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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
July 14, 2019
5th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Zechariah 13:7-9, Luke 9:18-24
Hymns: 466; 364; 473; 644 (244:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Galatians 3:26-29

²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Finding your Ancestry!

If you watch any TV at all you have seen the commercial spots advertising this service. They will start with a swab of your DNA and will search records and then they will tell you where you are actually from. Most of us Americans have a pretty good notion of our ethnic heritage. Some may even have a family tree or two tracing things back to the fatherland in Europe. Ancestry.com would like you to

believe that there is a surprise waiting for you. You may have an ancestry much different than what you have been told or have been led to believe. They send you a report that takes you on a journey into your past, perhaps promising you a better understanding of who you really are and what “makes you tick.”

That is basically the service the Apostle Paul was delivering to the Galatian Christians. And what is truly amazing is that same heritage report is accurate for you as well, and will indeed explain so much for you. It will help you see so much more clearly not only where you have come from, but also where it is that you are going in life.

Are you ready to hear --

THEME: Your Spiritual Ancestry Report?

It starts with the most astounding news of all!

I. You Are Sons of God!

Galatians 3:26-27 “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

Now this is a life changing find! You are sons of God! There are a couple of important notes added to this find. The first is absolutely essential because it contradicts a false assumption that is held by the vast majority of people in the world. Many religions claim that their adherents are children of God. Even people that aren't religious claim that all people, some even say all living creatures, are children of God. They hold to this truth on the basis of creation, (a creation which some also deny in preference for evolution, if that makes any sense at all.) So this world's claim of “son-ship” on the basis of creation ignores the fall into sin and its dread consequences of complete and total estrangement from God. Others do add the idea of innate goodness and righteousness that is to be found within people, claiming that since people do some good

things and that in their opinion people are more good than bad, they also qualify to be children of God.

All that nonsense is false, and it is just nonsense! From God's perspective, and He is the one who sees the heart of man; *"every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."* (Genesis 6:5) And *"the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth,"* (Genesis 8:21) and *"there is none who does good, no, NOT ONE!* (Psalm 14:3)

So we get back to our report that speaks to us of our ancestry, which declares that we are sons of God. How can this be if it is not by nature? Is there something that can actually change the dynamic of the situation? Indeed there is! The gospel of Christ crucified. Christ Jesus came into this world as our brother and fulfilled all the requirements of the law, and then took upon Himself our guilt, our sin, our condemnation, and carried it all to the cross where Jesus satisfied divine justice on our behalf. Then the Spirit came to us in His grace and sanctifying power, and in baptism we not only had our sins washed away, but we were dressed in the robes of Jesus' righteousness. That is the faith into which we were baptized, and that faith has taken hold of your hearts.

So the ancestry report declares of you, "You are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Not **BY** faith, or because I was able to come to faith, as if faith were the great work that I performed, but **through** faith, through that faith which the Holy Spirit worked in my heart and yours through the gospel.

Now the second point of special note that we might struggle with: why "**sons** of God" and not just simply enough "children of God?" Children of God sounds more inclusive, doesn't it? It is important that we understand a little history and remember the culture of most of the world to this day. In the world not all children share the same status before the law. There are lesser children, those who are children of second wives, or those who have

been adopted. Even in American law until very recent years it was still observed in some legal documents that “issue of one’s body” is held in distinction from adopted children and what they would inherit. So it is important that the status of those who are drawn into the family of God through faith is very clear. It is important to assure you of the certainty of your inheritance in heaven.

Remember that the Son of God became incarnate, took on our flesh and blood that He might be our brother to both save us from sin and death, and to secure our inheritance in heaven. That you have received status as **sons** through faith in Christ is a remarkable act of grace and a highlight of our spiritual ancestry report.

This report continues with even more detail that is important for us because of --

II. The Elimination of Vain Worldly Distinctions.

In this world we are extremely adept at making all sorts of distinctions between human beings. We see things as important that simply are **not** important at all, and that these things are insignificant before God in heaven is certainly true! The congregations in Galatian, mixed in their ethnicity, were being told by traveling false teachers that there was a big distinction between Jew and Gentile, and that carried over to God’s view of things. **Nonsense!**

Then also the Jewish believer was stuck in the tradition of women being separated by a wall from the rest of the congregation when they met in worship. And of course there are all those social and class distinctions that man observes, like whether one is slave or a free man. While God confers different roles and responsibilities on different people during this earthly pilgrimage, responsibilities and roles for which they are accountable before God, this does NOT carry over into God’s eternal perspective of how we shall stand before him in heaven, or even regarding our spiritual standing before Him right **now** as He regards us as His people.

We read from this *inspired* “ancestry report.”

Galatians 3:28 “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

That effectively throws out any ideas of superiority of one class of believers over another. We are ONE in Christ. All those distinctions we make in society, many of which are simply sinful and hateful, do not carry over into the Church of God. Race is nothing, nothing more than a difference in skin pigmentation, nothing more than a difference in the color of people’s eyes. Ethnicity or nationality, God doesn’t see that either. Our brothers and sisters in Christ that are in Africa or India or Nepal or Myanmar or in Canada, or in Mexico, are our brothers and sisters in Christ, We are ONE in Christ Jesus. What an amazing perspective to bring into our view of this family of God. Each and every one of us is who we are by the grace of God, through faith in Christ Jesus.

We celebrate this wonder of grace when we join together in the work of evangelism with our brothers and sisters in Christ. This week our Mission Helper teams had an opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus as Lord and Savior with many children in Tanzania and Zambia who did not know Jesus as Lord and Savior who is powerful to save. They could do this because of the opportunity God afforded us by bringing us together with African brethren. What a privilege! What a joy! What a blessing!

Now let’s get back to our ancestry report, because there is a big surprise left there for you!

III. You Are Abraham’s Seed.

Our text says --

Galatians 3:29 And if you *are* Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

This conclusion to our ancestry report is a little confusing in English because we use the word “seed” to be either singular or plural. In another verse in this same chapter of Galatians Paul makes a significant point regarding the promise of God that in Abraham and his Seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. (Galatians 3:16) Paul pointed to the fact that in **that promise** the word “Seed” is singular, pointing to one special descendant, and so it is pointing to Jesus as this all important Seed of Abraham.

In this last verse of our text Paul declares you are Abraham’s seed. Here it makes reference to the promise of the gospel being extended to include all of us who believe in Christ crucified for the forgiveness of sins. To understand this better let us refer back a few verses in this same chapter where Paul wrote:

Galatians 3:6-9 “Abraham ‘believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ ⁷ Therefore know that *only* those who are **of faith** are sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying*, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” ⁹ So then those who *are* **of faith** are blessed with believing Abraham.”

When the Lord says we are sons of Abraham He is telling us that we trace our *spiritual* roots back to Abraham whom God called out from his people to separate Abraham for the fulfillment of His gospel promise. He led Abraham to a strange and foreign land and made what man would regard as absurd promises to a childless old man regarding his descendants being as numerous as the sands on the seashore, or the stars in the sky. God told this childless old man that the one special Descendent he would have would be a great blessing to all nations.

Abraham didn’t scoff. He believed God, and that faith was counted as righteousness. Righteousness didn’t come to Abraham because latter he was circumcised, or because of

the law given at Sinai. Abraham was counted as righteous through faith. So we also who by God's grace believe this gospel of a crucified Savior (which the world regards as foolishness), well we also are counted as righteous with Abraham. **We** are the spiritual descendants of Abraham. We are included in that great number of descendants God promised Abraham, a number greater than sands on the seashore or the stars in the sky.

Why does this matter? It matters because it reveals God's plan for **our** salvation. We are not sneaking in the door by latching onto something that was actually not intended for us. NO! We were right there in God's mind's eye. He saw us. He knew us! He directed and planned for our salvation, yours and mine. God included **us** in this plan that He set in motion when He called Abraham out from his people. **We** are the children of Abraham through faith in Christ Jesus.

This goes back once more to the benefits of God's grace that extend to us. We are not intruders or usurpers of the grace of God. We are rightful heirs according to the promise of God delivered to Abraham. Yes, **our** spiritual roots, **our** spiritual ancestry has been traced back to the patriarch Abraham, and we shall inherit heaven with Abraham, and together Isaac and Jacob we shall bask in the glory of God and our Savior Jesus Christ! That is your spiritual heritage! What a remarkable ancestry report! Treasure this **grace** always until you know its fulfillment in heaven.

AMEN.

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Amen. (Romans15:13)