

THE LESSON: ROMANS 8

The New Testament writers like to use the word “heirs” to describe Christians. The word appears in Hebrews, James, 1st Peter, and many of the epistles penned by the Apostle Paul (including Romans, which we’re going to look at today). Now, an heir is someone who has the privilege of inheriting money (and in some cases land and position) from someone who has died, usually a parent. But when the Bible uses this term to describe Christians, it is drawing upon this human image to make an important point: that we have a new relationship with God and it is one that is characterized by intimacy and privilege.

J.I. Packer touched upon this when he wrote, “Do I, as a Christian, understand myself? Do I know my own real identity? My own real destiny? *I am a child of God. God is my Father; heaven is my home; every day is one day nearer. My Saviour is my brother; every Christian is my brother too.* Say it over and over to yourself first thing in the morning, last thing at night, as you wait for the bus, any time when your mind is free, and ask that you may be enabled to live as one who knows it is all utterly and completely true.”

Through the work of Christ we have been adopted and made heirs of the most amazing parent imaginable. Not only does this mean we have a new relationship with our heavenly Father, but it gives us a new relationship with each other, and a new way of seeing ourselves.

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow the rule of prayer that you created for yourself.

(If you didn’t make one, try saying the morning and evening prayers from the “Forms of Prayer to be used in Families,” which begins on page 728 of the BCP. If you don’t have a copy, you can look it up here: <http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer>.)

Spend some time quietly considering what it means to be an “heir with Christ”. Close with this meditative reading adapted from Galatians 4:4-7: ***“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem us who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as his own children. And because we are his sons and daughters, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So I am no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. Thanks be to God”.***

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect, pausing to reflect after each phrase.

O God, whose blessed Son was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil, and make us the sons of God, and heirs of eternal life: Grant us, we beseech thee, that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves, even as he is pure; that, when he shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto him in his eternal and glorious kingdom; where with thee, O Father, and thee, O Holy Ghost, he liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. Amen. (COLLECT FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY, BCP PAGE 131)

ROMANS 8: **CHOSEN. ADOPTED. HEIRS.**

¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵For 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!” ¹⁶The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and 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.

¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God... ²³And 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. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

²⁶Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ... ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ... ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.