

Pako Evening Service: 12/06/2016

Scripture Readings: John 1:1-18; 1 John 2:28-3:10; Sermon: "Sons and daughters of the Living God"

Congregation, one thing that has become very obvious is that we live in a multi-religious society. Many people don't think it matters what you believe, so long as you are good and you do your best and don't hurt anyone, then you have a good chance of reaching heaven. But that is not what the Scripture's teaches. Scripture teaches first and foremost that God is holy, pure and altogether lovely, and we are unholy, impure and altogether unlovely.

The Scriptures also teach that because we are unholy, impure, altogether unlovely, let's call it sin, we are under the condemnation of God's wrath, or as Paul put it in Rom 6:23, "The wages of sin is death..."

However, before despair completely, the same verse also teaches that, "...the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." In fact, Jesus Christ is the only one way to the Father. John 14:6; comes readily to mind. "I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me!" Or if you prefer, John 6:29 – "The work the Father requires is that you believe in the one he has sent!"

And one of the things we need to believe about Jesus Christ is that He is the Son of God. This is vital for your faith to be true and right. No one else could have paid our debt. Only the sinless Son of God could make satisfaction for our sin. I mention these things for not thinks it is necessary to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Muslims certainly don't believe it, nor do the Jehovah witnesses, nor do many modern day Jews, nor do many other religions.

It is only Christians who confess Jesus as the Son of God and Saviour of sinners, and therefore, it is only Christians who can be regarded as adopted sons and daughters of God! It is not through Muhammad or some saint or anyone or anything else that we become children of God! And when people say that Jesus is not the only way to the Father, or the only way to be God's children, than they are denying Scripture's clear teaching in several passages.

For instance, they deny John 3:16 that "God so loved the world that He sent his one and only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in Him, may not perish but have eternal life! They deny John 14:6, and they deny the truth of Acts 4:12, "That there is no other name under heaven by which men can be saved."

Just think about it, if we could be saved, or if you prefer, be regarded as God's adopted children by some other means, whether it is some other sinful human being, or by our prayers to various saints, God would not have sent His one and only Son to be murdered on a cross!

In the early church the Arians taught that Jesus wasn't God's Son, but the first and best-created being of God. The JW's are regarded as modern day Arians. In response, the Christian church developed the Nicene Creed.

Part of this creed states the following: "We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of the same essence as the Father"

Now I want to back up a little. To say that Jesus is not the Son of God is one extreme. But there is an equally dangerous extreme and that is to say that all human beings are sons and daughters of God. Now in one sense, they are right. The Bible is fairly generous when it uses the phrase 'sons of God.' For instance, in Acts 17:28; Paul states that the pagan poets are right when they claim we are his offspring. In God we live and move and have our being whether we are Christians or not.

However, Jesus alone is the natural and eternal Son of God, and all God's other children are His creation. Think of it in this way. In this world, we have three different circles of people. All people are God's children. No one comes into existence without the Father's will.

He knows how we are formed. That's true of Christian and non-Christian alike. Just because people do not acknowledge God as Creator and Lord does not mean He isn't. People who die atheists will not be so for a second after they die! Sadly, those in this widest group of people have become so anti-God, so estranged from their Creator that the Bible calls them children of disobedience and objects of wrath (Eph 2:3). They are inclined to break all God's laws and especially to hate God and their neighbour!

Thankfully, because of God's common grace it isn't as bad as it could be, however, when I see what is happening in Northern Iraq, Syria, and what even happened in Christchurch after the earth quakes with looters being arrested within hours, it is not that difficult to see that people do hate God and their neighbour. So that's the first and widest circle.

The second circle within that wide first circle, are people who God has called out of darkness into the marvellous light of His Son. This has been made possible purely because of God's special grace as Eph 2:4-5 makes clear. "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved."

It is only because of God's lavish love poured onto us in Christ, that we may again be called children of God, or adopted as sons and daughters of God. It's not because we are so good, or that there was something particularly good in us, but purely God's grace!

So, within the wider circle there are Christians, people who acknowledge Jesus as God's only Son and as their Saviour and Lord. Gal 3:29 "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Third, we have the last circle, and there is only one person in that circle and that is Jesus Christ. In John 3:16, the original Greek speaks about an "Only begotten Son." The word 'only' is also used in Luke 7:11-17 of the 'only' son who had died of the widow from Nain.

The use of this word highlights how precious, beloved, or favourite this Son was to the Father. And that is why John 3:16 carries with it such a huge amount of pain and compassion, "God so loved the world that He gave his One and Only begotten Son..." Don't think for a moment that this was an easy thing to do!

The word "begotten" comes from the word beget, which means to get something of the same kind as yourself. A man begets children, a dog begets puppies, a cat begets kittens and so on. So the essence and nature of our parents is communicated to us in part by our parents.

So it is with Christ. The divine essence is communicated from the Father to the Son wholly according to his divinity. Jesus is the natural and only Son of God, begotten from the Father. Jesus alone according to his human nature is the Son of God by the grace of his conception through the Holy Spirit. However, that Jesus is God's natural and eternal Son is something beyond our understanding. It is impossible for us to think that through.

We accept that by faith, but not a blind faith. We know that there was never a time when God was not the Father, nor the Son the Son. There are plenty of texts to prove that. In the beginning God - God who? God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

John 1:1; "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (14) "...and he became flesh and made his dwelling amongst us." (18) "No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known."

So, the question when Jesus became the Son of God is invalid. He has always been the Son of God. Now Scripture teaches that those who believe in Jesus are adopted children of God, adopted by grace through Christ. What does this mean? Allow me to use an every day example.

In families, strangers do not have the same rights as children. For instance, only my brothers and sisters have the right with me to call my parent's father and mother. However, should my parents have adopted a stranger then they receive all the rights of the children.

Likewise, to become a child of God is something that happens to us, it is not something that we do. God does the adopting and He does it "by grace through Christ."

And yet as true as that is, it does not give us the right to be totally neutral. Yes, on the one hand, it is God who quickens us to new life by the gracious work of his Holy Spirit. However, it would be wrong to think that we can be part of God's family while our will is in neutral.

God did not make us puppets. John 1:12 says, “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” The wonderful gift of salvation must be received. And receiving, is believing in Jesus. We must yield ourselves to Jesus Christ.

As parents we deal with this most days. We not only tell our baptized children that they are adopted by the heavenly Father, but we also ask them to acknowledge Jesus and to believe in his name. For it is a wonderful privilege to be adopted by God into his family. To be sons and daughters of the only true living God makes us rich! Some of those riches we already experience in this life, such as knowing that death is not the end but the beginning of eternal life.

We know that He hears our prayers and intercedes for us. We know that whatever happens in this world or in our own lives that God is working his purposes out for his glory and the benefit of his people. Yes, how rich we are to be sons and daughters of the living God.

Just like the Son shares in his Father’s glory, so too we share in His glory. Rom 8:16, reminds us, “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.” Just as well he does, for otherwise we would never believe it.

The Apostle John in his first letter brings out the same amazement and jubilation. Ch 3:1 “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” And that is why we call him Lord! We acknowledge His great cost to make us His children. This cost was experienced by the Father and the Son. To think that the Father would send him into this world to dwell amongst sinners, while we were still his enemies, and to experience our pain and sorrow and fears, is really beyond our comprehension.

And if that were not enough, the only Son obeys His Father’s will to be crucified for our sins so that we believing may be called sons and daughters and be given eternal life! The cost wasn’t gold or silver or barrels of oil – they were God’s already! The cost was God’s Son’s own precious blood! By his death He has freed us from the hold of the devil so that we can live for Jesus as Lord.

That’s why we profess “that we are not our own but belong, body and soul, in life and death to our faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.” And although our adoption is wonderful news for us and we sing it and shout it from rooftops, there is something within us that sometimes restrains that jubilation.

Our adoption as God’s sons and daughters causes a gap to appear between our unbelieving neighbours and us and sometimes even in our families, which is very painful. It causes us pain to think that our unbelieving neighbour or family members are not Christians. And that’s why we don’t not run from them or shun them, but we reach out to them because our own wonderful salvation creates within us a new kind of concern.

The gap between us and our unbelieving friends and family may indeed be wide, but spiritual separation does not mean physical isolation. If our adoption means anything, surely it means to show the same compassion that God showed for us.

In Christ, we learn to love with the love that God is, revealed to us in Christ and that has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We have so many privileges being God’s adopted children, so much joy to share, and there is more to come.

One day we will experience the full glory of being sons and daughters of the living God. There will be a day when we sit in our Father’s living room. Wow, what bliss that we be.

Shall we speculate, I think not. Rather, let it move us to clean and righteous living. The more we leave the life of sin, the more we get closer to our real home. We must all behave as worthy members of that family.

If you need an example to follow, then look to your eldest brother, the Lord Jesus, for without him, we could never be called sons and daughters of God! So as you go into another week, don’t just think of your earthly mum and dad or the picture on the wall.

Remember to think about your adoption – what it cost and how great it is to now be called children of the one and only living God. Amen.