

The Twentieth Sunday After Pentecost

October 14, 2012

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

Hebrews 2:9-11

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.

“*You are family to me.*” What am I saying with those words? What does it mean when I say I consider you family? You know what that means. For of all the earthly blessings the Lord in His grace showers upon us I don’t know if there is any better than the gift of family. Family loves and cares for one another. Families look out for each other and protect one another. You share most closely both your triumphs and your trials of life with family members. You find a whole new level of love the first time you take a new family member, son or daughter, and pick them up in your arms and hold them next to your heart. You would do just about anything for family. So it means a lot of things when you say to someone: “*You are family to me.*”

We are going to consider what this means for us because the Word of God before us today reminds us that we belong to another family. We are part of God’s family. We are brothers and sisters of God’s own Son. Yes, Jesus is not ashamed to call Himself our brother! This morning we hear this remarkable truth as: **God says: “You are family to me!”**

The writer of Hebrews points out some of the blessings that mankind received from God. We are the crown of His creation. Adam and Eve were objects of God’s special favor. They were given glory and honor and all things were placed under their feet. God’s care for them was evident when He said: ***“Let us make man in our own image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures of the ground.”***

God did as He said: ***“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”*** God gave man and woman every blessing. They had the entire creation at their disposal. Most importantly, they were members of God’s family. They fit in because God gave them the holiness they needed to live and walk and talk with their Holy God. They had His image, His likeness, a will that conformed to His will. They had it all. But as Paul Harvey would say: “*you know the rest of the story.*” Sin enters the world and death through sin. Adam and Eve and all people from that day on lost the holiness they need to live with God. God tossed Adam and Eve out of the garden of paradise and He had every right to toss them out of His presence and out of His family forever. God could rightly look at you and me and say we don’t have what it takes to be in His family. But thankfully this is not what our loving God wants or what He did.

We are reminded what God did so that we can be part of His family. **“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels.”** This writer turns our attention to

Jesus, who has all power and glory as true God, yet who was made a little lower than the exalted angels. The writer uses the His earthly name Jesus to remind us of His humanity - to remind us that Jesus became fully human like us. The commentator of the People's Bible writes: **"What a sight it must have been for the angels as their Lord stepped down from eternal glory to be wrapped in human flesh and made lower than they"** (PB 19). Why did Jesus need to do such a thing? Why did He humble Himself and become a man? We know why, don't we? Jesus needed to live under God's law for us who by our sins had put ourselves outside of God's family.

Have you ever felt left out or out of place? Some people even feel this way with their own families. Say that everyone in that family has the same interests except for one. For example how would you feel if everyone in your family is a doctor and you are the fry cook at McDonalds? It is no fun to be the odd one out or seem out of place. This really hurts when it happens at times in our earthly families. But this does not even come close to how far we are out of place when it comes to God's family. In order to live with God, God demands: **"Be holy, as I am holy."** But out of our hearts come evil thoughts. In order to be at peace with God, Jesus says **"Be perfect, as my heavenly Father is perfect."** But we sin every day and our sinful nature is **"hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. In fact, those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God"** (Romans 8). We could not be more different! God is holy and we are sinners. The relationship will never work!

But Jesus changes all this by becoming just like us, by living under God's law and facing every temptation we face with the same weak flesh except with one key difference - He was without sin! Jesus met God's requirements for holiness, for perfection, and He did so for us! He did so, so that we could live and walk and talk with God. Jesus offers His perfection to us so that **"Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family."** Jesus gives us His holiness so we fit in - so we can be a part of His family. Paul writes: **"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ"** (Galatians 3). Faith in Jesus Christ gives us the holiness we need, and because of this, listen to His awesome truth: **"So Jesus is not ashamed to call (us) brothers."** Think of it - God now says: **"You are family to me!"**

Jesus not only clothes us with holiness, but He also removes something from us. We are covered with our own filth of sin and rags of unrighteousness. Just think of how we sometimes treat our own families. Spouses argue and disrespect each other. Parents too often exasperate and fail to disciple their children, and children dishonor and disobey their parents. Brothers and sisters fight and are mean to each other. What about our church family? We do not always care about one another the way we should. When was the last time you picked up the phone to call or stopped by the house of a fellow member, a brother or sister in Christ, who has not been in church for a while to encourage them not to give up meeting together? We do not even love and protect and take care of our own families the way we ought. These are just a few examples of sins which cover us making us unworthy to be in God's family.

So what does Jesus do with us? Jesus does not just throw His righteous garments over the top of our filthy clothes. He removes our sin-stained clothes. First, He washes us from head to toe. This is the second reason Jesus becomes a man. He comes to take all our sins away. This is what Jesus, who now sits in heaven crowned with glory and

honor, did for us. ***“He suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory it was fitting that God...should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.”*** Jesus becomes man to suffer death - to pay the penalty for sin. He does so for us. Jesus tastes death for everyone. Certainly, this is described with the only word that is fitting - grace. This is undeserved love. This is an undeserved gift. Jesus does more than just taste death. On the cross Jesus drinks the full fury and wrath of God for our sins. He drinks up every ounce of punishment so that we will never have to swallow a bitter drop of the fires of hell. Jesus announces from His cross that without a doubt: ***“It is finished.”*** Words that are affirmed on the third day as God makes it clear this sacrifice is acceptable as His Son, and our Brother, rises from His grave. Jesus did all this so that God can say: ***“You are family to me.”***

We have spent most of our time talking about what Jesus did to make us a part of God’s family, but now I want us to think about what it means for us to belong in God’s family. It means we have a heavenly Father who always loves and cares for us. We have a God who faithfully looks out for us and protects us. We have a Lord to whom we can go and talk to anytime. We can share with our God everything, both the highs and lows of life. God considers you, His dearly loved child, to be the apple of His eye. God would do just about anything for you and all we need to do is look to the cross to see how true that is – for God did not spare His own Son in order to save you. There is nothing greater than being in God’s family where we enjoy gifts such as peace, forgiveness, prayer, and power for living. It will be the best of all when because of Jesus, our Brother, we will be welcomed into our eternal home, in a paradise where we will live with God forever.

Until that day comes I pray we thank God for and love and care for our earthly families. I pray we thank God and love and care for our church family, for I meant it when I said: ***“You are family to me.”*** I pray we thank God most of all because He sent Jesus to be our brother, so that God now is able to say: ***“You are family to me.”*** Amen.