

Adoption

St. Brandon's

Exodus 2: 1-10; John 19: 25b-27

26th February 2017

Letters A D O P T E D held up by children / youth if possible in random order – anagrams of 3 or more letters:

add, ado, ape, apt, dot, odd, opt, pot, pea, pet, pad, pat, top, tap, tea, toe (16)

aped, date, dope, dote, pate, poet, tape, toad, tope (9)

adept, adopt, dated, depot, doped, opted, taped, topped (8)

6 letter words?

7 letter words? adopted

Hang ADOPTED up on rope.

OT reading

Who was adopted in our OT reading? Moses

Did Pharaoh's daughter have to adopt him? No, though he might have been killed if she hadn't. But she chooses to adopt him.

What did adoption mean? New mother eventually; new status (grandson of Pharaoh); new set of relationships; but losing of old set of blood and Hebrew family relationships; privileges of being in a royal household; perhaps some rejection (what's a Hebrew boy doing in Pharaoh's household?); perhaps some danger as a result.

Key points: Pharaoh's daughter chooses to adopt Moses; status change; new set of relationships; privileges.

Gospel reading

Who was adopted in our Gospel reading? Mary but also John (disciple who Jesus loved)

What did adoption mean? A new member of the household; mutual commitment to each other; new relationships; security (perhaps she wanted to stay in and around Jerusalem to be with the disciples, and her own family was back in Nazareth and couldn't support her from that distance)

Key points: new relationships; privilege of security

Your / our experience

Has anyone here had experience of adoption in their immediate or wider family? Hands up.

We have just become grandparents to an adopted grandchild – our first son and his wife have adopted a little girl of 3 to join their two sons who are 8 and 7. So it's helped us to experience what adoption is like. For a start, they didn't have to adopt, but chose to do so. They are lavishing love on her as just as much one of the family as her two brothers. She is experiencing an almost bewildering range of new relationships, and still working out who is who, and how we all fit together.

Two things in particular have struck us. One is that she will inherit 1/12th of our fortune. Now that may not amount to very much, particularly given the numbers of pairs of shoes I'm told we still need to buy, and the

possible costs of old age. But my initial reaction was, “What has she ever done to deserve 1/12th of whatever is left of our fortune?” And the answer is, of course, nothing. It’s a gift, and a gift that she will inherit. The second thing is that Alison has a postcard which has been handed down to the first daughter in her family. So Alison’s grandmother gave it to her mother when she was 8 in 1929; and Alison’s mother gave it to Alison when she was 8 in 19 ... the middle of the last century. There’s writing on the back recording these events. Its value is clearly sentimental, but Alison’s initial reaction was, “Oh! Do I want our new adopted granddaughter to have it?” And yet, following four sons and five grandsons, and therefore as the first daughter, albeit granddaughter, it’s clearly hers, and she will inherit it when she is 8 and, we hope, treasure it.

So what about us?

Well, it’s interesting that adoption as sons and daughters is a key way in which the Bible describes our relationship with God. We’re probably familiar with the idea of being God’s children mostly because we’ve learned to call God “Father”, or “Daddy” even. In the famous prologue to John’s Gospel, we have these words:

“But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.”¹

But in the Epistles of St Paul, the idea of adoption becomes much more worked out:

“God destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”²

Do you see how God chose to adopt us, decided to adopt us, of His own free will, out of His love for us, and not because He had to? Do you see the change of status we experience as we become God’s children?

Listen again:

“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For ... you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.”³

Do you see the new set of relationships, as we join with God’s other children and with our brother Jesus in an extended family? And do you see the inheritance which we have, as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ?

So:

Adopted by God as His child out of His own free will and love;

Given a new status in God’s family;

Given a new set of relationships with God Himself and others to enjoy;

Given an inheritance that no one can take away.

And perhaps, as you come forward this morning to receive communion or a blessing, as you walk under the letters which spell “Adopted”, you might both try to realise more fully what that means for you, and thank God for it. Amen.

¹ John 1: 12.

² Ephesians 1: 5-6.

³ Romans 8: 14-17; see also Galatians 4: 5-6 which is very similar.

Communion prayer

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ

which he gave for you,

and his blood which he shed for you,

or the blessing which he has for you.

Come in remembrance that he died for you,

and that you are an adopted child of God,

and feed on him in your hearts

by faith with thanksgiving.