood family. The Jewish people that Paul knew had their family. It was an ancient family. It was a family full of customs that were canonized in Holy Scripture. The Torah is full of family history, stories, customs, rites, rituals, and customs. Interpreting that family history was literally a full time job for some people—Paul included before he met Christ.

The families of the Galatian churches however, were having trouble figuring out the changing ways. New people were coming in, and they weren't used to new people. These new people had families of their own. They had their own rules, customs, and stories that they cherished. Yet despite all of these differences, they were trying to form a new family. This was a chosen family based on something they all agreed: Christ.

Christ and his followers had given them a new story. It was a story of grace, forgiveness, community, and radical equality. In the previous part of the letter Paul reminded them of their new story. It was the new story that they recited every time they received someone new: "There is no Jew or Greek. There is no slave or free. Nor is there male and female."

Yet Paul wanted to go farther. He wanted to make sure that they all realized that their new family was what really mattered. The new family of Christ was one that traced itself back to Abraham. God chose Abraham to be a family of blessing so that the world may be blessed. Paul is describing how this new family—which is actually an ancient family—is being formed.

There were some that were a part of the old family, but in that family they were minors. Now with Christ, they had come of age. There were others that were a part of a completely different family, but now they have been adopted. Together, the children of Abraham who were now come of age and the children who were adopted could form a new family.

This is the genius of Paul. He is describing something like a chosen family. Some were of one family. Others were of another. But now they are all equal parts of a new family. The old stories still matter but at the same time there is something new. Anything that keeps the family into different parts must adapt and change. Likewise, anything that keeps the family together must be held onto and celebrated (that is what next week is all about).

What matters most to Paul is that we are all adopted. We are in. We are a part of a new family. We all have different families of origin, but as a Chosen Family we are all adopted. So we meet over and over again and share the stories, eat the food, live into the rituals and rites that come along with being a family of blessing.

We welcome in new members of the family, share with them the stories of blessing, do our best to teach and model to them how the family works, and allow their gifts to help create a new thing. Always changing. Always ancient. Always adopted by God into the new family of Christ.

Next Week: Fruit of the Spirit
Galatians 5:13-25