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Sermon Notes

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A Light Shining in a Dark Place: The Glory of Adoption

John 1:12-13

- Recently scientists have discovered a vast, subterranean lake in the Antarctic called Lake Vostok. It is near the South Pole, and near the Russian outpost called Vostok Station which recorded the lowest temperature on earth (-129F)... it is covered over with over 2 ½ miles of ice, and is 500 feet deep! I would imagine the bottom of that lake is the coldest, darkest place on earth

This place is cold, and dark physically...

But in this world of sin, there are some pits that seem to the soul every bit as cold and dark... and Satan specializes in crafting those places and leading the human race to fall into them

Today is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday... as we continue to speak out against the horrors of abortion and its continued legal status in our country, I want to speak most powerfully against the darkness and despair that characterize abortion

I want to speak of the light of hope in Christ, or the power of hope that Christ alone can bring to hopeless situations... and I want to stand in the heritage of our Christian ancestors—brothers and sisters—who let their light shine to rescue perishing infants in every generation of church history

Most of all, I want to speak of Christ, the Light of the World, and of the joy of adoption in Christ's name... a light shining in a dark place

Thinking about ADOPTION

Three families: Brad and Christine Estes; Cameron and Laura Mauro, Paul and Miranda Martin

Looking at Sanctity of Human Life Sunday... I thought what a joy to proclaim the light of Christ, specifically through adoption, in some very dark places in human experience

I. Sin Causes Dark Places

A. Dark Place #1: Becoming an Orphan

1. What could be more powerless than a child without parents?

CARIBOU: up near the Arctic circle, newborn caribou can run with their herd almost immediately after birth; newborn humans are totally helpless... how much more orphans

- a. In Kenya, life in the Mathare Valley near Nairobi... thousands of children spend the whole day clawing through huge piles of garbage looking for something to eat... many of them are orphan

2. Worldwide statistics unclear

- a. Present estimate: UNICEF estimates as many as 210 million orphans worldwide; the United Nations has the number at 143 million
- b. Perhaps as many as 15 million children orphaned by AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa
 - i) Extremely difficult situations... both parents and all adult relatives in a community dead from AIDS
 - ii) Leaves young teenagers in charge of multiple children... some teens unable to cope with the responsibility commit suicide
- c. Still more orphaned by war in the Sudan and Uganda
- d. In the US itself, 118,000 children await adoption; there are 300,000 churches in the US, thus less than one orphan per church

3. The DARK PLACE of being an orphan

B. Dark Place #2: A Crisis Pregnancy

- 1. For a young woman, few things in life can be as shocking or scary as an unwanted pregnancy
- 2. Satan is especially active in creating these devastating circumstances
 - a. He motivates the act that produces the unwanted infant in the mother's womb
 - b. MORE THAN THAT: he pulls the strings on the hearts of both mother and father causing them not to WANT the child... to not WANT ANY child... to learn to hate not only marriage but children
- 3. Depression sets in... options all are painful... fear of the future, questions: "How will I raise this child? How will I pay for everything? What will happen to me? Will anyone want to marry me? Will I be able to do anything I want to do?"

C. Dark Place #3: Abortion

1. The wicked scourge of abortion continues to plague our country and our world
 - a. There are 46 million abortions performed every year worldwide; about 1.1 million per year here in the US
 - b. 95% of abortions performed in our country are done for birth control reasons only
 - c. 20% of all pregnancies in the US end in abortion
2. Of all the many things to hate about abortion, one of the things I hate the most is the Satanic HOPELESSNESS that causes women to harden their hearts against the most natural affection in the world: their link to their own baby
3. In my pro-life ministry in Boston, I was so frequently struck by the hopelessness of the women who sought abortions
4. They looked sick, terrified and hopeless... they had been sold a bill of goods by Satan himself that their lives would now come to an end because of an unwanted pregnancy
5. Amazing to me: for all the “pro-choice” rhetoric, many of these women spoke of having NO CHOICE

D. Dark Place #4: Infertility

1. So many couples struggle with infertility
2. They yearn to have a baby, to raise children, to nurture a family, to leave a legacy
3. But now month after month, flickering hopes are doused by buckets of reality
4. Before long, the couple is wondering if they can ever have children... they succumb to medical tests to determine the problem
5. Depression sets in... feelings of guilt or despair; some are even tempted to question God

E. The Ultimate Dark Place: Being Outside of God’s Family

1. Nothing can be more terrifying than knowing you are on the outside looking in when it comes to the Kingdom of Heaven
2. The darkness of sin, the fear of death, the terror of hell... all of these make lostness the darkest point on the earth

3. The metaphor of darkness is used again and again to describe what it means to be outside of the family of God

John 3:19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

1 John 2:11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.

F. In Christ, Adoption Is God's Answer

1. My purpose this morning is to show how beautifully adoption is one of God's most gracious answers to these
- 2. Adoption: to take by free choice in a formal legal act a child born of other parents) and make him/her your own child.**
3. Adoption brings joy to the **orphan** by giving them a home and a family where there was total loneliness, by giving them provision when before there was want, by giving them love when before there was rejection, by giving them security when before there was dangerous instability...
4. Adoption brings relief to the **woman in a crisis pregnancy**: she no longer needs to worry over the years or stable provision she is unable to give her child, but is able to entrust that responsibility to a godly couple who can give a good life to the child
5. Adoption frees a woman in such circumstances from considering **abortion**... she is no longer faced with having NO CHOICE, but she has a life-giving choice
6. Adoption brings joy to the **infertile couple**... they are able to have a family and raise that family to the glory of God
7. Above all, adoption brings joy to every sinner in danger of hell: no longer aliens and strangers, we can now be members of God's own family:

John 1:12-13 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

II. Jesus is the Light Shining in the Dark Place

John 1:1-5 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life,

and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

A. Jesus' Unique Position: Only Begotten of the Father

1. The opening words of John's gospel clearly harken back to Genesis 1 and original creation
2. In Genesis 1, God speaks into darkness, "**Let there be light**"... John tells us that Jesus' life is the light God speaks into the darkness of human history, human sin, human despair
3. BUT MORE... relevant to the question of adoption is Jesus' utterly unique position in relation to the Father

NAU John 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

"Only begotten" = in a position utterly unique in relation to the Father

Whereas all of us can be adopted into God's family through faith in Christ, Jesus is eternally begotten of the Father... the only begotten Son of God

B. Jesus is the Light of the World

John 1:4-5 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

1. In this position, Jesus' entry into the world is the ultimate gift of light and of life
2. Life is found only in Christ... and when Christ entered the world, He did it to bring light to all the dark places on earth
3. The analogy of Jesus and light is used again and again

Isaiah 9:2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

John 8:12 Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

From the very beginning of the history of redemption, Christ's life has been the only light in the dark place of this world

So it is that Jesus alone can shine into the despair of all these dark places: for orphans, for women in a crisis pregnancy, for those contemplating abortion, for infertile couples, and for all lost people who know they are on the outside of God's family

C. The Light Must Be Revealed

John 1:5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

1. John says the darkness cannot “comprehend” the light... the Greek word may refer simply to understanding who Jesus is
2. Later in this passage it will show that the world did not understand Him; even Jesus’ own people, the Jews rejected him:

John 1:10-11 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

3. Other scriptures reveal why:

2 Corinthians 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

4. Only when God reveals this light directly to our hearts can we be saved

Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

When a person in a dark place turns to Christ, then and only then can God’s hope begin to flood into their heart

D. The Light is Eternally Victorious

1. A second way to understand John’s statement about Christ’s light is this:

ESV John 1:5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

2. Satan puts up all kinds of defenses against Christ’s light, against Christ’s hope... but darkness CANNOT defeat light!!

III. A Most Gracious Light: Adoption in Christ’s Name

A. The Power to Become Sons: John 1:12-13

John 1:12-13 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

1. Adoption, though not mentioned in John 1, is clearly implied
2. Context: Christ rejected by the world, and specifically by His own people

3. BUT some people would receive Him... would believe in His name... that He IS the only begotten Son of God
4. Anyone who does that IS BORN OF GOD... God has created life inside their hearts
5. With that life comes ADOPTION... the “right” or “power” to become a child of God
 - a. Greek word “exousia” could be translated “right” or “power”... like authority

John 5:27 Jesus has authority to judge all human beings on Judgment Day

John 19:10 Pontius Pilate has authority to crucify or release Jesus

It also means “the right to do something”

Revelation 22:14 "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

We have been given the right, the power, the authority, the infinite privilege of being adopted as the children of God

b. it is a legal standing, a power in the eyes of the law

6. John is clear that this is adoption without using the word because of verse 13:

ESV John 1:13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

“Not of blood” = not a genetic relative... Jesus is the “only begotten Son” (vs. 14)—“monogenes” ... the only one of His KIND

We are of another KIND but every bit as much Sons of the Living God!!

HAS THIS HAPPENED TO YOU??? Have you received Christ, believed in His name?

I plead with you to trust in Him today... to believe that His death on the cross was for YOUR SINS, His resurrection from the dead was for you to live forever

B. Predestined for Adoption: Ephesians 1:5

Ephesians 1:5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will

1. Before the creation of the world, God chose us and predestined us to be ADOPTED into His family

2. Predestination is linked with adoption TWICE, actually

Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

3. This was God's eternal plan, crafted from the foundation of the world

C. Given Love and a Name: 1 John 3:1

KJV 1 John 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God

1. When a child is adopted, that child is now in a new relationship with the family

2. He can call his new father "Daddy" and his new mother "Mommy"

3. And the Daddy and Mommy can give to that child a love reserved only for children... the special love a father or mother has for their own children

4. AND that child now legally bears the name of the Father... there is a legal identification... God calls us by the name "Sons of the living God"

D. A Permanent Place in the Family: John 8:35

John 8:35 a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever.

1. Foster families are impermanent... children can be moved frequently

2. Adoption changes all that... with adoption comes a permanent place in the family

Anne of Green Gables: Anne Shirley, an orphan, brought to the home of an old spinster and her unmarried brother, Matthew and Morilla Cuthbert

BUT THERE WAS A MISTAKE!! They had wanted a boy to help in the fields; instead they got a talkative girl ... rather than returning her to the orphanage, they decided to put her on trial; if she were on her best behavior, they would consider adopting her

Well, she got into one misadventure after another... yelling at a neighbor, smashing a chalk tablet over a boy's head for insulting her, dying her hair green; seemingly having stolen a piece of jewelry

All the while she was terrified that they were going to reject her and send her back to the orphanage

BUT through it all, she somehow captured their hearts; they decided the trial period was over and they adopted her

She was now a legal member of the family, and a permanent one

Her sins and her troubles in no way jeopardized her status as a child of that family

HOW MUCH TROUBLE WE HAVE IN BELIEVING THIS!!!!

We think we're still on probation!!

In order to conquer that, God has given us an incredible gift... the INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT, called in Romans 8 "the Spirit of adoption", in Galatians 4 "the Spirit of His Son" and in Ephesians 1:14 "the deposit guaranteeing our inheritance"

E. The Spirit of Adoption, Our Guarantee of Inheritance: Galatians 4:1-7, Eph.1:14

Galatians 4:4-7 when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

1. The Spirit of Jesus, the spirit of adoption within our hearts cries out "Abba" Aramaic for "Daddy"
2. It's what Jesus cried in the Garden of Gethsemane...

Mark 14:36 "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

3. This is the greatest evidence we have that we are adopted
4. And when you are adopted into a family, you become a LEGAL HEIR, with an inheritance as rich as the Father is willing to give... and the Father is willing to give us a share in the New Heaven and New Earth
5. The indwelling Spirit is a deposit guaranteeing that full amount

Ephesians 1:13-14 Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession-- to the praise of his glory.

The concept is of a wealthy father who leaves his children an estate from which their needs can be met fully until they reach an age at which they can receive their full inheritance

The child is an heir; someday he will have the full inheritance... but for now there is this stipend

So is the indwelling Spirit crying ABBA Father within our hearts

F. Partakers in Christ's Suffering and His Glory: Romans 8:15-17, 23

1. If we are members of the family, we share in its sorrows and its successes equally
2. So Paul speaks of our adoption in these terms:

Romans 8:13-17 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of ADOPTION. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs-- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

The indwelling Spirit, the Spirit of Sonship, leads us to HATE SIN as much as the Father and Jesus do, and to wage war against it

If we follow the leadership of the Spirit well, we will grow in Christlikeness

That war will indeed result in great suffering: both the suffering of personal holiness and the suffering of persecution at the hands of unbelievers ; If we are co-heirs with Jesus, we must share in these sufferings...

G. Discipline: Hebrews 12:7-8

1. we must put sin to death by following the Spirit moment by moment
2. We must battle the flesh
3. If we rebel at a given moment, yielding to temptation, we will not be evicted from the family
4. NO... we have a permanent place in the family!!
5. But our adoptive Father will treat us as legitimate sons: He will discipline us as we disobey

Hebrews 12:5-8 "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.

H. Sonship Consummated: Revelation 21:7

1. At the end of the ages, our sonship will be consummated in our resurrection, as Romans 8:23 says
2. Future glory: a resurrected body in a resurrected earth

Romans 8:23 we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

The creation is groaning and waiting for liberation from decay

Someday, the world will be born anew into an eternally perfect form: the New Heaven and New Earth; And so will we!! This will be the consummation of our ADOPTION: the **resurrection of the body**

3. Revelation says it is at this point, in the New Heavens and New Earth that we receive our full inheritance as sons of God

NAU Revelation 21:7 "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.

IV. Application: Shining the Light Now

A. Thanking God for Our Spiritual Adoption

1. God has given us the right to become children of God
2. God set His love on us and predestined our adoption before the foundation of the world
3. When we believed, God set His adoptive love in our hearts and called us children of the living God
4. God put the spirit of adoption in our hearts calling ABBA father
5. God gave us the Spirit as a deposit guaranteeing our full inheritance
6. God is at work in our lives to conform us to the image of Christ so that he will be the firstborn among many brothers
7. God calls us to a life of suffering, fighting indwelling sin and advancing our Father's Kingdom
8. If we fall into sin, we are totally secure, and He will merely discipline us as a father disciplines his child

9. In the end, we will receive the fullness of our adoption when we receive our resurrection bodies

PRAISE GOD FOR ALL OF THIS!!!

B. Understanding Our Rich Christian Heritage

Violence against infants is no new phenomenon, nor is the church's courageous actions to rescue babies in jeopardy from their own parents who would seek to be rid of them

Ancient Greek and Roman culture, though civilized in architecture, government, philosophy, art, and other sciences, was downright barbaric when it came to unwanted children

Roman fathers had the authority to decide whether newborn babies would live or die... if a Roman father didn't want the baby, he would simply leave it in an exposed, out of doors place. The infant could fall victim to the elements, or to animals or birds. Amazingly, this was LEGAL!! Even worse, philosophers like Plato and Aristotle recommended infanticide as legitimate state policy!!

In a city where children were abandoned and left to die, the followers of Christ would comb the city for abandoned babies and raise them and love them as their own. They deplored both abortion and infanticide and swam against the cultural tide by raising their own children and rescuing those children abandoned by others.

By the 6th century, Christianity had permeated the Roman world and completely changed the mentality of the empire; the Eastern Empire still existed and the Christian emperor Justinian enacted a law that anyone who abandoned their children should be prosecuted by law, and that Christians who find an exposed child should see to it that it is cared for fully and brought up in the Christian faith

Looking after orphans in their distress has been a hallmark of the Christian church ever since:

- William Carey, missionary to India, labored against the Indian practice of throwing babies into the Ganges River as sacrifices to pagan gods
- Amy Carmichael, living in India a century later, adopted girls who ran away from forced prostitution in Hindu temples
- George Mueller's faith-filled and sacrificial life was entirely focused on caring for 10,000 orphans

1. Let's be more like the early church who rescued those babies discarded by their Roman fathers

2. Let's not only fight abortion on the legislative front, but also in encouraging women in crisis pregnancies to consider adoption
 3. There's a lot to learn about adoption... go to web sites and educate yourself
 4. Let's encourage the families we know that have chosen adoption
 - a. Giving THIS WEEK to the orphanages that Paul and Miranda Martin are going to in Ethiopia as they seek to adopt their precious 9-month old girl Felicity
 - b. Aiding families who want to adopt financially
 - c. Praying for them, cooking meals, offering to babysit, etc.
 5. Perhaps consider adopting a child yourself... whether or not you are facing the heartbreak of infertility
- C. Get Involved in Pro-Life Ministries like PSS
1. They counsel women in crisis pregnancies to choose life... perhaps even by giving their children up for adoption
 2. They stand for life in a very dark place in people's lives
- D. Understand the Grace of Christ
1. Many feel guilty in the issue of abortion
 - a. Women who, in a dark place in their own lives in the past made that choice
 - b. Christians who feel they've done very little for life in this dark age

Colossians 2:13 God made you alive with Christ. HE FORGAVE US ALL OUR SINS