Blessings from the Father

Scripture: Ephesians 1:3-6
Subject: Blessed
Central Theme: Identity of Blessing
Objective Statement: Our "in Christ" identity can be clearly seen in three ways that God has blessed us.
Keyword: Ways
Points:

1. Chosen in Christ to be Holy (v.3-4)
2. Chosen in Christ to be Adopted (v.5)
3. Chosen in Christ to be Accepted (v.6)

Introduction:

Connection:

- Alright, here is a chance for you to connect with someone around you.
- The answer may be "no I never had one" or "I'm not sharing that!"
- But, if you want to have some fun, turn to a neighbor in the room and tell them if you have ever had a nickname, and what that nickname was.

- I never really had a lot of nicknames.
- But it is amazing how nicknames can stick- either with other people or even in our own minds.
- Kids in elementary school used to say “Ben Ben the big fat Hen”. Why do I remember that? I have no idea!
- In college I was the guy that gave people nicknames.
- There was a buddy that I had on my floor named the most Italian name possible- Marco Antonio Impastato. I asked him, how do you spell your last name? He said, “I’m pasta to.” He was a big guy and a lot of fun. One day I told him, Your name is now Moose. We will call you Moose.
- Years later when we got together, he said, I know I’m talking to someone from that time in my life because they call me that.
- It’s amazing how we identify ourselves.
- Today, I want you to think of a new way to identify yourself. Here is who you are if you are in Christ. You are blessed.

Tension:

- Last week we started a series in the book of Ephesians in the New Testament.
- The name of the series is “We are rich”, because the theme of this incredible book is who we are “in Christ”.
- The reason I’m saying that you are blessed today is because of the first verse of our text. Here is what it says

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Ephesians 1:3-4

(3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

- Verse 3 begins a single sentence in the original language that goes all the way to verse 14.
- In the usual structure of a letter Paul goes from an introduction right to a thanksgiving section.
- But in the book of Ephesians, he goes into what was called a Berekah or an anthem of praise to God.
- This whole section, verse 3-14, could be divided into blessings from the Father, blessings from the Son, and blessings from the Holy Spirit.

- The word “trinity” is not found in the scriptures, but it is plainly taught in places like this throughout the scripture.
- Verse three makes the subject of the sentence God the Father.
- Remember that last week we saw this expression “in Christ”….
  - The author, the apostle Paul, was sent by Christ.
  - The saints, the recipients of the letter, are in Christ.
  - The source of this identity and position was from the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
- This is the identity that he is expressing repeatedly. All our blessings come from God through Christ because we are in Christ.
- Paul begins to praise God because of what He has done to bless us who are “in Christ”.
- He has “blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ”.
- These spiritual blessings that God chose to give those who are in Christ are the subject of the rest of the sentence and section.
  - The Father blessed us.
  - The Son has blessed us.
  - The Spirit blesses us.
- Over the next couple of sermons we are going to see exactly how that God has done that for those who are in Christ Jesus.
- Today we are going to start with how we are blessed by God the Father.

Body:

Our “in Christ” identity can be clearly seen in three ways that God has blessed us.

1. Chosen in Christ to be Holy (v.3-4)

(4) According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

Explanation:

- Now let’s take this verse phrase by phrase to help us mine all the richness of what we find here.
- We are blessed by the Father with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ

- According- Appropriate to or in proportion to what you would expect from the God of the universe who sent His Son to die for us from heaven is how we are blessed.
    - Our blessing is according to this Father.
    - It's in keeping with… or proportional to the resources that He has!
    - Now that should be exciting to us.
- As he hath chosen us in him
    - God chose us in him…
    - When you talk about God choosing, predestination, or election there are multiple ways to think about that choosing.
    - It is a hotly debated topic today.
    - Some believe that God chooses individuals to salvation, and therefore chooses others to damnation.
    - They teach that man in incapable of choosing salvation without God giving them the gift of faith and regenerating their heart so that they can choose.
    - The Bible teaches that God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.
    - So how could God not be willing that any should perish, and yet at the same time not choose to save some?
    - Why does God provide salvation for people and then send messengers to compel people to be saved if he is not willing to save some by choosing them for salvation?
    - At the same time, in this text it is clear that God chose us at some capacity. The question is how does God choose people?
    - There are times that God chooses for people to a specific purpose or calling.
    - For instance, God chose Israel as a nation to be his people that would carry his revelation and through which the Messiah would come. This had implications for salvation, but not everyone who is Jewish is automatically saved because of their being Jews.
    - There is also a choosing to a position or status. I believe this is the sense that is being spoken of here.
    - Simply put, God chose that all who would be in Him would be holy and without blame before him in love.
- God chose before the foundation of the world that those who are in Christ "should be holy and without blame before him In love".

- God, according to his foreknowledge, knows all who would be saved and those who would reject.
- Knowing what we will choose does not mean that we do not choose it out of our own free will.
- God chose to save us.
- In choosing to save us, he chose that those who would be saved would be "in Christ".
- He chose that those who are in Christ would be "holy and without blame".
- One commentator said it this way:
- "This passage is not about God predetermining which individuals will be in Christ and which ones won't! It is about God predetermining what will become of those who are in Christ through faith."
- An airline may determine beforehand, or predestine, which airplane will leave at noon tomorrow to fly from Cleveland to Tampa, and not decide who will be on it and who will not. So to, God can decide beforehand that those who are in Christ would be holy and blameless before Him in love.
- The text says that God has deternmined beforehand that the "faithful in Christ" (v1) will become "holy and without blame" in verse 4.
- This is amazing because that was exactly our problem.
    - When you and I accept Christ as our Savior, God has chosen that we will be made holy and without blame".
    - Our sinfulness, born out of our sin nature, has made us unholy outside of Christ.
    - We are in our sins and guilty before God.
    - But when we accept Christ as Savior, God imputes Christ's righteousness to our account.
    - We are sanctified, or set apart, positionally as those who are "in Christ".
    - God put our sin on Christ.
    - 2 Corinthians put it this way:

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2 Corinthians 5:21

(21) For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

- God makes us positionally holy or "set apart".
- Because we have Christ's imputed righteousness, we have no more condemnation.

Romans 8:1

(1) There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

- He also makes us more and more progressively holy.
- One day we will no longer sin, and we will be made perfectly holy!

Revelation 21:3-4

(3) And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

(4) And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

- God is growing us and transforming us who are in Christ.
- We are made more and more like His Son.
- The good news is that what he begins in us will be completed in the day of Jesus Christ.
- This is our identity. We are in Christ, and God is making us holy.

Transition Sentence:

- God chose that those who are in Christ would be holy.
- He also chose that those who are in Christ would be adopted.

2. Chosen in Christ to be Adopted (v.5)

(5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

Explanation:

- Not only do are we made holy, we are made a part of God's family.
- Not only are we saved from hell, and sanctified, we are adopted into a new family.
- God chose that those who would be in Christ would be adopted.
- When you and I get saved we become a part of God's family.
- Because we are in his family, we have all of the benefits of being one of His kids.
- God calls Himself Father, and He is that.
- Not only did He create us, but in Christ He redeemed us.
- If we are His sons and daughters, then we are heirs and joint heirs with Christ.

Romans 8:14-17

(14) For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

(15) For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

(16) The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

(17) And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

- We have a new family.
- We have a Spiritual Father.
- We have spiritual brothers and sisters.
- This impacts our identity:
    - What's your name?
    - I'm Benjamin Wayne Jennings.
    - Wayne-
    - Jennings-
- Guess what my son's name is:
    - Ezekiel Wayne Jennings
- When you are adopted or born into a new family you're given a new name.
- When you are part of a family you have a different kind of access.
- When I'm at your house, you would think it odd and even offensive for me to get up, go to your fridge, take out meat and bread and start making myself a sandwich.
- It's not my home. I'm not a part of your family.
- When we have guests come over and want them to feel welcome we even say, "Make yourself at home."
- But when you are a part of the family you have access to what is in the fridge.
- If you were to go to Springfield, Missouri and drive to Cherry Street Baptist Church tomorrow at 9:45am, to get to see Dennis Jennings you would have to walk by a receptionist and a secretary who would see if he was available. When I come to the office I walk right past their desks and into his office. Why? He's my dad. I have a different access because I'm family.
- When God chose that those who are in Christ would be adopted into His family, it meant that we would have and do have a different access.

Romans 5:1-2

(1) Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

(2) By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Application:

- God's plan always was and is to offer salvation to all people. Those who put their faith and trust in Him he invites to be adopted and part of His family.

Transition Sentence:

- God chose to bless those who are in Christ by making them holy, adopting them into His family. Finally we see that we are blessed by God the father by being…

3. Chosen in Christ to be Accepted (v.6)

(6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Explanation:

- As a result of how God has blessed us, His grace to us brings praise and glory to Him.
- Because of this grace, or unmerited, undeserved favor that God offers to us in Christ, we have been accepted.
- This is connected to what he said in the previous verse about adoption.
- It is obviously true that God loves all people.

John 3:16-17

(16) For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

(17) For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

- It is also true that God loves His family.
- God called His Son, Jesus Christ, beloved.
- He did this at His baptism…

Matthew 3:17

(17) And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

- Notice what He is called in Colossians 1:12-13

Colossians 1:12-13

(12) Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: (13) Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

- Because of God's grace, Jesus became a substitute on the cross for our sins. His blood, as we shall see atoned for our sins, and His righteousness was imputed to our account.
- Because of what Christ has done, we are made a part of His family, and as the verse says, "accepted in the beloved".
- God loves His only begotten son. He also loves us, adopted sons and daughters of God, because of what Christ has done.

Conclusion:

- So here are some identity shaping truths for us today:
    - God chose that those who would believe and be put in Christ would be:
        - Holy and Blameless
        - Adopted into His Family
        - Accepted into the Beloved
- You are not first and foremost an Ohioan.
- You are not first and foremost a Findlayan.
- You are not first and foremost what you do.
- You are not first and foremost your nationality, gender, addiction, sinful habit…
- If you know Christ as Savior you are not "an alcoholic". You are not "an addict". You may commit those sins, but you are not what you do.
- If you know Christ as Savior you are in Christ.
    - God chose for you to be holy, adopted, and accepted.
- You are rich.
- If you are struggling with those things, the problem is that you are not accessing the spiritual riches that God in His grace is offering to you who are in Christ Jesus.
- If you are not saved, then your life is characterized by the fact that you are not in Christ.
- Jesus said it this way to Nicodemus when he came to talk to Christ about spiritual things:

John 3:16-19

(16) For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

(17) For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be

saved.

(18) He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

(19) And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.