

Text: Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7; John 1.12
St Stephen's

Dec 28th, 2008
Sun

"Into a New Family"

We are starting a new message series in the month of January, called '**Family Matters**'

The Sunday after Christmas is a good time to start.

- Our worship has been centered about the events that happened with a special family in Nazareth, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.
- Families gather at Christmas...

Today's passages pick up important **family images** : **birth and adoption.**

He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, the gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 1.12-13

John reminds us that People responded to Jesus in two ways:

- **Insiders Opting out**

his own people did not receive him

People of great spiritual privilege, turning their backs...

- **Outsiders Jumping In**

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, the gave the right to become children of God,

People flooded to Jesus, prodigal sons and daughters coming home...

The family grows!

Bringing someone new into the family is a challenge. Outsiders immediately **wonder if they fit.**

How does God bring us in? Two 'family' images...

He Brings us in By New Birth

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, the gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

The **idea that you could be born again** was so astounding to people that they questioned Jesus carefully about it when he taught it. The new birth does not just refer to a chance to start over, but also to a change in our nature that is so significant that it is like being born again. It is a change that starts when a man or woman comes to faith in Jesus. Right then and there – it may be a quiet moment of quiet prayer; it may be a thunderous season of upheaval and change where you cry out to the Lord to rescue you – that is when the Holy Spirit comes into you, enters into you and launches the new birth.

Natural birth gives you the likeness of the natural family. You carry all your families traits and characteristics. All the markers are there.

Supernatural birth changes gives you the markers of God's new family. You are changed from the inside out so that your DNA matches that of your new family. The markers of the new family are the presence of the Holy Spirit, the presence of Christ living in our hearts. This is what makes us new people.

He makes us 'fit' for his new family by new birth.

There is another illustration the NT uses about entrance to God's family:

He Brings us in By Adoption

God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children.

Galatians 4:5 (NLT)

In Roman culture, a wealthy, childless man could take a slave youth and make that slave his child and heir. The adopted person was no longer a slave. He became **a full heir** to his new family, guaranteed **all legal rights** to his father's property. He was not a second-class son; he was

equal to all other sons in his father's family. That person's **origin or past was no longer a factor** in his legal standing. **That is grace.**

Max Lucado says that **"Adoptive parents understand the grace plan better than anyone.** *Us biological parents know well the longing to have a child. But in many cases our cribs were filled easily. We decided to have a child and a child came. In fact, sometimes the child came with no decision. But not adoptive parents. Every child was a planned child, a dreamed for child. A sought after child. Adoptive parents understand God's passion to adopt us. They know what it means to feel an empty space inside. They know what it means to **hunt**, to set out **on a mission**, and **take responsibility** for a child with a spotted past and a dubious future."* Here's how Paul says it...

So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir.

Galatians 4:7 (RSV)

New birth changes your nature...

Adoption changes your name...

1) Isn't your natural Family Important?

Again and again God chooses natural families for his most important work:

- Jesus born into a family – raised and trained there, prepared there...
- First miracle at a wedding...
- Ministry bases were in households where he became a frequent and welcome guest: Lazuras, Martha, Mary, Peter's
- Used family imagery in his parables and teaching... (New birth and adoption)
- With his dying words created a new family...

Your Family is linked to God's Kingdom... a tributary for his life and ways.

Could this be a year of blessing for your natural family?

A year of healing for your family?

2) Isn't his supernatural family – his church – even greater?

Natural family:

For a while

My DNA

Limited

God's forever Family:

Forever

Bears God's DNA

No limits

3) Isn't it important that you respond to Christ?

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...

Receiving a gift...

Three facebook options:

"Friend"

"Ignore"

"Refuse"