

December 28, 2025
First Sunday After Christmas

“No Longer Orphans”

Galatians 4:4-7

Right from the start we see how Christ the Savior is opposed in this world. Jesus is still in diapers and Herod wants to kill Him. Why? Because Jesus is king. His kingdom is not of this world and he comes to save everyone, even Herod, from their sins. It doesn't matter. Herod perceives Jesus as a threat and seeks to kill Him, failing to do so but compounding his sin in the process through the slaughter of innocent children. We rightly look upon that act in horror.

Thank goodness we're nothing like Herod. We have received the Gospel in faith and know that Jesus Christ is indeed Lord, King and Savior. St. Paul is speaking to us when he says, *“And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying ‘Abba! Father!’ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.”*

This is why there is so much joy in Christ's church as we celebrate Christmas. This is so much more than the birth of a child. The Son of God has become flesh that we of the fallen flesh could attain the impossible—becoming holy sons and daughters of God. This is why St. Paul's adoption language is so appropriate.

An orphan is on his or her own, abandoned and vulnerable. But once adopted the child is more than just cared for; one receives all the rights and privileges of sonship. One is now in every respect, family.

So having been brought to saving faith by the power of the Holy Spirit we cry “Abba! Father!” And I don't think it can be sufficiently stressed what that means. “Abba” is a term of endearment akin to saying “Papa” or “Daddy”. It is a term of familial love of a child for a parent. When we come before God in prayer or worship, when we simply ponder Him in thought, the proper picture is that of love, a doting Father who wishes to bestow the best blessing on His children. We know this is true. This is obvious in that He sends His Son to the manger, and later more so at the cross.

Yet how often do we look at God as not just the lawgiver, but the enforcer standing over us not with a loving smile, but a stern, strict countenance and a ruler in His hand ready to slap our knuckles the minute we step out of line? Okay, maybe that's kind of harsh. But then again, at times, maybe not. But you see what I'm getting at—we often view God as something other than steadfast love. And when we start doing that, we start resenting Him.

This isn't a stewardship sermon, but financial giving to the church is one of the simplest examples of where this goes awry. *“God loves a cheerful giver,”* but I'll admit that I haven't always been so cheerful about it. There were times where I thought writing that check was a burden. I wasn't thinking of God as “Abba, Father” but as a bill collector forcing payment out of me. God is the gracious Creator who has blessed me with all I have and need from His abundant love, but I saw Him as a rival for those blessings.

If we get comfortable in sin we can't avoid this. If you're willfully engaged in greed, sexual immorality, anger...whatever, you're not going to be seeing the smiling, fatherly face of God looking upon you because you know you're standing in rebellion. You'll see His scowl, not because that's His disposition toward you but because you, holding onto your sin, can't see Him any other way.

Why was Herod such a psychopath toward Bethlehem? He saw competition for kingship and authority and wanted the source of that competition eradicated. An extreme example to be

sure, but when we grab authority over ourselves in opposition to our Father's will, we stand in defiance, desiring His competing authority over us gone.

But think about what a huge mistake we make! A loving Father God has adopted us by grace—claimed us from our abandonment to sin and death, the damned realm of Satan—and claimed us by grace into His family; eternal life as His child in paradise. We stand heirs of eternal bliss.

And we choose to rebel against Him for what? Some fleeting earthly pleasure. Some pathetic delusion of autonomy?

Consider our fate if Christ is not born into our flesh! We remain enemies of God, kings over ourselves living a short life full of struggle and pain, maybe pulling off some amount of pleasure, happiness and power for a few years, then ultimately decay, death and, at best nothing according to atheists, but we know better. Do we want to oppose the one who loves us? Does anybody desire the fate of Herod? Of course not.

Love came in that manger. The love of our Father God that our rebellion would be forgiven and we who had made ourselves His enemies in our sin, would be adopted, made His holy children by grace. We now stand as objects of His perfect love in Christ.

See Him rightly this way. Doing so you recognize that He always wants what is best for you. Even in your struggles and afflictions you know He promises what is best for you. Be these testing, discipline, somehow the plan for ultimate good, you know He loves you and is bringing you through it in Christ. It's going to be better than fine.

In the midst of your sin see this. He still loves you. His design for you is best because He loves you. His will for you is best because He loves you. Let His fatherly love bring you to repentance and forgiveness. Yes, the law is good, holy and perfect. But Abba Father loves you and you love Him for His goodness to you. You don't need the threat of the law; you have the smiling face of love beckoning you into His light. Run with it. Repent, and run to it.

I could ramble on and on about all the reasons and ways God is love to us, but y'all know it's true. We look at Christ born, sacrificed and raised that we would be adopted into sonship and it's all the love of God for us.

Always see God this way. Get past yourself and your fallen desire for independence, authority and kingship over yourself. Repent of that. Know His love in full forgiveness. And, as His beloved child, seek nothing more than to abide in that love.

Amen.