

All creation sings God's praise, this is the day the Lord has made, rejoice! Overwhelming joy and playfulness are at the heart of the message. Today we start the second worship series of the summer; we started with Psalms, now to the New Testament book of Ephesians and we'll close out the summer with the sacraments, baptism and communion, from Martin Luther's Catechism. Moving from Psalms to Ephesians might seem like a big jump but the Psalms ended, "let everything that lives praise the Lord," and Ephesians starts saying it is the destiny of the whole creation to "live for the praise of God's glory."

Who wrote Ephesians: was it the apostle Paul, or a student of his, or a person writing in the style of Paul after his death? The most common belief among scholars today is it was a student of Paul's after his death. Their educated guess is based on the vocabulary used and the way Ephesians talks about the church and Jesus is different than the undisputed Paul books: Romans, I & II Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, I Thessalonians and Philemon. But Ephesians has what Martin Luther called the whole of the gospel in a nutshell, the gospel in a sentence; Ephesians 2.8, "You have been saved by grace through faith and it is not of your own doing but a gift from God."

(Read Ephesians 1: 1-14)

It is difficult to speed read Ephesians. You need to dwell in the text to experience the power of the language. Ephesians has poetic lines that allow you to revel in the beauty of the meaning of the words—phrases that take you up into the presence and power of God. The soaring

opening lines that we read today will, by the end of the book, be paired with an internal conflict—even in the presence of God, having experienced the redemptive power of God, there is still evil at work in the world and that reality gives faith that quality of resistance.

The book of Ephesians is a bit like a fireworks show that has the magnificent finale at the beginning as the book starts with a cosmic vision, the redemption of the whole world. It is an explosion of words—telling all Jesus has done for us. And it uses family language there is the line "God's plan for the fullness of time. The Greek word translated as "plan" is *economia*, it sounds like our word *economy*, but what it means is: the way of ordering the household or the way of giving order and structure to the home. Ephesians uses family language to describe God and God's work on our behalf. In verse 5 is the word adoption, "God has destined us for adoption through Jesus Christ." What does it mean to be an adoptive parent? What do you go through when adopting a child? Val Sorenson has two adopted children and so I talked with her to better understand and she agreed to share (Val comes up front).

Kjell: Val, thank you for sharing this morning, will you tell us about the process you have to go through to adopt a child?

Val: It was a really long process, 18 months of background checks, finger prints people needing to verify we are decent people and all the while there was no guarantee that we would get a child. There was so much uncertainty. So much vulnerability.

My personality is such that I like to have all the information and know what is going to happen and that was not at all what the adoptive process was like. I had to let go and give up control.

Kjell: When you think about God being our adoptive parent, what insights do you have into God because you are an adoptive parent?

Val: God must really want us. To be a biological parent, that can happen pretty quickly, but adoption takes time and forethought, God gives up control because God so wants to be in relationship with us. I think about how my heart felt as we waited for our children—the deep desire and yearning.

Kjell: Val, thank you for sharing (Val sits down). Your story helps me to see how the image of adoption shows us what God's love is like. God is invested in us, God takes time for us and God invests vast amounts emotional energy. God deeply desires relationship with us. Since creation began God has been seeking us and at great cost to God, God limits God's power for us, to be in relationship with us.

One of the other family words is inheritance in verse 11, In Christ we have obtained an inheritance. The gift establishes the child or children and gives them a future. Inheritance is gift, given not because of who we are but because of whose we are. We are God's. And God is the great giver. God wants to give us and all creation every good gift. You are fully known by God and you are loved. Amen.