



Adoption – Deserted or Befriended? Hebrews 13:5-6

A few years back I saw a picture of a young woman playing with a 7 year old boy...it looked fairly normal, except for what appeared to be Russian writing in the bottom corner...

- that might be enough though to tip you off to who these people actually are...
- the young boy is from Siberia...Artem Savaliev...and this picture was taken at an orphanage in Russia...
- the woman is Tory-Ann Hansen a 34 year old single nurse from Tennessee...
- in this picture, Tory was visiting Russia as one of the final steps in her process of adopting Artem, and bringing him back to Tennessee to live with she and her son Logan...
- Last month, Tory shocked the world when she sent Artem back to Russia on a plane alone because she didn't want him anymore...

- if you have ever traveled internationally, you know how overwhelming that can feel as an adult...imagine it happening to you when you were seven years old...
- as the details unfolded, the story became even more unbelievable...
- Tory gave Artem a typed note and instructed him to give it to the police when he arrived in Moscow...

- it was addressed...to whom it may concern (which was obviously not her)...
- she went on to say, I adopted this child, Artem Savaliev, on September 29, 2009. This child is mentally unstable. He is violent and has severe psychopathic issues/behaviors...After giving my best to this child, I am sorry to say that for the safety of my family, friends, and myself...I no longer wish to parent this child. As he is a Russian national, I am returning him to your guardianship and would like the adoption disannulled...Sincerely, Tory Hansen...

- as you can imagine, this set off a response of international outrage...
- in fact, Russia has enacted a freeze on all foreign adoptions between their country and the United States...
- of course Tory and her mother have taken the position that the justification for their actions was Artem's misbehavior...Am I the only one who would say – I'm glad my mom didn't take that approach to my misbehavior?...I would have been flying all over the universe... put him on Apollo 13, Huston we have a real problem- this kid is a brat...
- to desert a 7 year old child by putting him on a 10 hour international flight with a note in his hand saying – I no longer wish to parent this child...is about as outrageous as it gets...

- I wonder if God would ever do that to us?...after all, He doesn't just see our behavior—He knows our hearts...well, the Bible actually answers that question, doesn't it – in both the

Old and New Testaments...and this morning we'd like to study what Scripture says about that very matter...

- wit that in mind, please open your Bible to Hebrews chapter 13...

- for followers of Jesus Christ, we can identify 4 very important answers to the question we've posed – who am I?...I'm forgiven, and I'm free, I'm adopted, and I'm anchored...and the goal is to use those principles to govern the way you respond to the circumstances around us each and every day...

- this morning we want to study the first 6 verses of Hebrews 13 and ask, are you **Deserted or Befriended?**...

- read **Hebrews 13:1-6**...

- so we're talking about whether you're deserted or befriended, and with the time we have remaining, let's think about **3 perspectives on your security in Christ**...who you were, who you are, and who you can be...

- just like we did last week, we'll eventually get to Hebrews 13---but for sake of time, let's start with some other passages we'll just have up on the screen...

I. Who You Were.

A. Separated from God.

- that's what it means to be spiritually dead...(you're separated...)

- you remember what occurred...

- **Genesis 2:16-17 - The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."**

- death of any kind is separation...and the Scripture speaks of 3 distinct kinds of death...

- physical death is the separation of the soul from the body...

- spiritual death is separation of the person from God...

- and the second death is the separation of the person from God, forever...

- and in this particular case, it wasn't a matter of God deserting man, it was a matter of man deserting God...and that was the crux of the issue...will your sin separate you from God?...will there be any consequences to your disobedience?

- **Genesis 3:4 - The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!**

- of course satan is a liar, and the rebellious heart of man loves to believe he is king...

-Those who favor gambling put up billboards advertising the casinos...one shows a man with a crown on his head and the caption...you rule...[see, just come to the casino and you'll win all kinds of money and then you'll have a crown on your head because after all – you rule...until you run out of chips.]

- and here was the sad result of their disobedience...

- **Genesis 3:23-24 - therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.**

- we could trace this theme through many places in the Word of God...

- **Romans 1:21-25 - For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of**

corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.

- earlier the text speaks about men... – **Romans 1:18 – “who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”**
- rebelling against the existence and character of God results in terrible separation and loneliness and isolation...we were created for an intimate relationship with Him and when that relationship is severed there is simply nothing that can adequately fill the void...we might “rule” all right (as the billboard suggests)...but we don’t rule very well...

- that, in turn, messes up our relationships with other people...

B. Separated from people.

- **Psalm 25:16 - Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted.**

- the “you rule” approach to life results in pride and anger and division between people...
- it’s the classic explanation of life given by James in James 4...
- why are there wars and fights among you...isn’t it because of the war that wages in your own heart between competing lusts and desires...and James goes on to explain that that war of the soul finds its root in a war with God Himself...

Now, it’s at that very point in the relationship that the character of God comes clearly into focus...

- because what does God do at that point?...we’ve rebelled...as a result we feel isolated from Him and often other people...and how does God respond?...
- well, let me answer that question this morning in Facebook terms...He sends us a friend request...
- My daughters convinced me to go on Facebook about a month ago and I have to admit – it is a convenient way to stay in touch with people...and I’m starting to think there actually may be some ministry opportunities there as well...
- but many of you know how it works – someone sends you a friend request...and then you have to decide if you accept the request and bring them into your family of friends...or “ignore” the request...
- now, I realize that you might say – well, using the term “friend” to describe our relationship with the Lord sort of trivializes the matter, doesn’t it?...I might agree, except that is the exact terminology used in Scripture...
- if you’ve know Christ, here’s another set of glasses to add to the collection...you’ve been befriended...

II. Who You Are

A. The recipient of God’s grace.

- this is what Jesus said to His disciples...

1. John 15:15 - No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.

- earlier in that same passage, Jesus said this...

2. John 15:13 - Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

- this isn't a casual relationship...it's not the kind of person you just exchange cards with at Christmastime...
- the only way Jesus could send you a friend request...is if He first laid down His life for you...

- and what was accomplished by that death?...He was deserted by the Father, so that you didn't have to be...He got on the plane in your place...

3. Matthew 27:45-46 - Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"

- Jesus didn't deserve to be deserted by the Father...but He had to be...so that your sin could be laid on Him...

- Isaiah 53:6 - All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

- that's the ultimate example of what it means to be a friend...

- Can I ask you this morning, has there been a definite time in your life when you've responded to the friend request?...

- Revelation 3:20 - Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.

- and that was true of the local church to whom this was written in the book of Revelation...and it's true of you and me as well...

- this is a relationship you have to accept, and then cultivate...

- some people are like Facebook stalkers...do you know what that is?...

- they go around to other people's pages, and read what's going on in their lives, but they never formalize the relationship in the light of day...they just stalk around in the dark...

- some people are like that---they never come out and say – I want to repent of my Sin and trust Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord...

- what a terrible way to respond to a God who has made it possible for you to be His friend...

- Romans 10:9-10, 13 - that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation...for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."

- all of that brings us to our key passage in Hebrews 13...if you have trusted Christ as savior and Lord, what does that say about the nature of your relationship with Him?...

B. Assured of God's eternal presence.

Hebrews 13:5-6 - Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"

- that's a quote from the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy...

- imagine it – God will never do to you what that mother in TN did to her adopted Son...

- He'll never put you on a plane by yourself with a note attached that says – I no longer wish to parent this child...and that is really, really good news...

- we don't have to be deserted, because the eternal Son of God took that position for us...

- what we're talking about this morning is an important theme throughout the Word of God...
- after Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden...and by the way, we believe that was an act of grace---because had man also eaten of the tree of life, he would have lived forever in that unredeemed state...
- but as a result of man's rebellion, culture spun quickly out of control...
 - Cain kills his own brother...
 - then Lamech kills a man and actually writes a song about it and brags to his family about what he's done...
 - we don't even get through six chapters of the book of Genesis before we read words like...**Genesis 6:5 - Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**
 - and then though the holiness of God demanded that sin be judged, His mercy provided a way that those who would repent could enjoy the presence of God in an ark...
 - after that judgment, God provided a rainbow---a visible demonstration that the world would not be judged that way again and that it was possible to enjoy His presence...
 - He manifested His presence to Moses when He appeared in the burning bush and announced the name Jehovah, or YaHWeH – I am that I am – the God who exists and is eternally present...
 - we could think about His presence manifested in the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night...
 - He manifested His presence in the tabernacle and later in the temple...
 - Moses instructed the people before they went into the promised land...**Deuteronomy 31:6 - Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you.**
 - we could fast forward to the NT, where the OT promise was finally fulfilled...**Matthew 1:20-23 - But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."**
- what we're doing here today is not religion – it's the cultivation of an eternal relationship with a Savior who has chosen to make us His friend, with the promise that He will never leave us or forsake us...

III. Who You Can Be.

- What does a Christian look like if he/she is wearing these glasses?

A. Comforted

Proverbs 18:24 - A man *who has* friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend *who sticks* closer than a brother.

- develop – people who came down to Riley when we were learning of Drew’s diagnosis...(cf. Randy praying for us...)

B. Contented

- that is the argument of Hebrews 13...
- **Hebrews 13:5-6 - *Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,” so that we confidently say, “THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?”***

C. Confident

- **Deuteronomy 31:6 - Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you.**
- having the right set of glasses on can help us face whatever challenge might come our way