**Romans sermon series 6 - Hope**

**10th March 2024** 10.30am Holy Communion St Peter’s, Stonesby

**Reading: Romans** 8:1, 14-19, 31-32, 38-39

1. **Hope**

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, **2**because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set youfree from the law of sin and death.

**14**For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. **15**The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by the spirit we cry, *“Abba,* Father.” **16**The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. **17**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.

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? **32**He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, **39**neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Talk Romans session 6 – Hope**

So here we are today at the top of Paul’s Roman’s mountain! Today we are thinking about hope, the pinnacle of this great letter. So far we have considered the power of the gospel and the peace and freedom it brings us. Now Paul arrives at a high point of praise. He celebrates what the gospel means for our relationship with God – we are adopted as his children and given a new identity. Then he widens his view, celebrating what God will do for all creation – making it new, and raising us to eternal life.

How many of you have ever reached the top of a mountain, under your own steam, or on a railway or cable car? From the bottom you can see very little, as you ascend the view is limited, but at the top! Wow! You can see so far and so much! As a family year’s ago we went up the Schilthorn Piz Gloria in Switzerland – James Bond’s mountain. You go up by train inside the mountain at times, and then you come out at the top and the view is astonishing, amazing, beautiful! Breath-taking.

That is where Andrew Ollerton pictures us today in Paul’s letter to the Romans. At the top of the climb and able to look out and see the most amazing view. There is so much to take in that it is hard to know where to look and focus our attention.

But we are going to focus, and that focus rests on how we are part of God’s family now. Very appropriate for Mothering Sunday, where we are remembering and celebrating those who love us the most in this world: here in Romans we are celebrating the love of God for us and what that means for our lives.

Paul says: For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. **15**The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.

Paul is talking about a relationship between God and us. We are no longer slaves but free people, no longer outsiders but inside, and not just inside but adopted as sons of God. And with that adoption we receive an inheritance in God,

So let’s start with adoption. Paul has in previous chapters talked about our need to be set free from the power of sin; how this happens through Jesus Christ; and that this freedom brings us into a new life in God. We are adopted as his sons, his children.

I don’t know if anyone here is adopted, or has adopted children? It is often not an easy process and whilst it is wonderful and very rewarding the need for adoption arises out of difficulties in the life of the child. For anyone who has watched ‘Long Lost Family’ it is clear that adoption can bring great happiness but also leave deep sadness. But we need to understand the context in which Paul uses the term ‘adoption as sons.’ In the Roman world to be adopted as a son by the senior man of a powerful family brought huge changes and privileges: old debts were done away with; the family name was conferred on you, and you came into a share of the inheritance as if you were a true born son. This never applied to girls! Only boys might be adopted, and if you were adopted you became as if you were a true child and son. So it is important for Paul’s analogy to concern sons here – we all become sons in God when we become Christians: all our debts are done away with, we inherit God’s name and all his promises. We become brothers and sisters of Christ.

We are truly sons with all the prestige and inheritance that adoption into sonship brings.

The second thing to consider is God being our father – and what images that raises. Again as we celebrate Mothering Sunday we all acknowledge that not all mothers or fathers are the people we would like them to be. In an imperfect world there are many parents who cannot or will not be the best and most loving parent they could be.

But when we think of God and him being our Father we have to look beyond human experience. God our Father is the best father there ever could be, way beyond any human father in his goodness, his wisdom, his love towards us. In fact, Paul says God is our Abba, Father – Abba is a name of intimacy and delight – used as we would use Daddy. Andrew Ollerton tells the story of arriving at an airport in the middle east, and as people walked out into the terminal, the man next to him was floored by a child running at him shouting, abba, abba, abba! Do we think of God in this way? Do we trust him entirely and love him unconditionally as our loving Father?

And Paul’s third point here is that as sons we become inheritors too. We inherit from our Father, our Abba as his adopted children, and we come into an eternal inheritance given to us by the Holy Spirit.

Were all familiar with the term inheritance – some of us will have received one, others may be ‘waiting’ on one someday. An inheritance sometimes includes money, but it also often includes items of little monetary value, but of great sentimental value. When my Mum died last year I did inherit some money, but I also inherited vast quantities of her stuff, and in that ‘stuff’ there are a few items that really remind me of her – personal things which I now cherish as part of my inheritance. (her ring).

Coming into an inheritance is a privilege, and so it is as children of God. Paul tells us we come into an inheritance of great riches and great personal assurance. The greatest gift is to know the love of God, to experience it in our hearts and lives, to be assured by it. In Romans 8:38-39 Paul says this:

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Nothing can separate us from the love of God: Nothing!! Not illness, not loss, not war or famine or unemployment, not rejection or judgment by other humans. Nothing can separate us from the love of God because he has adopted us as his children and we are his. In a world where very little seems permanent, where people trust very few and very little – here is God saying we can trust him absolutely, completely, eternally. Nothing can separate us. In my Mum’s most personal letters to me she addressed me as ‘My dearest Sue’. For a moment I want you to imagine God addressing you as ‘my dearest…..’. That is how important we each are to God, and how loved.

Paul does not say that we will have an easy life as God’s children, indeed he says we will share in Christ’s sufferings. Paul certainly did, but he had learnt so much of God’s love that he could be content in whatever happened, his knowledge of God’s love gave him such hope and assurance that he could survive the darkest hours trusting in his lord and in God’s fatherhood. Think of God addressing him: my dearest Paul - Such does it mean to be an adopted child of God.

So we have a new identity as God’s adopted children, we come into a new inheritance, and that gives us a new confidence, for now and for the future. Paul says this in 31-37:

**31**What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? **32**He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? **33**Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. **34**Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. **35**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

**37**No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

I know that I do not live in this place of belief yet – I believe, but I can’t fully comprehend the depths of God’s love as yet. Oh how I long to, because how it would change my life, and indeed yours, if we fully grasped what God has done for us and who we are in Him. Like the view from the mountain top - it is wonderful, amazing, liberating, inspiring – and it brings hope. Hope now because God is always with us, we are his children, he is our Father:

and hope that in the future we will be with him in all fullness.

I return to one of Paul’s revelationary statements:

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. **15**The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by the spirit we cry, *“Abba,* Father.” **16**The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. **17**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.

Sisters and brothers, this is our Hope!

Amen