

God Your Father Owns You As His Child

by James Jennings

This sermon emphasizes the profound truth of God being our Father as highlighted in the Gospel of John. It explores the unique relationship between Jesus and His Father, emphasizing over a hundred references to this in John's Gospel. The sermon delves into the significance of Christ revealing God as our Father, a milestone moment in the Gospel, and the implications of this truth for believers. It also draws parallels to earthly adoption, illustrating the depth of our adoption as sons and daughters of God.

Scripture: John 20:17, Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6, Hebrews 2:11, 1 Corinthians 10:13

Topics: "God as Father", "Our Adoption in Christ"

Description

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Transcript

Turn to the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John. In the Gospel of John, how many references are made of God the Father being Jesus' Father? Anyone want to take a shot at that? How many times? Specifically referring to God the Father being Jesus' Father? Forty-two? Over a hundred.

Over a hundred times. Now, one thing to remember, we've got the whole canon of Scripture right here. You get converted.

You follow Christ. You get a whole Bible. That was not the case in the early days.

Different believers. You might have just had Matthew's Gospel. You might have just had John's Gospel.

And these Gospel writers have different things they would emphasize. And one of the clear things throughout John's Gospel that is emphasized is Jesus Christ and His relationship with His Father. And over a hundred times, you have this reference to.

Now how many references are made about God the Father being your Father in John's Gospel? How many times when you go through John's Gospel does it refer to Him being your Father? I think there's only one time. One time, and that's what I want to look at this morning, and it's actually near the very end,

which is a very interesting time at which this truth is expressed to these believers. And one commentator, as I was trying to wrestle through what to share, I was reading some commentaries to check my own study, and he made this comment.

He said this is a milestone in the Gospel of John for it is the first and only instance out of 120 instances in which God is explicitly identified as Father of anyone except Jesus Himself. And so this is something very specific in this Gospel. The point at which this is explicitly stated that He is our Father as Christians.

And this isn't the same in every Gospel, right? You go to Matthews. Where does Matthews start using this language? What chapter? Yeah, 5 and 6. I think you have it ten times there. Pray to your Father.

What about in Mark? Where do you find out this idea of God being your Father? Not directly, but indirectly. Mark what? Mark 3, right? Jesus looks around and says, you are My brothers, mothers, and sisters, those who do the will of My Father. And so, we take this idea for granted, right? You tell a Christian that God is your Father.

It's like, yeah, I already knew that. It's such a common knowledge. But if we enter into the knowledge that people had in Christ today, even the disciples, there's certain truths that might be really developed in your mind and it was not as developed in the disciples' minds.

And we need to consider those because those can be truths that we take for granted. And we maybe need to reconsider that they might have a greater impact upon us. And so the point in John's Gospel that Christ brings up that God is your Father is after Christ has been raised from the dead and prior to His ascension.

And that's in John 20. And so you can turn to John 20. John 20.

And as you're turning there, let me just read some verses throughout John's Gospel that build up to this. John 3, the Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. John 5, for as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son also to have life in Himself.

She's talking about the Son and the Father. John 5, for the works that the Father has given Me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing bear witness about Me that the Father has sent Me. John 6, for this is the will of My Father that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise Him up on the last day.

John 8, they said to Him, therefore, where is Your Father? Jesus answered the Pharisees, you neither know Me nor My Father. If you knew Me, you would know My Father also. In Jesus and John 8, He tells them their Father is who? The devil.

The devil. John 8, I speak of what I've seen with My Father and you do not know what you've heard from your Father. John 10, for this reason, the Father loves Me because I lay down My life that I might take it up again.

And then you have this idea in John 15, but I have called you friends. Right? You've got that. Not a slave, but a friend.

John 16, because I go to the Father, you will see Me no longer. John 6, I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I'm leaving the world and going to the Father. He's been telling them this, preparing them for what's going to happen.

Yet, I'm not alone, for the Father is with Me. You see, John's just highlighting again and again, the Father and the Son's relationship. It's incredible that we're getting pulled into this, right? This Trinitarian love between the Father and the Son and the Spirit.

We're not outsiders as Christians. We're being pulled in. It's remarkable.

John 17, Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You. And then John 17, 24, well-known verse, Father, I desire that they also whom You have given Me may be with Me where I am to see My glory that You have given Me because You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

And then we get to John 20. So let's start. We won't read verses 1-10 for the sake of time, but right there you've got different people reaching the tomb and you find the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene, she came and saw the stone was taken away.

And then you've got Peter coming and the disciple whom Jesus loves coming. And then we start verse 11. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb.

And as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had lain. One at the head and one at the feet.

They said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? She said to them, You've taken away My Lord. I do not know where they've laid Him. Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing.

But she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking? So she's going to ask multiple times why are you weeping. Whom are you seeking? Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, Sir, if You've carried Him away, tell me where You've laid Him and I will take Him away.

Jesus said to her, Mary. She turned and said to Him in Aramaic, Rabboni, which means teacher. Jesus said to her, Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father.

But go to My brothers and say to them. So we're about to read the statement that Christ, post-resurrection, wants Mary to take and say to the disciples. And this is what we find right here.

Say to them, I am ascending to My Father. Well, we know that, right? That's been throughout the Gospel. That's emphasized again and again and again.

But look at the very next phrase right here that is stated. I am ascending to My Father and Your Father. To My God and to Your God.

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, I've seen the Lord, and that He had said these things to her. So He doesn't say exactly how she represented it, but she's relaying exactly what He stated to her. So we're going to consider this, brethren.

Think about our adoption and God being our Father. And I hope this will encourage you more about the Lord's love for you. But let's pray.

Father, Lord, here we are 2,000 years after the fact, and we read about these different interactions and happenings. We could almost visualize ourselves being there at the tomb or being there in the room when Christ appears and speaks peace to them. Lord, we read about it.

It's incredible. Father, we've got so much light, so much truth, so much knowledge. Lord, we want something obviously greater than the knowledge.

Lord, we do think about what is written in Romans 8 about the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit. We read in Romans 8 of one kind Abba, Father. And Lord, we want that.

And Father, I pray if there's any of Your adopted children here today co-heirs with Your Son, and it's not hit them, that You're their Father. Lord, I pray that You'd drive that truth home to them. Lord, that that would be not just an intellectual fact, but something that presses their heart in and makes them have a greater level of assurance.

Lord, that this all really is real. This isn't some theoretical adoption. Lord, this is the real deal.

We really are co-heirs with Your Son. And so Father, we thank You for that. We thank You for all You've done.

Lord, bless Your Word to Your people. In Christ's name, Amen. You know something how Christ addresses His disciples? We want to think about what He says.

Jesus never misspoke one word in His whole life. He never looked back and said He should have said something in a certain way. He spoke perfectly.

So every word of His is literally pure gold. Something to really, really be considered. And you know, Mary, we don't really know exactly what she's thinking right here.

He's given her a message to go and say to Christ's brothers. Who does she go to? Does she go to His biological brothers? No, she doesn't. We see right here verse 18.

She went and announced to the disciples. So clearly, those in view that He's saying what He's saying to are His followers, are His disciples, are the Christians. This is for you and I. This is for us.

And no doubt, Mary representing this to them in truths like Mark 3, my brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers are those who do my will. No doubt she could apply this to herself. That I am a sister of the Lord.

There's a real relationship here. And you can think all the more now that Christ has accomplished the cross. There is a sense through the Gospels of there's a progression here leading to it is finished.

And Christ is hinting at or more explicitly stating specific truths. And we kind of look at it after it's all been said and done. But there's certain truths Christ has been trying to tell the disciples and they've not fully grasped that.

Or He's had to repeat it again and He's had to state it again. But what a statement for Him to make to them. And what I want to consider is the point at which He makes this statement to me is incredibly meaningful.

After everything that's just happened to these disciples, for this to be the message that the Lord gives Mary to take to them that I hope you will see in a little bit is very, very striking. So I want us to be gripped with this reality. If you look at a few of the statements that are in this verse and what's being said, you see first, Jesus' relationship to God.

I know we know this, but look what He says, I am ascending to My Father. Right? This is His Father. The Father who sent the Son.

It's been completed. Right? How long has Christ been gone from the Father? How long has He been gone from the glories above? Around 33 years. It's been done.

He's fulfilled all righteousness. He's completed the mission. And He is going to ascend to His Father.

And then you have Jesus' relationship to us. John 20, 17. But go to My brothers.

And we saw it. The disciples. He's calling His brothers.

That's Jesus' relationship to us. He's our elder brother. You grew up wanting an older brother to look up to.

You have it in Jesus Christ. Right? The perfect example. And then thirdly here, our relationship to God.

I'm going to My Father, Your Father, to My God and Your God. And so clearly, Christ here in certain words is speaking about the amazing grace that's brought us basically stating we've been brought into the same position as the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is very much relating to us right here.

It's not just His Father. It's Your Father. It's not just me ascending.

You're my brothers. It's not just my God. It's Your God.

He's stating this in a striking, clear way after His resurrection, after He said it's finished, after all of their doubts, after all their denial, this is what He wants to communicate to them. And you know, obviously, most people in our world they think everyone is a child of God. They have this idea we're all children of God.

John is very clear. You're either a child of the devil or you're a child of God. Most people in humanity are children of Satan.

Children of the devil. Their will is to do their father's will. They've not experienced this adoption.

We're among those few who can say our Father, as Jesus taught, how to pray our Father who art in Heaven. We've got a Father. We really are children of God.

This isn't some hypothetical statement. And it's so direct here with what Christ says to them. And you go on from the Gospels, right? You've got this buildup in John where he finally uses this language.

And you've got it being spoken of in Matthew. And you've got this idea of God being our Father. But what happens after Christ even ascends? You've got statements that are far more clear.

They're much more clear. Listen to Romans 8. For those 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. Or Ephesians 1. In love, He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ.

Paul is stating these things after it's all been finished. The cross work is done and Paul is stating these things in such a clear, direct way. But when they heard this right here building up in the Gospel of John, what did they think of this? When did it hit Peter? When did it hit these guys that God is their Father? We don't explicitly know.

But what about you? Has it hit you that God is your Father? What happens when you actually adopt a child, right? We've had people, they've adopted children. You might adopt a child. They might say, Daddy, to the father who's adopted them, but you're wanting something more than just addressing him as dad or father, right? You want it to get to a point where that kid really realizes this is my father.

I really am his child. We want the same thing as Christians. We want it to really hit home to us.

So, let's think first here about what Christ says when He states, I am ascending to My Father. So, John 20, 17, Jesus said to her, Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father, but go to My brothers and say to them. So let's think about this first part of the verse right here.

Christ's statement to her of not clinging to Him. What's that about? What's going on there? Well, no doubt, He's trying to prepare her for His absence. This reunion that she has with the Lord.

It's a momentary reunion. It's not going to last. He's resurrected.

This whole process of getting to His ascension has started. And in a way, He's saying to her, do not think, Mary, that by grasping hold of Me so firmly, you can keep Me with you always. Don't you remember what I already said? In John 13, where I'm going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.

Christ's departing. They want to be with Him. They want to go with Him.

Christ is saying to Mary, this former mode of fellowship, it's not going to be resumed. It's not going to keep going. But Christ does have a message for her to take to the brothers.

To express something to them that I would say it's far greater than clinging to Me now. It's kind of like the truths earlier in John about the Spirit coming and being given a Helper. The disciples are trying to get their minds around these truths.

Christ is departing. He's going to the Father. Oh, and that's our Father, and He's going to bring us to Him eventually.

And then He's also saying, I'm sending a Helper to be with you. As much as we might comprehend this now, it wasn't that easy for them. As they're hearing these things, and Christ hasn't yet died.

It's all being lived out before them. They're facing trials, persecution. At some point though, these truths are going to hit home in their heart.

We need the same thing in our own lives as Christians. But the intimate relationship between Jesus and His Father, this language, Jesus uses the possessive pronoun, My, when referring to His Father, indicating His exclusive, inseparable connection with God. And you know what? He then turns around and says that's true of you.

So, you and me should be able to say the same thing. My Father. My God.

The same way Christ can confidently affirm that His Father is His Father, we should be able to say that as Christians about our Father and our God. And knowing Christ's desire is for us to come, not yet, but later at some point. We need this reality in our lives.

It's something I would say that's supernatural for God to make hit home in our heart. But here Christ is going back to His Father. The One Who He was with.

The One Whom He left to come down. And they had perfect fellowship for all of an eternity past. He left the glories above.

What's Psalm 24 about? It's the ascension psalm. It's about Christ ascending. And it uses the language in there.

It says that when the King of Glory comes back, it says the Lord what? Mighty in battle. Have you ever thought of that? Christ's life was a battle. And He was successful and mighty in battle.

And He's accomplished the mission and He's going back to the Father. And here He says this statement prior to that. I mean, there Christ, the Son of God who just called from the cross, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Who was sent in God's predetermined plan to suffer and die for the sins of His people.

He's going back. He's leaving the disciples. He's going back.

He will no longer have creatures spit on His face. No more will they take the rod and strike Him with the reed. You know what's going to happen? He's going to return one day with a rod to judge His enemies.

It says in Matthew, some slapped Him. And imagine being one of those people who slapped the King of Glory. You kind of see it in a kid kind of gets in a fight maybe.

Not my kids, I hope. No, probably this. And they go to slap another kid and the mother steps in the way and accidentally slapped their mom.

And they're just so embarrassed. They're so ashamed. These people, it wasn't an accident.

It was intentional. The slapping, the mocking of Christ. These disciples are witnessing this.

They're hearing Him say, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? And here we're at this point where it's happened. He's resurrected. And there's this short period before He ascends and goes back to His Father.

He's leaving these disciples. He's going back to that glory above. It's incredible.

But here we are. We're the other soldiers in the platoon and we've not completed our duty. We're not going with them.

We're stuck here. We've got to remain. And we're losing our captain.

And what just happened prior to this? Think of the blunders of the disciples. They did what? Peter denied Christ. Jesus says they all fled.

What happened prior to the fleeing in the garden? They had the most important mission, operation to get together and figure out what's going to happen to prey in the garden and what happened with the disciples. They fell asleep. You're going to call Jesus.

You're going to tell these people that Your Father is their Father. You're going to identify with them as your brothers. When they just fell asleep in a prayer meeting with you in your greatest hour of trial, they've just denied you.

They've just fled. Peter denies you before this girl. They totally don't understand your plan right.

And they take a sword to cut a guy's ear off. And you have to kill the guy's ear back and stop him from being physically violent. They don't even get what's happening.

And you're now finished the mission. You're going to go back to your Father? Part of you would almost think, who cares about these unbelieving ruts who weren't faithful to Me? And that's not Christ's message. I mean, I've got a message I'm going to give to Mary to send to My disciples.

What am I going to say to them? Well, you know, Mary, make sure when you get to Peter, really rebuke them. I mean, yes, let Peter have it. Tell them, quote to him in Revelation, the cowardly will have no place in heaven.

There are places in the lake of fire. Tell them this. Tell them that.

That's not what happens. I mean, if you were there and Mary gets there, and from John's perspective, such an emphasis on God the Father and the Son, and here at this point in this Gospel after over a hundred mentions, now it gets mentioned. I'm not saying they didn't hear this language already in Mark's account and Matthew's account.

I'm not saying that, but John emphasizes this reality right here in this verse. Go to my brothers and say to them, I'm ascending to My Father. And then Mary looks and says, and He said to tell you guys, she probably wouldn't have said it like that, to your father.

So right there you hear Christ say, you're My brother. And My Father is your Father. That to me would be an incredibly encouraging statement to hear after everything they just went through to have that affirmed right there at that point.

I don't see Christ trying to send a message to the disciples to reprove them right there. It's rather a message of encouragement. It's a message of affirmation right before He's going to ascend at some point in the near future and this is being affirmed to those disciples.

To me, that is an incredible statement. Don't cling to Me. What about us? I'm going to your Father.

Yes, I'm your brother. Have you not understood? Have I not been with you so long? I came to save you, not just to forgive you legally, but you're a co-heir with Me. Seated in the heavenlies.

Have you not understood? He's your Father too. It's not just my Father. That's why I said to pray to your Father in heaven because He's yours.

This is real. You really are adopted. He really is your God.

He really is your Father. At some point, it's got to click. If it hadn't already.

What a message. Your Father. To put us on equal footing.

You know, Votie Bachum preaches a lot on adoption and they adopted multiple children. And he doesn't even like when people ask which children are adopted, he doesn't even want to answer that. Because he feels like it's making a distinction still between the biological and the adopted.

And he feels like that diminishes the reality of adoption. If they really are my child now through adoption, why am I going to keep segmenting them? You see what I'm saying? It was very impactful in the sermon I heard of his just trying to emphasize that reality. We're co-heirs with Christ.

It says it in Romans 8. We've got to believe that reality. So here Christ owns us as His brothers and affirms to us that His Father is your Father. He didn't shame Peter.

And then when you see He gets there, the doors were locked, verse 19. Fear of the Jews. So, you know, Mary already affirmed to them these truths and they're still terrified enough to lock the doors.

I'm not saying locking the doors is wrong. But Jesus came and He stood among them. How is this happening? And look what He says to them here.

Peace be with you. Where is Christ? Really scathingly reproving these men. He's not.

I realize He says some things to Peter. But even with Thomas, you get later down to Thomas. Thomas who wasn't there.

And Thomas is saying, verse 26, eight days later, His disciples were inside again and Thomas is with them, although the doors were locked. Jesus came, stood among them, and said, peace be with you. Then He said to Thomas, put your finger here.

Because Thomas had said, verse 25, unless I see His hands and mark of the nails and place my finger into the mark of the nails and place my hand into His side, I'll never believe. What a statement! Christ is risen from the dead. Thomas has heard this and he's making a statement like that.

How's Christ going to deal with that? Eight days later, His disciples were inside. Thomas is with them now. And Jesus came again and look what He said.

Peace be with you. The same statement. Apparently, somehow, He knows about what was going on with Thomas.

Because verse 27, Jesus takes initiative. And He said to Thomas, put your finger here. See My hands.

Put out your hand and place it in My side. Do not disbelieve, but believe. Christ wants them.

He's working with them to encourage them prior to His ascension. He wants them to not disbelieve, but to believe. And honestly, these are incredible statements of peace.

They're incredible statements of a gentle, loving Savior to His disciples at such a time where they have failed Him in so many ways. Christ is not letting that impact Himself in His treatment of these people, but He's seeking to be there as a support to them in what He says. And you see Thomas' response.

My Lord and my God. Jesus said to him, have you believed because you've seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen Me and yet have belief. So you see Christ's treatment here? I really appreciate this.

And obviously, this is something we want to imitate. How do you handle those who are struggling as Christians? What does it say? Is it in Timothy? Restore them with a spirit of gentleness? That's Galatians, I guess, right? Galatians 6. So we want to have this type of character of the Lord Jesus Christ in our treatment of people. Jesus can affirm to them with these possessive pronouns indicating how real this connection is.

And we want to be able to believe these things for ourselves. By referring to God as your Father, Jesus is affirming that the disciples now share a family relationship with Himself and with God. They're not merely servants, followers, friends.

Is John 15 that language is used? They're actually part of the same family. In that word, your, it denotes a personal, individual relationship between each disciple and God. It signifies that the disciples as individuals have a unique and personal connection with God the Father.

And this adoption is not based on any merit or achievement of our own. It's based on the perfect achievement of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we can see that just in the context of everything.

We didn't read it, but what happened prior to this and the different failures of the disciples and their different unbelief. And as I mentioned, adoption, people tend to blend adoption and justification together. That's not a good thing to do.

Justification deals with the legal reality that we've been reconciled to God and we're declared legally righteous in a courtroom, but our salvation goes far beyond being legally reconciled to God. Where you view God as a judge and in His courtroom, we're legally declared righteous through Christ's righteousness. Amen, that's true.

But there's another reality that we are adopted. We are brought in as sons and daughters of God. And He actually wants to give us that assurance that we might cry, Abba, Father.

He wants His Spirit, who He's left with us, to bear witness with our spirit that we're children of God. You read in Romans 8, 16. You get assurance from the Word of God.

You get assurance from believing the Lord, but there's also this subjective witness of the Spirit of God in the Christian's heart where there's this reality, kind of like what Alex even was sharing in the first hour where he read that verse in Isaiah, and it's like it became known to him, I am the Lord's. There's that assurance given. You're my child.

The Bible speaks of that reality. So our captain, he was mighty in battle. We failed.

We let our vehicle into an ambush. And we got out and we ran terrified. And here, what does our captain do? He says, my Father, I'm going to Him, and He's your Father too.

Yeah, even though you guys just did everything you did, He's your Father. And He's my God and He's your God. He associates with you.

You're in the family. That's not been lost. All the more now, it's going to be true with my ascension and the words, it's finished.

This is all being brought about. These different truths, even different prophecies from the Old Testament that were spoken about. It's all being completed here.

Incredible. There's so much that could be said about the fatherhood of God. His tender care, His provision, His guidance toward His adopted children.

It's amazing He doesn't shrink from identifying with us. Christ was not forgetful of those He was leaving behind. He had, to me, such a good word.

To those He's about to leave behind. He's going to ascend. And you can't sit there and hear what Mary relays and think, oh, He's forgotten about us.

Rather, it's affirmed to you the Lord knows us. And though He will now be rich when He ascends, we're going to remain poor. Right? We're still going to be here with our bodies of flesh.

Though He'll be seated up there no longer despised, we're going to be despised here. And right at this point, to use the words of the writer to the Hebrews, He was not ashamed to call us His brothers. Why would Hebrews 2 even state that? He was not ashamed to call us His brothers.

You can be ashamed to want to identify with certain people, right? You feel that in your own life there are certain people you don't want to identify with. Christ had a thousand reasons to not want to identify with us, and He actually says, you're My brother. And My Father is your Father.

Hebrews 2.11, For He sanctifies, He makes holy those who are made holy, all have one source. That is why He is not ashamed to call them His brothers. You know, when you think about family and everything, many older brothers, they stand between the affections of their father for the younger children.

Right? They want to engross the whole of the inheritance. They want to have those who are younger just be dependent and not be left as beggars. But Jesus pitied those who were less happy than Himself.

He pleaded for us. And He shares with us in our miseries. And He's determined to make us partakers of all His honors and riches.

And He calls us co-heirs. I mean, that's just incredible. We've got the best elder brother possible.

Right? You know, when your parents die and you have all these siblings, and it's kind of like, oh, what's going to happen with the resources and the inheritance? Is there going to be a fight? Is this going to split the family? And that happens on earth. We're not going to struggle with that. With the Lord.

We should be incredibly grateful for our elder brother allowing us to be partakers with everything to be co-heirs. At this point, if you're one of the disciples, you're in that locked room. You've denied Christ.

You've even wondered if this is all true. You're like Thomas. I mean, your conscience must be in a sensitive and a convicted place.

There's anxieties. These are Christ's words to you. I'm going to My Father.

He's your Father. You're His child. Don't be scared.

Don't be afraid to go to Him. Own Him as your God. Own Him as your Father.

Who else in the Bible treated His brothers in such a way after their great denial? Joseph. It's incredible. There's so many ways Joseph is a type of Christ.

Just remarkable. I mean, he could have driven his brothers to despair, but he showed them great love and comfort at such a time. He said in Genesis 45, once he's revealed himself, he's resurrected, right? He's basically resurrected.

And it says, they thought he was dead. And he says, don't be distressed. Don't be angry with yourselves because you sold Me.

For God sent Me before you to preserve life. What a revealing of Joseph! What patience! What love! You know what? Joseph was a type of Christ, but I'll tell you this, Joseph was a man. He was a man just like you and I. And we see him in an hour of trial and how he's going to treat people who have miserably failed him.

We see him through the power of God respond how you and I want to respond. That's one thing to remember from this. We're called to imitate the love of Jesus Christ.

If Christ loves His disciples who fell asleep at the prayer meeting, who denied Him, who were overconfident and boastful, who fled all these realities that happened there, who questioned Him, who said, I won't believe unless I see the holes in the hands. If He treated them in such a way and said, peace be unto you, and Joseph treated his brothers in such a way, this is a call for us to love with this same love that Christ has. And you know what? While we do that, guess what's going to be happening? We're going to look like our Lord Jesus and imitate the Father.

And by this, what's John say? All will know that they are of me by how they love one another. How they love one another. Dear Christ, He doesn't disown the relation in which He has.

He affirms to them this reality. It's incredible. Well, think of this.

We are so adopted by God that when He judges the world, and He judges, what does He say? As much as you did to the least of these, you did to who? As much as you did to the least of these, my brothers, you did unto me. That's incredible. You see, there's all these truths throughout the Scriptures that point to this reality of us being sons and daughters of God.

And here our elder brother, he has sent the Spirit, and not just that, he has seated up there the Lord Jesus, and He is interceding for us. We have access to the Father through the Son. He's left us the Holy Spirit.

Studying for this, it reminded me of the statement our dear brother, our missionary in Nicaragua, Vest Chancellor, what does Vest say when he goes evangelizing? Who remembers? What does he say? Let's go find some of our brothers and sisters. That's what you're doing. You're trying to find your brothers and sisters.

You're trying to see others adopted into the family of God. And I thought about this, something I read on the news a while back, but there was a man in China, his son was abducted when his son was a little boy. He was out in the street and he got kidnapped.

And Guo Guangting, he spent 24 years searching for his son. As I read this, think of this for you as the Christian in evangelism. Okay? We need to take this guy's mindset, looking for our older brothers and sisters.

Bringing them to the Father. Giving them the Gospel of Christ. He spent 24 years searching for his son.

Mr. Guo traveled to more than 20 provinces. We go to every nation, every tongue. Around the country on the back of a motorbike chasing different tips people gave.

24 years. He drove 10 motorcycles to the ground in China, a country of a billion people. In the process, he broke bones in traffic accidents and even encountered highway robbers.

10 motorbikes were damaged. He carried a banner around with his son's picture on them. He is said to have spent his life savings on his mission, sleeping under bridges and begging for money when he ran out of cash.

That man did that for a biological son who was kidnapped. What if we could enter in and look at reaching the lost in a similar way? Because once they're saved and found, they're your brother. You see, so we've got a lot of our brothers and sisters, they're abducted, they've been taken.

They're captive to the devil. They're believing a lie. And how are they going to escape? We've got to go to them.

And like this father here, we're going around with a banner, and it's not a banner of the son's picture, it's a banner of the Lord Jesus Christ testifying of him. And this man, he spent his life savings on the mission. He slept under bridges.

And it says he begged for money. Don't do that. But he slept under bridges.

I mean, we wouldn't do that. Sleep under a bridge to find your brothers and sisters once they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. You can say to them, He's your Father.

You're my brother. That's what the Lord Jesus has told me in His Word. We're brothers.

It's an incredible reality. So, kind of in closing, two weeks ago, I tried to lay out that truth from 1 Corinthians 10:13. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man, but God is faithful and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability. But with temptation He'll also make a way of escape that you might be able to endure it.

And I would remind you of those truths in view of this reality of God being your Father. There it said God is faithful. Well, in the last two weeks since I brought that message, you've not found that a comfort to enter into a trial knowing at the beginning of the trial that it's going to be okay.

He's not giving me more than I can bear. I hope this affirms that it is your Father putting you in a test and He's not going to put you in a situation more than you can bear. And He didn't put the disciples in that situation either because He sends Mary with a message, then He goes Himself.

He gave them enough bread and truth that they needed to get on for that next month in their lives. And same thing for us as Christians. There's not going to be a season where it's as if there isn't enough food to live on.

The Father is willing to give you spiritual nutrition and truth in order to keep going on and not grow weary of well-doing. So God is faithful. It's your Father.

Your Father. For those who've been adopted and are sons and daughters of God. Salvation, this is no foster to adopt.

Right? We're going to have Him stay here a little while and if things work out, we're going to adopt a kid. That's not what the Lord does. He brings you in and you're a son.

And you know what? He does discipline those whom He cares for. We even heard that in the first hour. Our brother giving thanks to God's discipline in his life to grow him and praise God.

That's one of the evidences of sonship is that our Father spans us and deals with us in order that we might become more like Christ and share in His holiness. But turn right here in the end to Romans 8. Romans 8. The faithful God is your faithful Father. Romans 8. So then, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh, who live according to the flesh.

For if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you live. So through the Spirit's power, we kill sin.

Verse 14, For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For 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, Father, Father. Verse 16, The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit in our inner man that we are children of God.

And if children, then heirs. Heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ provided... so there is something to be aware of in this whole adoption here. Provided we suffer with Him.

So we're going to suffer. In order that we might also be glorified with Him. Verse 16, The Spirit bears witness with our spirit.

And I know many of you have heard one of the ways someone illustrates this text to help it kind of hit home. What is that talking about? It's like as a Christian, you're walking with your father and you're right there. He's embracing your hand and there's that sense of, I know this is my father, but some would say verse 16 is speaking about that moment where you're going through something that might be more severe and your father, he picks you up and holds you in the arms.

There's just a greater expression and assurance. This really is my father. Or I like to think about it like I said earlier.

You get adopted and you know on paper you're adopted. You know, this is my father now. He's adopted me.

But one day, as your father is loving you and you're seeing all that he does for you in your life, it's like you look at him and it really hits you. The Spirit really witnesses that in your own soul and you cry out, Abba, Father. It's like, He really is my father.

There's just a greater depth of assurance there. And you know what Paul says? This is something the Spirit does. The Spirit Himself bears witness.

I'm not saying there's some experience. You go and you seek after that experience. I don't have an experience, but children of God, as you walk with your father, as you seek to obey Him, He might indeed pick you up at certain points and give you that degree of assurance in a greater way.

And that's something that we can be grateful for to whatever degree that God gives that to us in our lives, where we just know in a refreshing way, He is my father and I am His child. One pastor, he made this statement. He said, what if I said part of my parenting is I never hug my kids? Right? That would be kind of a bummed deal, right? Never get hugged by your parents? Well, guess what? Romans 8, it's saying that's not God's parenting.

God does hug His kids. He does hug them through the Spirit of God bearing witness in your soul, where you can go and look at a text like John 20 in that verse, and you can read it, and it can hit you, He really is. He's not just their God.

He's not just Jesus' Father. He's my Father. He's mine.

He personally is my Father. And we sang it in one of those songs right there. God owns you as His child.

Amen, let's pray. Father, Lord, I thank You for owning us as Your children. And Lord, I know that I should be thanking You in a far greater way with far greater reality.

And Lord, that's one of my prayers that You would take these truths, this truth. And Lord, that any here today who, Lord, they might be suffering and struggling or like the disciples had recent failures in their own lives. Lord, that this would be Your message to them up there in that locked room of their heart with those doubts, whatever it might be.

Lord, that You would strike it afresh in their own soul. That You're not ashamed, Lord Jesus, to call them Your brother. And Father, we thank You that You're not ashamed of us, Your adopted children.

Lord, we thank You for all Your provision. We thank You for all You've done. We thank You, Lord, I thank You for Your discipline.

It is so encouraging the way that You grow us. Lord, even thinking of my brother Alex in the last four years and the ways You've grown him. And Lord, I'm just grateful You don't leave us in the same spot.

Lord, You're such a good God. You're such a good Father. Lord, we're thankful, Lord Jesus, for You to be our brother.

Lord, we have not seen You, and yet we do believe in You. Lord, that's what You said right there to Thomas. Blessed are those who've not seen Me but believe.

Oh Lord, we long for that day when we can see You, to behold You. Lord, there's so many distortions of how You look and portrayals of You. Lord, we want the real thing.

We want to behold You in all of Your glory. Lord, You're worthy of all worship and honor. Lord Jesus, I thank You for being mighty in battle, for really accomplishing redemption.

Lord, I just bless Your name. In Christ's name, amen.

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