

SERMON

Ephesians 1:3-14

We are the Father's Children, his Chosen

Nunawading and Waverley, 3-1-21

People are proud of what they belong to: an aboriginal clan or nation, or a first nations people as we say now, or to have Italian ancestry, for example. We all look for an anchoring point, something to identify with and that will give us a sense of who we are. Stan Grant does not like to see himself only as an aboriginal person but a multi-layered individual. He said recently that he is more of an internationalist. God created us and placed us in families and ethnic groups but our primary identity is to be a child of the Father, to be his chosen. Our family history, the story we try to place ourselves in is only provisional.

It is great to see people welcomed, engaged with and accepted in our church. There is nothing more painful than standing in the foyer of a church you are visiting and not being acknowledged. All visitors must be seen as the Father's chosen, special and hand-picked children, touched by his love and his powerful redemption.

Look at how things are in God's kingdom. **He elected us in him before the foundation of the world...having decided before hand to adopt us as his children. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions flowing out of the riches of his grace. In him we were assigned an inheritance by a prior decision. Having believed, you were sealed by the promised Holy Spirit, who is the deposit of our inheritance...for the praise of his glorious grace.**

There is something here that is analogous to human families. Most parents planned to have a child. All of us are genetically related to our parents. Hopefully, children are loved and nurtured. Eventually, after many years, there is an inheritance.

It is only a pale reflection of what our Lord has done for us. Most parents over a few months, plan for a pregnancy but our Father **elected** each of us from eternity. Long before this universe existed, he chose each one of us by making a prior decision to save us through his Son. Unlike earthly parents, he knew who we would be

and how he was going to arrange for our salvation. Being a child of God or a believer in Christ had nothing to do with a decision we make but with our Father's thoughts and intentions about us. A lot of thought over a long period of time has gone into bringing you into his own family of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and all other believers.

I know that **adoptions** rarely take place now but this is the term Paul uses to describe our status as children of God. Jesus spoke of being **born of God, by water and the Spirit**. Both have in mind baptism, the sacramental union we have with the Father. Just think how much he wants to have you as his own son or daughter that he would come into the world as a baby himself to fetch us and take us home, a process that involves baptising us.

I spoke of parents nurturing their children, guiding and teaching them. I think back to my childhood, the rebellion and arguments, the lighting of fires and stealing, fights with kids at school and neglecting homework, not coming home on time etc etc. Yet, I was a pretty good kid. How wonderful to hear that our Father **forgives our transgressions out of his overflowing grace**. Every parent becomes resentful of the defiance and misdemeanours from time to time but finds the strength to forgive. Our Father's love abounds so greatly that he meets us with a grace that not only forgives but actually is so strong that it heals.

We move on to our **inheritance**, the eternal fellowship we shall have in glory which our Father has prepared for us. There, we shall shine like the stars in our glorified bodies transformed by the resurrection of Christ. In our present situation we receive a sum of money or a house of bricks and mortar. How small in comparison to the riches we have as children of God reigning in life with our Father.

Let me end by saying our Father has guaranteed our position as his redeemed children by sealing us with his own signature not by ink on paper but by the Holy Spirit poured into our hearts through baptism. God has to respond to his own Spirit within us by answering prayer and raising the dead.

Should not this news move us to praise our Father? As his children, his chosen, we will want to live to honour him.