

I. Text: Rom. 8:28-30

²⁸And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. ²⁹For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (Rom. 8:28-30)

II. In God's redemptive story we see 4 scenes that have a very common theme: Family!

A. Creation: God created mankind in the image of a perfect Father.

- Our Father (before the beginning) existed in perfect Harmony with the Son and Holy Spirit.
- From the very beginning the Trinitarian nature of God was on display.
- Within Himself God displayed the fact that there is no competition in Him. There is no insecurity in Him. In God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) there is divine completeness and fulfillment.
- In the Trinitarian expression of the Godhead, God uses himself to display the beautiful and almost indescribable complexities of community.
- So God created man in His image and likeness. Man was a clear reflection to the world of what God is like (if you could wrap your mind around the enormity of that display).
- So when God created Adam, he did not create Adam with isolation in mind. God specifically hardwired Adam with a desire and a hunger to share, to connect and to commune.
 - God creatively designed Adam with a capacity and a thirst to belong to a selfless, secure community.
- In His infinite wisdom, God gave Adam a family to express God's superior design and purpose to all the rest of creation.
 - From the very beginning, God gave man a family to reflect God's perfect character to all who'd dare peak in.

- Although He alone is God, God unselfishly and almost inexplicably chose not exist alone (and in isolation). This God is not very far off.
 - We were made in that image.

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” (Rom. 8:28).

- B. **Rebellion:** Just as God used the family to reveal His perfect plan for mankind, He used family to expose the depravity of Man’s heart when man relies on man.
- Adam may have never known that rebellion had settled in his heart, had he not been in communion and connection with family.
 - Family will pull some stuff out of you that you didn’t know was in you.
- Family has a way of exposing sin, inner issues and habits.
 - So the mirror (man) who reflected the very image of God became cloudy and distorted (at best)
- Most people (when they look at man’s rebellion... man’s failure) would rest on the obvious fact that the devil was at work in the garden and has been at work ever since.
- But in the midst of the colossal human failure, human rebellion; You better know that God has been at work!
 - He never got off the throne!
 - And God never changed his plan.
 - God never lost control. There’s no doubt in our mind. We know this...

“And we know that all things work together for good (even what the devil meant for evil) to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose...” (Rom. 8:28)

- C. **Restoration:** God chose to use family (Jesus, our Kinsman Redeemer) as the vessel and vehicle to propagate His plan of restoration and redemption.

- God the Father, used the offspring and seed of the Woman to do what the First Man Adam never could.
- So God used family. He utilized family lines because He's a God who honors relations and even generations.
- Finally, Jesus was birthed into this mess of a world and man was finally mirroring the image of God (as intended from the beginning).
 - But there was something about this man.
 - Authentic and flawless, born of a virgin
 - Acquainted with all of our temptations and hurts, yet without sin.
 - He (Jesus) was arrested and tried in a kangaroo court devoid of due process and prisoner's rights.
 - Beaten beyond recognition and hung on a cross reserved for the worst criminals.
 - His only crime was being guilty of being the only one who could bring mankind back into the family of God.
 - He willingly died the death that we deserved to die.
 - Jesus miraculously took on our shame and guilt. And He offered to anyone who would receive it, His perfect righteous identity.

*Would you receive that great exchange today?

- God the Father used Family (Jesus) to redeem us and bring us back into right standing with Himself. And if the devil thought He was busy... God's been busy.

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." (Rom. 8:28-29)

- In God the Father's express foreknowledge, He predestined His Son (Jesus) to be the firstborn among many brothers.
- Jesus is our Kinsmen Redeemer.
- This may be difficult, but if you believe in Jesus as your Lord. Then he's not only your Savior, your God, your Hope, and Peace... But He's the firstborn among many brother!

Recap:

- **Creation:** God used family to display His own character through man in the garden.
- **Fall:** He used family to expose the depravity of man's heart in the Fall.
- **Restoration:** And God used family to redeem us and bring us back into His family.

Q: What is God doing now?

- D. **Sanctification:** God is molding and shaping us whom He has redeemed into the image of Jesus.
- Sure... In heavenly places, we are seated in Christ the moment we accept Jesus.
 - Positionally, we are perfect in Jesus.
 - On the inside we are sealed with the Holy spirit of Promise.
- But on the outside... God is doing an ongoing work on us.
 - God is removing and scraping away remnants of the old self.
- God wants all of us to be like... Jesus.
 - And He uses family to help make us more like Jesus.
 - God gave us spiritual brothers and sisters (a new family) to always be pointing us back toward Him.

Rom. 8:29: *"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."*

*The problem is that it's sometimes difficult to swallow the fact that we who are born again are actually born into a spiritual family.

- Several Scriptures support the premise of church as family. Here's a few:
 - "... As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (**John 1:12**)
 - "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know

that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:1-2)

- A spiritual family is a little hard to swallow, because most of us still haven't gotten our heads around our natural family that God gave us.
 - If you trust Jesus as your Savior, then God the Father is not only His Father. But He's also your Father.

Rom. 8:14-16: *"¹⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father". ¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God"*

- The day you received Jesus as your Savior, you were born again... into a new family.
 - Now you have a Heavenly Father.
 - You were adopted, but not as an only child.
 - We now have brothers and sisters
- Christ died not only to bring us back to God, but He also died to bring us back to each other.
- Jesus (as our Kinsman Redeemer) and Big Bro... set the tone for how we are to relate to our new family.
 - Lay down your life for you ...family.
- Can we come to grips with the fact that the church is not like a family?
 - The church is a family.
 - You've got a new family that God completely desires for you to do life with.
- In a family, barriers and obstacles are not excuses not to love. They are opportunities to express love.
 - One of the marks of a family is that families put up with that weird uncles, aunts, cousins, brothers, etc.
 - If family treats each other poorly, they're still family.
- You are not always going to want to pursue your family.
 - We pursue them because our Father pursues us.
 - We forgive because our Father forgives.

*Could there be a greater barrier than the barrier that separated us from God (sin)?

- Yet Jesus overcame it, lovingly pursued us, and welcomed us back into relationship with the Godhead
 - “*While we were enemies...*” we were reconciled by the death of the Son (**Rom 5:10**)

*Jesus set the tone for how to do family (selfless love, inconceivable longsuffering, and transparency).

- Transparency (Realness) is a prerequisite for family.
 - Even though Jesus was perfect and flawless, He still shared his loneliness and isolation with his family.
 - “*My God. My God. Why have you forsaken Me?*” (Matt. 27:46)

III. Conclusion: Hospital vs. Family

As a people, we are forced to choose between two almost opposing views of the church.

- Is the church a hospital or is the church a family?
 - Biblically I think there's plenty of evidence to point toward family. A hospital? Not so much.
- If the church (the Body of Christ) is just a Hospital, then it's just an institution. It's an organization, instead of a living organism.
 - If the church is a Hospital, then we're only called to exist as a bunch of unconnected, unrelated, needy patients who are waiting to be cared for by the very few overworked staff.
 - And the only means of relationship is that we all came into the same building, for the same purpose.
- But if the church is a family, then we are all invested in each other's very lives.
 - We all care for one another's needs.
 - We all rub each other the wrong way sometimes.
 - We all utilize our giftings to minister to one another.
 - We all invest in each other's live with our time.
 - Hang out.

Heb. 10:25: “*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching*”. (Heb. 10:25)

- Don’t forsake the assembling... Don’t be a stranger... Don’t do your own thing.
- Get together. Do worship services together. Do Bible Study together. Do Lakers games together. Work out together. Cry together. Endure hardship together.
- Sometimes we miss the power of why in this scripture.
- Doing life together will push us, challenge us and mature us like nothing else.
- Just a verse before, the writer of Hebrews gives the why:

Heb. 10:24: “*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works*” (Heb. 10:24)

- **When the people of God do life together...**
 - We model what love and good works looks like to the world.
 - We challenge brothers and sisters (some who have never experienced love in their earthly families) to love and produce good works.
 - We provide plenty of opportunity to forgive.
 - We instigate and agitate until longsuffering is produced.
 - Plead with one another to come back to the cross when unbiblical thinking exposes itself.
 - Point each other back to the cross when sin is exposed.
- Together we demonstrate the truth of the gospel of the gospel to the world
 - Serve each other
 - Correct each other
 - Love each other
 - Utilize gifts to grow each other
 - Utilize resources to aid each other.

Warning: This will be both exciting and challenging. Family...

- People in your family are not impressed with you.
- They know full well who you are, but they love you anyway
- God isn't pleased with you because you're good at family. He is pleased with you because Jesus was good at family.

Challenge: Can you enjoy Jesus while this new, strange family is being used to shape you, mold you and mature you?