

VIII Trinity 2026

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

Romans 8.12-17 St. Matthew 7.15-21



We are all God's adopted children. We were brought into God's family through His unearned love, mercy, and the redemptive work of his Son, Jesus Christ. We have been given the "Spirit of adoption". That means we get to call God by the same deeply personal, intimate name, Jesus calls him...*Abba*...an Aramaic word that literally means "Dear Father".

The first part of today's Epistle reading is our friend Saint Paul's instructions on how God's children are supposed to behave. Our human nature often gets in the way. We do things we shouldn't have done; we fail to do the things we should have done. We get caught up in the world and get distracted. Paul instructs to to rely on God's Spirit to guide us and keep us grounded.

The second part of the Epistle has a deeply personal meaning to me. Perhaps that's because I am an adopted child myself. Adopted children know they are special. My adopted parents loved me enough to give me a home and the chance to love them back.

ALL Christians are God the Father's adopted children regardless of their natural parentage. Adopted children have the same rights as their brothers and sisters should they have any, including a share in their adoptive parents estate.

Jesus is God's "only-begotten Son, born of the Virgin Mary" as we say in the Creed. Jesus died and rose again on the third day for us. He has received his inheritance and now sits at his Father's right side. One day we will inherit what Jesus has now and that is spending eternity with him and *Abba*, our "Dear Father".

There is a connection between what Paul says "living as our human nature wants us to" and living like one of God's adopted children. We always want to act like we are God's adopted children. It's one thing to say we love God; it's another thing to show how much we love him by loving others. They say talk is cheap...and it is. Our actions toward others say a lot about who we are. Actions...do speak louder than words!

The Gospel lesson is also about how we behave toward others. If we act in a way that is disrespectful or mean we are not doing what God wants us to do. We may not always agree with other people but that never gives us the right to act badly toward them. The best way for us to show we are Christians is to do exactly what Jesus tells us to do: “Love God above everything else and love others in the same way we want to be loved”.

The Gospel also comes with a specific warning not be fooled by “false prophets”. Jesus warns us there are people even within the church that talk the talk...but they don’t walk the walk. They say all the right things people want to hear. They look good on the outside. They appear as harmless as sheep. They deliver messages they claim are inspired by God. But inside...they are like wild wolves only concerned about themselves. They end up hurting the very people they are supposed to love and cherish even more than themselves.

Jesus then tells a short agricultural story that resonates even to 21st Century Christians. We know how healthy a tree is by the fruit it produces. A healthy tree that receives the right amount of sun and rain produces a bumper crop of good fruit. A diseased tree cannot produce good fruit and eventually gets cut down. False prophets are like diseased trees...they will be known by what they do...and they too will get cut down.

God has given each of us the gift of the Holy Spirit to do what is right and good, and the wisdom to know when someone is trying to fool us. We want to use our gifts as God intended, so no one can accuse us of being false prophets. If we always act for the good of others, just as Jesus did, God will bless us and the work we do

The “fruit” is the result of the good works we do, and the work we do is for the honor and glory of Abba...“Dear Father”, and to bring others to him. Like a tree that gives us healthy and good fruit, we want to always ask God to help us act like his children, and always do the right thing.

We want to be known by the good works we do.

