

Trinity - 5 November 2017
Reading: Ro 8:1-17
'Vision Sunday: Adopted as Children'

Introduction

- Being orphaned as child surely one of worst things can go through as human being. **III - Charles Mulli born in 1949 in Kangundo, Kenya. One morning at age of 6, Charles woke up in hut to discover parents - abusive father + abused mother - abandoned. From point on, lived life as orphan. Begged in streets of village for food. Worked as child labourer on coffee plantation. Spent 10 years living on streets until finally taken in by family and given home. But even then, life as orphan haunted. 'I was abandoned and rejected by my own parents. I felt completely hopeless. I felt rejected by my society. I needed something better. But I just wanted to commit suicide.'** Almost did. Tragic! Tragic because story like so many others in world.
- Stories like this really get to, don't? Something about experience of orphans really strikes cord in human heart. Fascinated by them. **III - Think of some of best loved characters in literature: Cinderella, David Copperfield, Oliver Twist, Mowgli, Anne of Green Gables, Paddington Bear, Harry Potter, Superman, Spiderman. What all got in common? Orphans. Reading BFG at moment to boys: who hero that? Sophie, little orphan girl. Drawn to stories about people who lost parents.**
- Why that? Wonder if because tap into fear wonder if all humans have, deep-down. Fear that adrift in life; that meant to be part of something bigger than self but now cut off from; meant to be in relationship, profound one, but no longer, and feel ache of that, even though can't remember who meant to be with. *Reason humans feel so deeply for orphans because part of us, deep down, feels bit orphaned in world selves?*
- What comfort does God give to in this fear, to this orphaned ache? Today's passage gives answer, and it good one. In gospel, God tells that not just forgiven sinners, or valued servants, but loved sons. In gospel, God tells not just justified or sanctified, but adopted, as children. And that once child, no safer place can be.
- That what going to be looking at today as think about vision as a church for future. Points: children of God; assured by Spirit; heirs with Christ; sent to world.

Children of God

- Paul been taking us on huge journey in his letter to Romans.
 - Started book in v. bad shape. In Ro 1-3, Paul gets straight to point: sinners, and nothing can do about that. Rebelled against God and, as result, headed for hell. Things looking bad and not one thing can do to stop.
 - But then, in 3:21, comes in with 'but' - what surely got be best 'but' in Bible! **Ro 3:21-22** *'But now a righteousness from God has been made known. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.'* Suddenly, in a stunning intervention, the guilty who deserve hell have been declared 'not guilty' and set free. Paul recaps it nicely in **8:1-2**. For those in Christ Jesus, now 'no condemnation'. How did do it? **8:3**. What human effort could not achieve, God achieved by sending own Son to die in place so don't have to. Taken 'guilty' and, if put trust in him, declared 'not guilty'. *Justified*.
 - Now, given what done, that would be pretty amazing if that all did. But not! Goes on to say in Ro 5-7 not only *justified* but *sanctified*: set free from power of sin and given new ability to serve as always meant to, made us no longer

- slaves to sin* but *slaves to righteousness* (6:18). Again, Paul gives lovely recap of in **8:9a**. *Sanctified*.
- But as if this not enough, Paul now tells gone even further with those saved! Not only *justified* us and *sanctified* us; *adopted* us, as his children. Now, even more than *forgiven sinners* or even *valued servants, beloved sons*: **8:13-14**.
 - What mean to be 'sons'? Certainly not gender specific: means 'sons and daughters'. What means *safe, permanent* and *personal relationship* with God.
 - First, *safe*. **8:15**. Now that child of God, no longer need to fear. Doesn't mean no longer need to fear in sense that no longer need to be *in awe of him*. Quite opposite. 'Fear of Lord' - deep sense that God God and not, and hence better do what says - 'beginning of wisdom', says Bible. No, not saying don't have to fear in that sense. What saying no longer need to fear *judgment* any more. No longer need to fear going to punish. All things ever did to deserve God's judgment now been dealt with, on cross. And because of that, can now come to him without fear, knowing totally safe in presence: like child. **III - Exactly how children relate to human parents, isn't it? Do most outrageously familiar things with us because know no reason to fear us. Come into bedroom and jump up and down on bed at 5am demanding pancakes because know no reason to fear us. Blithely ask for bicycle, iPad and pony for Christmas because know no reason to fear us. Tell all deepest fears + what worrying little hearts at bedtime because know nothing to fear. Because parents. Wouldn't get away with if not. Can assure, if complete stranger bursts into bedroom at 5am, starts jumping up and down on bed and asks for pancakes, he will have plenty of reasons for fear! But not Dan, or Sam or Mim (when learns to jump). Because kids. Got 'spirit of sonship.' Know safe.**
 - Second, *permanent*. When God initiates relationship with those forgives not temporary arrangement. Doesn't take into home for short period until gets back on feet and then sends on way again. No, takes home for good. Adopts. 8:15 lit. 'Spirit of adoption' or 'Spirit of adoption to sonship.' If worried that being 'adopted' makes somehow second-class sons, think again. Word Paul uses here one from Roman law, in which adopted child given all legal rights would normally accrue to natural. Both at law + home, no distinction drawn between adopted + natural children. All just 'sons'. Same with us + God. No matter what done in past or how badly sinned, once adopted, in family, for good, and just as much son to God as son never sinned and never left.
 - Third, *personal*. Listen to how Spirit urges us to address God: **8:15b**. 'Abba' most personal word can use to address father in Aramaic. 'Dad', or 'Daddy'. Name little kids use for fathers; name of comfort and warmth and intimacy. God tells to call him it: 'Dad'. What's really amazing is that this is name Jesus uses to call Father. See what Paul saying? In urging to call God, 'Abba', Paul saying believers not just children of God, but have status *comparable to that of Jesus self*. Staggering! Can't any get more personal than that.
 - Wonderful to be *forgiven*; but judge can always send home, alone, never to see you again. Great to be *servant*; but master will never love like loves kids. But to be *child* - permanent member of family, utterly safe in father's care, on most intimate terms imaginable - that what God wants to be. Not *just* saved sinners *or* servants but *sons*. In gospel, exactly what done.

- **App - If not Christian, this what God offering: to adopt. Not just to forgive, as good as is; not even to give new purpose in life, as good as that is; but to make darling son or daughter, totally safe in your relationship with, never needing to worry if going walk out on because never will, always there to curl up in a ball next to because Dad. That sense get of being adrift in life; meant to be in relationship with something or someone bigger than self; of being orphaned in world - can end. Have father! Loves! Enough to send only natural son has, Jesus, to die on cross for. What Christianity about. Gospel not about offering people advice; about offering orphans dad. Want that? Become child of God? Can have, now, if want.**

Assured by the Spirit

- Of course, can be *told* God's child, but how *know really true*? Because Spirit assures. **8:16**: Spirit testifies with our spirit that really are one of God's children.
- How does do? By making us cry out to God as our father and then realise that doing it. Spirit makes us cry out to God as father in prayer: **8:15b**. See, read that can call God 'Abba', 'Daddy' and picture really sweet scene, like child running up to dad for kiss. But in context, scene much more desperate. Notice that not just 'calling' God 'Daddy' but 'crying out' to as daddy, like child does when hurt. Though these words Jesus uses to describe relationship with God, can remember when uses? Garden of Gethsemane. Moment of intense anguish + pain. In these moments, when most in need, that God by Spirit makes us cry out to him, 'Daddy!', for help. When find self doing - turning *to* God in need, not *away* from him - that Spirit assures really must be child, because only people really God's children would ever turn to him as dad for help. **III - Tim Chester tells story of friend who adopted child from Russia.** *'Russell Moore describes how he was struck by the terrible, poignant silence of the Russian orphanage. Children learn not to cry out when no-one comes to them, when no-one cares for them. For a week Russell Moore and his wife played with their two future sons. They read to them, sang to them, held them, loved them. And each evening they walked out, leaving this eerie silence behind. And then on the last day the time came for them to go. They had to go back to the United States to complete the legal formalities before the boys could become part of their family. And Russell Moore says he felt compelled to turn back. He went back in and, quoting the words of Jesus, said: "We will not leave you orphans. We will come for you." And as they walked out down the corridor, they heard one of their sons scream out. The scream of a one-year-old: wordless, angry, desperate. And Russell Moore says it was the most terrible and lovely thing he ever heard. It cut him to the heart, but it was the cry of a son for his father. With that cry of anguish this orphan had become a son.'*

Heirs with Christ

- God makes us his children and assures us that we are by Spirit. But what ultimate benefit of being God's child? Inheritance receive. **8:17**.
- Logic inescapable: if truly child of God, then will also be heir. And what will be heir of? What son Lord Jesus heir of: glory. Hard to believe gospel really this good, but true. When die, will share in Jesus' glory in heaven. Share in joy. Bask in excellence. Inherit life, eternally. Why? Because now get everything gets, because coheirs with as God's children.

Sent to the world

- Why on about what on about at Trinity.
 - Why want to *make* disciples of Jesus.
 - Adelaide city of orphans. We can reunite them with Father. **III - Told Charles Mulli came close to committing suicide but didn't. What stopped? Man invited to church + learned had father. Not father like his human father, who abandoned him, but heavenly father who loved him, could keep him safe in Christ, would never give up on him, and who would be so close to him that Charles could call 'Daddy' in his prayers. Became Christian. What did do then? Thing seemed to make most natural sense: opened orphanage.**
 - What Trinity: orphanage, calling people back to Father. In power of Spirit, by preaching of gospel, can turn sinners into sons. Isn't that why want to make disciples of Jesus?
 - Why want to *mature* disciples of Jesus. Once people *become* children of God, want to spend rest of lives digging deeper and deeper into ramifications of that truth. That how will withstand trials and temptations of life. That what bedrock of joy will be: ever-increasing knowledge of riches of adoption.
 - Why want to *multiply* disciples of Jesus. Because once seen people adopted as children, and matured as children, why wouldn't want to see happen all over again, somewhere else in Adelaide?
- This great privilege of Christians: children of God, assured by Spirit, and heirs with Christ. Now this is mission: to be sent to world to invite others into family. Amen.