

to be thought Jesus, that's now my new nature. So life begins to open up opportunity after opportunity to love, to live true to who I am. I have opportunity after opportunity to give myself away so that my brothers and sisters in Christ benefit according to their needs at my expense. Which brings joy.

No matter where I find myself I can live true to who I am; the Father's child, whom he loves. So I begin to be free from the need to please people and more and more begin to see how to apply Jesus wisdom, grace and mercy into any and every situation, cause that's how I can express the Father's love. That's how I seek to be true to my new nature in Christ.

No wonder when Jesus' disciples asked him how to pray he began with; 'Our Father'. No small statement. But in Jesus it is wonderfully true, we are family for we have the same Father.

Do we live as family or as acquaintances? The wonderful Good News is that in Jesus we are family and we all do have the potential to live true to our new family nature. We can support and encourage each other to grow to maturity in Christ. We are family, so we never have to face anything on our own, we've got a wonderful group of brothers and sisters to love.

This Christmas may we all celebrate being part of Jesus' family.

Remember at your baptism the Father said; 'You are my child, whom I love, in you I delight' and then the Spirit came to live with us. May you daily live true to who you are, no matter where you might find yourself. May you daily live to please the Father, loving his children, even loving your enemies.

Let us pray.
Jesus thank you for making us part of the Father's family. Help us to grow to ever greater maturity. May our lives be an expression of thanks and praise to our Father as we live trusting him, loving one another, living as a close intimate loving family. Amen.

16 December 2012

WHAT DOES CHRISTMAS MEAN TO YOU? FAMILY



One of the most common answers to this question would be family. Christmas is a time for families to get together and celebrate. Of course the first Christmas wasn't only the birth of Jesus, but in Jesus the birth of a new family, a new nation.

It was the same with the birth of Isaac. It wasn't just the birth of one person, but the first step in the birth of a nation. A nation which now out numbers the stars in the sky. Which was God's promise. And when God makes a promise you can be sure he'll do what? He'll keep it. Over these thousands of years how many descendants have been and are being born to Abraham, flowing from that first child, because of God's faithfulness?

In Jesus we have the birth of a new family, a new nation. And interestingly this family tree is like no other. We have the Father, and then Jesus the Son, and in Jesus we have brothers and sisters. We're all brothers and sisters with just one Father. We're all part of one family. Maybe instead of segregating the family next year we could all get together as the family we are and celebrate Jesus' birthday with him.

In the Gospel reading for today John the Baptist has a run-in with people who misunderstand what it means to be a child of Abraham. He uses some strong language; "John exploded: 'Brood of snakes! What do you think you're doing slithering down here to the river? Do you think

a little water on your snakeskins is going to deflect God's judgment? It's your *life* that must change, not your skin. And don't think you can pull rank by claiming Abraham as 'father'." (Luke 3:2,3 Msg)

John reminds me that just because I share the same parents doesn't mean I'm living as a family. There is much more to family than having the same parents. John looks for the family characteristics and they were missing. Abraham was the Father of promise, the Father of faith. His children are children of promise. Children who take God at his word and build their life on this word.

The nation that bore Israel's name was so far from being the family

Christ Church Lutheran

Worship Times - 9.00am & 10.45am
Pastor: Tim 0427326553



Jesus' disciples multiplying disciples

of faith God their Father had sought to create. There is a warning in this for me, because the Children of Israel stopped living like a family.

If someone in my family was in need, then I'd seek to help them, at my expense. I wouldn't expect them to pay for my help, that would be strange. They might as well just go off and employ someone. But an employee isn't a family member and a family member shouldn't be treated like an employee.

I know when I thought this I feel guilty because there is much more I can do for the members of my family. So John's barb strikes home with me today. Don't just rave on about family and relationships, live it.

Which reminds me of Jesus' words. He was in a house when people

came to him and said your mother and brothers are outside wanting to speak to you. Jesus said; "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Pointing to his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my

Jesus was born to birth a new family

brother and sister and mother.'" (Matt. 12:48-50)

Jesus was born to birth a new family, a family which lived out it's Father's nature and character.

Of course that was part of the harsh barb in what John the Baptist had said. He was saying that these people's actions reflected who their father was. And they all knew who the slithering snake was,

and it wasn't Abraham. I'm sure many of them were thinking; 'How dare this uncouth, country hick speak to us in this manner. We spend night and day studying the bible. We ensure we keep it to the smallest detail. We are trying harder than any of these publicans and sinners.' They didn't see family, but riff raff who deserved God's punishment. They didn't see family in need, but addicts who had brought it upon themselves.

They didn't see descendents of Abraham, their brothers and sisters. They only saw this Jesus guy healing on the Sabbath, letting the side down. Here they were breaking their backs doing the right thing and this loser was wrecking everything. After all the goal was to keep the Sabbath perfectly, just once, and then the Messiah would come. How tragic a

figure the Pharisees were, for the Messiah came and they couldn't even recognise him. He was a stranger to them, not family! Jesus was a stranger – alarm bells ringing!!!

Jesus has birthed a new family, so that when we look at people through him we see brothers and sisters. We don't see strangers but family. I don't see people to judge, to lord it over, to simply point out their mistakes condemning them. No, in Jesus I see brothers and sisters, whom I can give my life for. After all that's our family character.

Our family character, our family nature is to love, because our Father IS love. God the Father doesn't love, he simply acts true to himself, for he IS love. He's not putting on a show, he's being true to himself, and in Jesus we are now adopted as the Father's children so

that we too can live true to who we are. We love because in Jesus that's now our new nature, our family character. And Jesus lives out this love by dying for us, so that we can now sacrifice ourselves for each other. So that we can meet the needs of our brothers and sisters at our expense, for their benefit.

Live true to who you are in the Father

This is what it means to do the Father's will; to live true to who we are. In Jesus we are the Father's children whom he loves and delights to invest his life in. The children he's proud of. What a fantastic foundation for life. We don't go out to discover who we are; we know it. I'm the Father's child. And I'm loved. I don't have to play games to get you

to like me. That's a slavish way to live. This week at I read Colossians this is what the Spirit revealed; 'Please Jesus, love people'. If I don't feel loved guess what I'll spend my life doing? Pleasing people with the false belief they'll like me, maybe one or two might even grow to love me, if I work really hard, do the right think, pleasing them. That's a death sentence.

Thank God in Jesus I'm loved. So I live rejoicing in the love I have, seeking to please Jesus, because I know he loves me. I'm not trying to win love, but enjoy it, celebrate it. I seek to please Jesus, that's freedom, because Jesus has given his life for me. And now I'm freed to love for no other reason than I'm loved. For no other reason than as the Father's child, that's who he has created me