

## **“New Life Changes Everything”**

### Second Sunday after Christmas

#### Ephesians 1:3-14

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” Ephesians 1:3

I used to wake up to the sound of my alarm in the morning. Now I wake up—much earlier might I add—to the sound of my child on the verge of a meltdown. It is great, by the way. I welcome the change. But it is different. It is a welcome change. But it is a change. As I have heard someone put the change that a new child brings to your life, “It is like I handed the keys of my freedom and liberty to my child.” New Life Changes Everything. My child has taught me at least this so far. When new life, when a child, enters your life, everything changes.

In the Liturgical Season of Christmas We Celebrate New Life in the birth of Jesus. Imagine Mary and Joseph’s experience of having a child. We read a little about how he changed and affected their life in the Gospel reading (Lk 2:40-52). How he grew in wisdom and stature. We are reminded during Christmas that Jesus was born to enter your life and my life. He died for your sin and rose to new life from his death for your sin so that you might be baptized into his death and his resurrection. So that you might be reborn and participate in a new life “in Christ.” And when Christ enters our lives, he changes everything. Specifically, he brings many blessings. Paul begins our Epistle reading this morning by reminding us, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Eph 1:3). Let us consider those blessings.

In our Epistle reading this morning the Apostle Paul lists the first blessing of new life that the Christ child brings when he enters our lives. It is the blessing of adoption. He adopted us (vs. 5). He chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him (vs. 4).

Last week as we continued our celebration of the twelve days of Christmas on the First Sunday after Christmas, we took time to remember that Jesus was born to redeem us and *adopt us*. We compared the story of the young girl Cosette from the Victor Hugo novel, *Les Miserables*, to our experience. Just as the character Cosette was rescued and set free from a life slavery and then immediately adopted into the household of a loving, caring father-like guardian, so also you and I have been rescued by Christ from a life of slavery to Sin and then immediately adopted as children of God. We have received the Spirit of adoption in the waters of Holy Baptism. Through that Spirit we cry out, “Abba Father,” in prayer and loving trust to God, our Heavenly Father. You and I are no longer slaves, but sons and daughters of God through Christ, our firstborn brother. What a blessing!

The Apostle Paul lists the second blessing of new life that the Christ child brings when he enters our lives. It is the blessing of redemption. Paul tells us in our reading that God has redeemed us in Christ (vs. 7). We *now* have the forgiveness of our trespasses (vs. 7). He has lavished the riches of his grace upon us (vs. 7).

To redeem something is to “buy something back.” This concept is most familiar to us when we redeem cans and bottles for cash refund. Someone offers to pay you cash for your cans and bottles. There is at least one big difference, though, between the redemption of cans and bottles and God’s blessing of redemption of our bodies and souls. We initially pay the price of redemption of cans and bottles through a deposit. When someone redeems those cans and bottles they are essentially *giving us our money back*. Whereas, with God, *he* pays the price of redemption. He paid the price not with gold or silver but with the holy, innocent blood of Jesus Christ. He paid the price of Christ’s suffering and death to purchase the forgiveness of your sins that *buys you back for God*. This is why we call God’s redemption of us grace—it is an undeserved and unearned gift. What a blessing!

This idea of redemption and grace is also illustrated very well in the story of *Les Miserables* that we considered last week in our sermon. After the main character and protagonist, Jean Valjean, is set on parole, the film depicts a difficult life for him. Finally, Valjean catches a break when a Bishop sees his helpless state and takes him in, offering him food and shelter. Seeing an opportunity to better his situation, Valjean steals silver from the Bishop during the night and tries to flee. When the police catch him and bring him back to face the Bishop, the Bishop shows him grace by allowing Valjean to not only keep the silver but he also gives him two expensive candlesticks. The Bishop then uses the language of redemption. He tells Valjean that he “*bought his soul for God*.” Body and soul being bought back by grace—an undeserved and unearned gift. It leaves us crying out, what a blessing!

The Apostle Paul lists the third and final blessing of new life that the Christ child brings when he enters our lives. It is the blessing of inheritance. By redeeming and adopting us as his holy children, God gives us an inheritance (vs. 11). An inheritance brings hope. We have hope in Christ. Paul tells us that this hope is sealed with the Promised Holy Spirit that we have received (vs. 13). That Spirit of adoption. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance in the heavens (vs. 14).

As we were reminded last week when we considered the story from *Les Miserables* of the young girl Cosette’s redemption from a life of slavery and adoption into the household of Jean Valjean, the idea of an inheritance points us to the future. It leads us to imagine the future life that adoption and redemption brings. For you and me as adopted and redeemed children of God we have the certainty of a future life of peace with God. An eternal inheritance in the household of God where there is no more sickness or death. Where death and the struggles and suffering of the vale of tears that is our experience in this world will be no more. What a blessing!

God's new life in Christ enters our lives and it changes everything. He brings great blessings. This child was born for this purpose. When new life, when a child, enters your life, everything changes.

I used to wake up to the sound of my alarm in the morning. Now I wake up—much earlier might I add—to the sound of my child on the verge of a meltdown. It is great, by the way. One of the things that makes it great is that I get to pray with her.

We have established the routine in the morning that when we wake up I take her hands, put them together, and we pray a prayer together. We thank God for keeping us safe that night and bringing us to as new day. We ask for him to help us live as his beloved, baptized, forgiven children that day. Sometimes we pray Luther's Morning Prayer while other times we pray our own prayer. Regardless of what prayer we pray, we thank God for his blessings. The blessings of redemption, adoption, and an inheritance as children of God. Yes, new life changes everything. When new life, when a child, enters your life, everything changes. Amen.