

**+ Romans 8:14-17 + In the Holy Trinity, Remember Who You Are +
+ First Sunday After Pentecost: Holy Trinity + 7 June 2009 +**

“Remember who you are.” For a kid in about 6th grade, that was rather strange advice. “Of course, I know who I am. I’m Jeremiah Gumm. I’m a member of this family. I belong to this church and go to this school. I know who I am.” To my 11-year-old mind, it was strange advice, but there was good reason why my father gave that advice and why I still remember it today.

“Remember who you are. You’re more than a member of this family. You’re more than a member of this church or a student at this school. You’re a child of God, a Christian bought with the precious blood of Christ, and someday you’re going to go off to school or get out in the world on your own, and it’ll be very easy to forget who you are as the world or your sinful nature or Satan tempt you to become someone else—a slave of sin headed for hell. So always remember who you are.”

As I studied the Second Lesson from Paul’s letter to the Romans this week, that advice came to mind, because that’s really what God is telling us through his apostle in these four brief verses. At the same time, God reminds us of who we are from the perspective of how he reveals himself in his Word—as the holy Trinity—three persons in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. How God reveals himself to us ultimately makes us who we are. So this morning, **IN THE HOLY TRINITY, REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE.**

Before you can remember who you are, you need to realize who you were before. Paul spends the verses before our text describing exactly what that means. It’s not a pleasant picture at all. In fact, it’s a picture of rebellion and disobedience and ignorance and death. Just listen. ***“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires...the mind of sinful man is death...the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God...if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die...”***

What an awful picture, but that is what you and I were! In fact, by nature that is who we are—a terrifying reality! By nature we are mortal enemies of the holy God. We are rebels enslaved to our sinful natures and deserving nothing, but God’s wrath and punishment and eternal death in hell. That picture is terrifying, but Paul uses this awful picture of who we are by nature to emphasize who you and I now are in Christ—recipients of his life-giving, life-changing Holy Spirit. Just last week we heard how Jesus had promised to send his Spirit to help us remember his promises and his fulfillments.

Well, that ***“Helper”***, that ***“Counselor”*** doesn’t just remind us of Jesus’ promises, but he turns our lives completely around from who we are by nature. ***“Those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires...the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace...if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you...if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”***

Remember who you are...a recipient of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit doesn’t come through grand displays of power or glorious miracles or natural phenomena. No, he comes through simple unassuming means—through the halting words of a Christian friend sharing the good news of your Savior Jesus, through the simple telling of the story of Jesus’ birth and life and death and resurrection from a loving mother to her child, through the waters of Holy Baptism poured over a head ***“in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”***. Through such simple means, the Holy Spirit created faith in Christ in your heart, where before, even as an infant, there once was hatred for God. Through such simple means, you were reborn. You were renewed. You were reconciled to God because the Holy Spirit connected you to what Christ accomplished for you.

So what does that mean for who you are right now? Paul reminds us that we are recipients of the Spirit. ***“Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the spirit of sonship... The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”*** Through the Word, the Spirit now works and lives within you. He bears witness to your spirit, which receive his witness and responds with grateful thanks for the rebirth, the renewal, the reconciliation you now have with God. Through the Word, the Spirit leads you to follow God’s will not as a slave terrified by the wrath of the master, but as an obedient son of the Father.

Remember who you are? You aren’t just recipients of the Spirit, but also sons of the Father. I know for you ladies out there that might seem kind of strange to be called “sons of the Father”, but Paul’s not being sexist here. He’s not downgrading women. You see, Paul is talking about our status before our heavenly Father, not

gender. In fact, here he uses the words **“sons”** and **“children”** interchangeably. So yes, it may sound odd, but realize what Paul means when he says you are **“sons of God”!**

“For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the spirit of sonship.” Slaves and sons each had a different status in a Roman household. Slaves may have been loved, but they were always subject to the whims of the household and had no privileges. Sons, however, carried on the family name and received all the benefits that came from that status whether by blood or by adoption. They had a privileged status and received all the inheritance. That’s what Paul says belongs to us **“who are led by the Spirit of God”** as **“sons of God”**.

To understand what he means, watch a little child ask her parent for something. She probably won’t stop to wonder if the time is inconvenient to interrupt mom or dad in what they’re doing. No, she’ll confidently march right up to the parent and ask for whatever she needs whenever she wants it. Even if the answer is no, that child can still confidently make those requests of her parents because her parents love her so much.

That’s the kind of confidence Paul is talking about here when he says, **“And by [the spirit of sonship] we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’”** **Abba** is simply “Father” in Aramaic—a term of respect, but also a term of endearment. It’s the kind of name a little child would use to make a request of his loving father. In the same way, we can be confident that God is our loving Father and we are his beloved sons through the faith instilled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, as John wrote, **“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”**

But aren’t there times when you forget you are a **“son of God”**, when you maybe take that status for granted and allow yourself to once again become a slave to your sinful nature? You and I end up acting more like the one son in Jesus’ parable who demanded his inheritance while his father was living and then went off to blow it all on wild living. The sinful world, our sinful natures and Satan make temptation seem so appealing and harmless—that little bit of lust, that little bit of greed, that little bit of envy, that little bit of rage, that little bit of pride—when really they’re just trying to enslave you once again so you forget who you are. Sometimes you do fall or you do get lost.

...But then, your loving Father picks you up and forgives you for your Brother’s sake. You see, as sons of the heavenly Father, you are therefore also a brother of Christ, the Son of God, and it was through that Brother that God showed you his greatest love. We heard about it in the Gospel Lesson, where we heard how God the Father loved the world so much that he was willing to give up his one and only Son, so that whoever believed in him by the Holy Spirit’s work would receive forgiveness and eternal life.

In that Son, your Brother by faith, God showed you his greatest love. Christ your Brother lived a perfect life of remembering who he was, because so often you and I have not. Christ your brother died to remove the guilt of that sin of forgetting who you are. The Father then accepted your Brother’s priceless payment of his sacrifice for your sins by raising him from the dead. Because of that, you now get to enjoy all the blessings that Christ your brother earned by his perfect life, his innocent death, and his glorious resurrection as Paul explains, **“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.”** Even the glorious inheritance of eternal life is yours too, because Christ your brother earned it for you. That’s a blessing and a reality that even in this life of suffering and sorrow and tears, you possess as **“co-heirs with Christ”** and because of whom, you will get to enjoy in full one day in heaven.

“Remember who you are!” You are a recipient of the Holy Spirit. You are a son of the heavenly Father. You are an heir with the Son of God. You are who you are only because God has chosen to act on your behalf as a triune God. When suffering comes or when you’re faced with the temptation to become someone or something else, remember you are a Christian bought with the precious blood of Christ. Remember you are a child and heir of the kingdom. Remember you bear the name of the Father who created you, the Son who saved you, and the Holy Spirit who set you apart as God’s own child. Remember who you are! Amen.