

## Easter Sunday 23 March 2008 Sermon - King's Centre Christian Church, Sheffield, UK

### Sermon Series: Easter Title: From Orphans to Heirs, Slaves to Sons By: Nick Allan

#### Intro

The Father's heart for his children, for the human race is what we've been focusing on for a week – through last Sunday's sermon with Nike and Soul Space all Holy Week. **There is no more powerful time to remember the loving heart of our God than on Easter morning!** We're going to look again today at the love of our Father which is real and available for each of us.

God as Father – sure, Trinity described in scripture in female forms too (eg. bird wing, some Psalms (Ps 17:8, 36:7, 61:4) but primarily as Father. **Fatherhood is a human picture to help us get a handle on some of the characteristics of God the Trinity** – not really a big old man in the sky (although since Jesus' ascension there is now a human in the Godhead – Jesus 100% human, 100% divine). A male picture, but one which works for both sexes – **we all wish we had a great father**. Some of us do, or did. Others of us may long for a better early experience of dad. Others of us who are Dads realise its not an easy job and I'm pleased there is one, perfect example of Fatherhood available to aspire to, and more than that.... To know and be part of myself.

#### Bible passages on Father's love

How do I know that God is a Father, and God loves me and you?

- "In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father." John 16:26-28
- "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God." 2 Corinthians 1:2-4

I want to ask you gently today – **do you know the love of God like this?**

- Like a father, dad.
- Is the way you relate to God a place of love, family, closeness?
- Or is it different to what the bible tells is it could be & should be?

There is a massive difference between being an **child & heir**, or being or behaving like a **slave & orphan**. We're not slaves to God, it's a love relationship. Nor are we orphans, but children of God. But if you feel differently this morning, I want to give you opportunity to think that over this morning, and respond to God's spirit.

#### Slaves & Orphans, or Children and Heirs?

Bible describes our position (because of the Fall) before we enter relationship with God the Trinity in a number of ways.

- Slaves (to sin)
- Orphans (fatherless, homeless – disconnected from our true spiritual roots)

Today we celebrate how the sacrifice and divine power encounter of Jesus' life, death and resurrection **made it possible** for humankind **to stop being slaves and orphans**, and again become sons and daughters.

## Slaves

Titus 3:3-8 – “At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.”

**Once we were slaves – slaves to sin and slaves through the effects of sin. Slaves to a condition of being detached from our loving God.** Not a good place to be – Paul describes it as “foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures”. **These “passions and pleasures” might not seem so bad at the time,** but they come from an alternative reality to God’s – from the **world’s system** which is **heading away from God.**

Slaves don’t get a choice where they go, what they do. They have to follow their master. Slaves to the system of this world which leads ultimately to... well, death – because death is the end, and the winner over life, if all you have to rest on is the system and reality of this physical, material world around us. **In fact, many of your street, workplace, school or local pub are still slaves.** And they may not even realise it. Some of them will probably actually enjoy it at the moment – because, as Paul explains, it’s a deception.

But this is how good God is.... Into this situation, this detachment, God chose to intervene, in the most dramatic and costly way that planet earth has ever seen. This is how great the Father’s love is for us – he gave his Son to fill the gap, to restore the relationship. To move us from darkness into light, from death into life. **Jesus became sin, so that you might become sons and daughters.**

- “But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.
- “He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, [when he died on the cross and his resurrection]
- so that, having been justified by his grace, [God’s effort achieved this, not ours]
- we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.”

The reality of work of Jesus on cross – means we can become sons & daughters of God, now and forever. See also Romans 6:5-11

- If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

The spiritual reality is... if you’ve accepted Jesus into your hearts and lives, then you are sons & daughters of the living heavenly father. It’s a done deal. You aren’t a slave to sin if you’re a committed follower of Jesus. But how many of us still live like we are?

God isn’t a mean God. He’s 100% good. He gives good gifts, wants to give joy & peace to his family. Sickness & bad-trials in life **DO NOT COME FROM GOD.** He can use circumstances & trials in life to mould our characters for good, but God is 100% good. Your earthly father may sometimes fail you, or even abuse you. But our heavenly father will never do bad things to you! It’s simply not in his nature – he is 100% good.

**The issue is.... Are you living like a slave or a Son/Daughter? What do you feel in your heart, and how does this affect the way you live as a result?**

## Orphans

What about orphans? The truth we celebrate at Easter is that Jesus' followers are not longer detached, orphaned from relationship and protection from God. Quite the opposite, we're in the family, our home lies in the heart of God.

Galations 3:26 – 4:7 - 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. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

## **Blockages in us to living like Heirs**

Our search for significance

- For acceptance, significance, for identity
- Often results in a wrestling match, as we struggle with others to 'win' our significance like it's a battle. Its evident in politics, the workplace, in movies & celebrity culture, sports, in families, even within the church. The result is a struggle for position, for authority, for inheritance to pass on to others
- People look in many places for significance – and many of them lead you over time into a worse situation, not a better one.

Many Christians too live like this

- Seeking approval from others (maybe through a prestigious or respected job) rather than being content with the approval of Father God
- Maybe cultivating our identity in the clothes we buy, the car we drive, the friends we have, the career path we have mapped out – rather than resting in our true identity in the heavenly realms as favoured, loved, cherished, important children of God's family

This comes out of an orphaned heart. Living as if you don't have a safe home, a secure family to give you identity, inheritance, significance, unconditional acceptance. You feel you don't have a place of affirmation, protection, belonging, even affection, for you, deep inside, as you go through the ups and downs of life

## Spirit of Sonship

Those who know a spirit of sonship are people who are secure in our father's love & heart, secure in your identity – not the head of the family, but you do know the head and he loves you! You find security, significance, identity, basic trust, being others-orientated.

Its living in the Covenant – promise & protection & provision

- “Give us today our daily bread (provision) and deliver us from evil (protection)”

But its not all about having a good time and doing what you want with the father's inheritance.

- A heart attitude of submission too – being subject to another's mission
- Whose mission is it?..... GOD'S!
- The point is, you're happy to prosper, your heavenly father's agenda, instead of yours, if you're secure that you're protected, provided for and have a fantastic inheritance coming

### Nick's own story

Experienced the 'Father Heart' in Toronto (even with own background stable & good father)

### What we need to do about it

Jesus said (John 17:26) "I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

### How do you feel?

- **Slaves & Orphans**
- **or Heirs and Children?**

God wants to heal the broken hearted. That was part of Jesus' mission statement, part of why he came, died and was resurrected – to make this truly possible.

I heard this song lyric the other day "whatever it takes, or how my heart breaks, I will be right here waiting for you..." (Richard Marx). That's a great picture of the love of our Father. Never-ending. Whatever it takes – like the cross! Always waiting for us, to give another encouraging hug, or perhaps to welcome you back home who have been far away from God. That's the invitation for each of us this morning, and every morning.

**Don't be a Christian out of duty or habit – it's about relationship not religion.**

### DVD

To close, powerful image of what our heavenly father's love is like.

- The Hoyt family – father (Dick) and son (Rick). (<http://www.teamhoyt.com/>)
  - Rick is paraplegic – wheelchair bound but with a sharp mind hidden inside. His Dad wanted him to feel part of sports and physical activity, so he entered a race and took Rick with him – pushing him in the chair.
  - Rick uses a computer to form sentences (controlled by his hand/ or eyes etc). Afterwards, he wrote to his dad saying that when he was out running, he felt like he was no longer disabled.
  - That was the catalyst for his dad to do the same again & again. In fact, he entered 'IronMan' several times which is a crazy American Triathlon of swimming, running & Cycling. With Rick 100% involved. Just to bless him, and restore a sense of pride and achievement to the son he clearly so dearly loves.
  - Its an incredibly powerful image of the love of a father for his child.
- I think this story is just like the loving father heart of our God.
  - So strong, so persevering, going the extra mile.
  - The commitment to walk the walk with you, fighting with us, protecting us, carrying us, that's the love of the father.
- As you watch it (makes me & marjorie cry each time) imagine you are the son being lovingly held, helped, pushed to greatness by your loving heavenly Dad.
- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPLCaAu\\_H2U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPLCaAu_H2U)

Worship & ministry to close