

Communion Service Order

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS:

CALL:

PRAISE: 188 God is our strength and refuge

PRAYER (Approach, Confession, Absolution):

KID'S ADDRESS: "I'm Justified- Just as if I'd never sinned!"

PRAISE: 128 Father God, I wonder how I managed to exist
(Kids leave for Sunday School)

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

Old Testament- Hosea 11: 1-9 (page 907)

New Testament- Ephesians 1: 1-14 (page 1173)

SERMON: Christian Blessings- "I'm a child of God."

PRAISE and OFFERING: 133 Father I place into your hands

PRAYER (Offering and Intercession):

THE INVITATION AND WORDS OF INSTITUTION:

COMMUNION PRAYER:

DISTRIBUTION OF ELEMENTS (retain seats so all may partake together):

PRAISE: 52 God sent His Son, they called Him Jesus

BENEDICTION:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.

Kid's Address: "I'm Justified, Just as if I'd never sinned!"

Once there was a brother and a sister John and Jane. When they grew up they both did very different jobs! Jane became a judge. Every day she would sit in court and listen to all the evidence. Then she would have to decide if someone was guilty or not and if they were guilty she would have to punish them. Sometimes she even had to send some people to prison! John became a robber! One day he stole a lot of money from the bank but unfortunately when he was running away he tripped and fell and the Guards caught him. He was arrested and sent to the court at the county council. But who do you think was the judge on the day John went to court? It was his sister Jane!

Now Jane was a very fair judge. She looked down at her brother John and then listened carefully to all the people who gave evidence. The lady in the bank told her how John had taken the money. The Guard told her how he had captured Jon in the street and found the money in the bag he'd been carrying. There was no doubt about it, John was guilty! What was Jane going to do? She loved her brother John. She didn't want him to have to be punished. But she also knew that as a judge she had to be fair. She knew she couldn't just ignore what the law said. So she stood up and read out the sentence, "John you have been found guilty of robbing the bank. The law says that for this crime you can either pay a E5,000 fine or go to prison for 5 years."

Everyone around the court gasped! They knew John couldn't pay the fine. They knew that Jane was his sister. But by being a fair judge she was sentencing her brother to 5 years in prison!

But then something even more surprising happened. Jane took off her wig and gown. She walked down to the clerk of the court. She took out her cheque book and wrote a cheque for E5,000. Then she turned to John and said, "John, the price for what you have done is paid. The fine the law demanded for your crime has been paid. You are now justified in the sight of the law. You are free to go! "You mean I don't have to pay anything", replied John, "I don't have to go to prison?" "No John, I've paid the fine for you. You are free to go." "Wow." said John. "It's just as if I'd never done anything wrong!" "How can I ever thank you Jane?" "Go out and don't steal anymore!" she replied. "I promise" said John.

Application:

Today we are celebrating Holy Communion. We eat some bread and we drink some wine. As we do this we remember that when Jesus died on the cross he paid the price for all our sins. We say thank you to God that because Jesus has died we are justified in his eyes. That means a decision has been made in the courtroom of heaven that we will not be punished for the wrong things we have done. It is just as if we had never sinned. Because Jesus has taken our punishment God will never punish us as we deserve for our sins. When you trust that Jesus died for you on the cross you too will be justified. God will accept that Jesus took your punishment. He will accept you forever and will never punish you as you deserve. It will be just as if you'd never sinned. I hope you trust that Jesus died for your sin. I hope you say thank you to God every day. The best way to do that is to live in a way that will make God happy.

Adoption- I'm a child of God!

Intro:

His eyes sparkled with excitement as he spoke. "We get our new wee girl on Saturday." It seemed a strange statement until I remembered the power of modern scans to predict a baby's gender. (Knowing the benefits of modern technology I replied,) "I hadn't realised your wife was pregnant" (I replied.) "She's not," he answered. "We're fostering a little ten year old girl."

As we talked on, I learned something of the differences between adoption and fostering, and discovered more about the little girl that my friend and his wife would be foster parents for. But above all, I rediscovered the passion that a loving parent has for their children. If you were to ask me, "What is a Christian?" I think the best answer I could give is, "A Christian is someone who has God as his or her father." In one sense God is the father of us all, in that he is the one who created us. We belong to God. The little girl that my friends are adopting has a real father and mother who made her. She will always belong to them. But in another sense God is only the intimate, loving Father to those who have been adopted into His family. In a similar way, it is only because my friends have agreed to become Sara's foster parents that she will experience the loving care of a family unit.

The question is how do we get adopted into God's family? How do we move from the place of simply having God as our creative Father to experiencing the depths of love and intimacy of God as our adoptive Father?

1 We need to appropriate our baptism:

When we were baptised we received a certificate of adoption. This certificate gives us the right to enter into the Father's house and receive all the blessings of being His beloved children. But it is not automatic. If it is not appropriated then it does us no good. It's a bit like Ronseal wood stain. It does exactly what it says on the tin- it seals and protects untreated wood for five years. But it is of no use unless you open the tin and apply it to the fence! So too, when we were baptised God gave us a sign and seal of his blessing; promising us His forgiveness, the gift of His Spirit to help us, the hope of a future resurrection and most importantly the acceptance into the church family with the promise of His fatherly love forever. All of this is true for us if we apply it to our lives by receiving Christ through repentance and faith. Listen to how John describes it in his gospel, "*To all who received Christ, who believed in His name, He gave the power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but born of God.*"

So the teaching of adoption forces each of us to ask the question, "Have I opened the tin of my baptism and received the blessing of Christ that it contains?"

2 Adoption is the greatest Christian blessing:

In the opening chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he loses himself in a poetical prayer as he sits in prison meditating on the blessings of what it means to be a Christian. As he contemplates the wonder of God's love to us in Christ he pens these words, "*God determined in His love before time began to adopt us to himself through Jesus Christ, in the good purpose of his will, so that all might praise the glory of the generous gift which he freely gave us in the Beloved.*" Paul is overwhelmed by the truth that out of free grace God has chosen to bring him and us into his family through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He suggests that the reason God did this was that we might be so moved by the wonder of it all that we would pour out our hearts and lives in praise to God for what he has done for us. But why is it so special to be adopted into God's family? Why should a grasp of this truth move us to worship and praise?

Well for a start we don't deserve it! Least of all Paul! He was once a leading persecutor of Christianity. He stood and watched while Stephen was stoned to death. He was also responsible for the imprisonment of many early Christians! Yet God was merciful to him and still accepted him into his family. It's the same for us. Even though we only deserve God's punishment for our sin, he has justified us in Christ and adopts us into his family out of sheer love.

But secondly, the gift of adoption is so special because it is such a contrast to every other expression of religion including the worship of God we discover in the Old Testament. You see, in the Old Testament, there is an emphasis on the Holiness of the Lord, expressed by His greatness and purity. As a result, religious experience was dominated by a humility and reverence, approaching God with loving fear and being careful to keep your place! Now God has not changed. The God of the NT is still holy in His greatness and purity, but another side to His character is revealed more fully. It is His loving fatherhood- His desire to adopt us into his family and literally become our dad in a very intimate way. You know how it is with your own kids, your grandchildren, a nephew or niece. You love to see them. They love to see you. They will run to you with complete abandon, they don't hesitate to show you affection, they're not afraid to ask you the most difficult and uninhibited questions. What's more, you love them so much that you never turn them away, no matter how foolish or naughty they've been. You love to talk with them, you worry about them, when they're sick you go out of your way to comfort and help them. If you've trusted in Jesus, that's how it is now between you and God! He's your dad! He couldn't love you any more! He longs to hear from you. You can ask him anything! He'll never turn you away! The stress of the NT is not on the difficulty and the danger of approaching God, but on the boldness and the confidence with which we may approach him. When we put our faith in Christ, God becomes our loving heavenly father. We belong to his family, we may approach him without fear and always be sure of his fatherly care and concern. This is the heart of the NT message.

Thirdly, adoption bestows on us a share of all the blessings that Jesus Christ enjoys. - Adoption was a common practice in the Graeco-Roman world. An adult who wanted an heir, and someone to carry on the family name would adopt a young adult male of good character as their son. Paul uses this picture to describe the blessing that we have in Christ. God in His great love for us, has chosen to adopt people of bad character to become “heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.” The wonder of adoption is that all the blessings that the father has promised to Jesus his son will also be ours to share in the new heaven and the new earth. Adoption is by far the greatest Christian blessing. Firstly, it reminds us of the sheer love of God for us- welcoming us in despite our unworthiness. Secondly, through it God becomes our heavenly dad, and thirdly, it bestows upon us all the blessings that belong to Jesus Christ, God’s son. Let me encourage you this week to take some time to meditate on the blessings of being a child of God and tell your heavenly Father just how much you appreciate it!

3 The nature of our sonship is similar to that of Christ:

It may be possible that your experience of childhood has not been as pleasant as it is supposed to be. Therefore, your initial response to the knowledge that God is your father may not fill you with excitement, but rather dread. But let me say to you that this need not be the case. For the fatherhood of God is not a model taken from an imperfect human father or mother. God’s fatherhood is a perfect one. We discover the nature of God’s fatherhood to us by examining how he was a father to his son Jesus Christ. Now the first thing that I must point out is that the sonship of Jesus to his father was different to ours. Jesus is the eternal son of the Father. There is a heretical teaching called ‘adoptionism’ which states that Jesus only became the son of God at his baptism. But this is untrue. The bible teaches us that Jesus Christ has always been the son of God the Father, even before he was ever born on earth.

Despite this difference, there are many ways in which Jesus’ relationship to his father is the same as ours. We must be careful to take our model of the fatherhood of God not from secular examples of parenting, but from the relationship of Jesus to the Father. So what does Jesus’ relationship with his father teach us about our relationship to God?

Firstly, God’s fatherhood requires that we must be willing to place ourselves under his authority. Jesus fully subjected himself to the authority of his father. He said, “I came down from heaven not to do my own will but to do the will of him who sent me.” If our experience of authority has been a bad one we need not fear, for God’s authority is a good one. He wants what is best for us and therefore his commands are not a burden. This doesn’t mean that it will always be easy to follow his directions in the bible or what we feel he may be calling us to do. But ultimately we must be willing to obey God our father completely knowing that his ways are best for our Christian growth, for the benefit of others and to bring most glory to his name.

Secondly, God’s fatherhood assures us of his constant affection and fellowship no matter what our circumstances. Jesus said, “The father has loved me. I have kept my father’s commandments and remain in his love.” He is also recorded as saying, “I am not alone for the father is with me.”

Even if like Israel that we read about in Hosea we’ve wandered far from God He still loves us and stands with open arms waiting for us to come home. It’s only when we

really start to believe deep within our hearts that God loves us, no matter what, that we'll have the confidence to face the problems that life throws at us. It's only when we really start to trust that God loves us that we'll find the security to live for Him no matter what other people think. Tom Wright says, "If we imagine that our God is a bully, an angry threatening parent ready to yell at us, slam the door on us, or kick us out into the street because we haven't quite made the grade, we will fail at the first whisper of temptation. But if we remember the voice that spoke those powerful words of love, we will find the way through."

Are you in the middle of a wilderness experience? Lonely, desolate, disorientated. Are your circumstances unfamiliar causing you fear or threatening to harm you? Do you feel at a low ebb physically and emotionally, in pain or vulnerable to temptation? Do you ever think "How on earth will I ever make it?" May the knowledge that God loves you deeply and has done since the day you were baptised, give you the assurance, courage and strength to carry on. Whatever we're facing, God's fatherly care is a reminder that he knows what is best for us and is always there with us carrying us through.

Lastly, God's fatherhood involves honour. As God exalted Jesus his son, so he exalts Jesus' followers as brothers in the same family. Jesus said, "If anyone serves me my father will honour them." Jesus also prayed these wonderful words before going to the cross, "I desire that those you have given me will join me where I am." Thus God wants us to see and to share in the glory that Jesus now enjoys. He will honour us but in return we must honour Him by the way that we live our lives.

When anyone asks us, "Tell me about the God that you worship." We can answer, He's my father in heaven. I want to listen to him and do what he says because I know that he loves me, whatever I face He is always beside me and he's so proud of me that one day he's going to let me share in his glory.

Conclusion:

So what does it mean to be a Christian?

A Christian is someone who has God as their father. When we were baptised, each of us received a certificate of adoption. Have you cashed in the full benefits of all that your baptism promises by turning from sin and trusting in Christ? Have you truly been adopted into God's family?

What's so special about being adopted?

To be adopted into God's family is a most wonderful privilege because we don't deserve it, because it gives us intimate access at any time to God as our loving father and because we will receive a share of all that is Christ's. Take time this week to dwell on the blessings of adoption and say thank you to God.

But what does it mean to have God as our father?

It will mean subjecting ourselves to his authority, knowing that with this responsibility comes the assurance of God's continual love and presence and the promise that he if we honour him, he will honour us with a share in his glory.

Call: “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God.”

Approach, Confession, Absolution:

Almighty God we worship you because you are a perfect Father. We thank you that in love and mercy you have adopted us into your family through your Son Jesus Christ. Thank you that because of Jesus’ perfect life and death that by simply trusting in Him we are justified in your sight. Thank you that because of Jesus we can come boldly into your presence with the assurance that you will hear and answer us. We come to you conscious of the fact that we are far from perfect children. We often disappoint you and at times we let down the family name. SILENCE. Yet we ask that you will save us from self-contempt and help us to really believe that you never stop loving us in spite of all that we are and do. Give us the assurance of pardon, the release and relief of those who know that the past is forgiven and the zest and joy of those who know the future is still to make. So may we live in that fullness and freedom of life which you have promised that we can share through Jesus Christ our Lord. Help us in our worship today to understand just how much you love us and how privileged we are to be Christians. In response may we sing and pray sincerely out of hearts that honestly love you and that are bursting to say thank you for all that you’ve done for us. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, Amen.

Offering and Intercession:

Lord of all the world you are also our Father in heaven. Thank you that as a perfect father you provide for all our needs. Accept our offerings today and give wisdom to our church leaders to use them wisely for the benefit of our church family, the wider world and the glory of your name.

We pray for all who are ill in body, mind or spirit. In silence now we remember especially those known to us. Bring them your peace in their pain, your strength in their weakness, your comfort in their sadness.

We pray for our parents and elderly relatives. Give us wisdom to know how to do what is best for them and to show them particular love in the midst of their increasing frailty and need.

We commit to your care all who are strained and stressed in the home, those with poor housing, those with young children, those nursing sick partners, parents or children, those whose marriage is going through difficult times, those with too much to do or too little to keep them occupied.

We pray for our government and other rulers around the world. At this time of economic uncertainty help them to make wise decisions. Enable those who have been made redundant to find new employment. Help those who have had homes repossessed to find affordable and suitable accommodation. Strengthen those whose businesses and livelihoods are threatened and guide them in crucial decisions so that they may weather the present storm. In the midst of these difficult circumstances, teach us the lessons that you want us to learn. May we cling to you more closely and support each other with renewed sincerity. This we ask in Jesus name who teaches us to pray saying: Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread, And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us, And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil, For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, For ever and ever, AMEN.

THE INVITATION AND WORDS OF INSTITUTION:

This is the table of Christ. The bread, the wine, the invitation to eat and drink, are all His. He is our host; we are His guests. If you confess Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Master, from whatever branch of the Christian Church you come, we invite you to join with us and celebrate communion together.

Hear the gracious words of our Lord Jesus Christ- *“I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”*

Hear the words of the Institution of the Lord’s Supper as they have been handed down to us by St. Paul:

“I have received from the Lord what I also passed onto you: The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me’. In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the New covenant in my blood; do this whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.”

As the Lord Jesus took bread and wine and gave thanks, so we take these elements of bread and wine for His use and ours in this sacrament.

MANUAL ACTIONS:

Breaking the Bread:

The Lord Jesus Christ on the night he was betrayed TOOK BREAD (lift bread)
And when He had given thanks, HE BROKE IT (break bread) and said:

THIS IS MY BODY WHICH WAS BROKEN FOR YOU; DO THIS IN
REMEMBRANCE OF ME.

Distribution of the Bread:

When all have received the bread say-

TAKE, EAT, THIS IS THE BODY OF CHRIST, WHICH IS BROKEN FOR YOU.
THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF HIM AND WITH THANKSGIVING IN YOUR
HEART.

Raising the Cup:

In the same way our Lord Jesus TOOK THE CUP (raise cup) saying:

THIS IS THE NEW COVENANT IN MY BLOOD; DO THIS WHENEVER YOU
DRINK IT, IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.

Distribution of the Wine:

When all have received the wine say-

DRINK YOU ALL OF IT. THIS CUP IS THE NEW COVENANT IN THE BLOOD OF CHRIST WHICH IS SHED FOR YOU. THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF HIM AND WITH THANKSGIVING IN YOUR HEART.

PRAYER:

Almighty God, we thank you for this opportunity to remember our Saviour's death, and celebrate His resurrection. Thank you that because of Jesus we are justified in your sight. Thank you that in him, we the guilty ones have been declared not guilty in the courtroom of heaven. Thank you that you have made us your daughters and sons forever. Lord as your children, help us to live our lives so that we will please you and bring honour to the family name. Give us a growing assurance that one day you will bring us and all your faithful people from every nation, throughout all of history to the family home in heaven where there will be great joy forever. And to your name be glory and praise forever and ever, Amen.

PRAISE (Resurrection): 52 God sent His Son, they called Him Jesus

BENEDICTION:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore, Amen.