

## SONS AND DAUGHTERS

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Series: Trails to Freedom  
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Freedom, Lent,  
Ephesians 2:1-6

So we have started the Lenten season. The church will be spending time preparing for Easter. Lent is about remembering Jesus' sacrifice, reflection and turning back to God. For generations, the church has done this by fasting. Sundays are not included in the 40-day count, rather Sundays are days of celebration again building up to the celebration of Easter Sunday. So each Sunday we will be celebrating something in the life of Jesus as we lead up to his death and resurrection in our series *The Trails to Freedom*.

I want us to start that journey by looking at the very end of it. I want us to celebrate today that we are sons and daughters of God because of the death of Jesus.

I have often said that Jesus did not die so that we could go to church. There is and was something bigger going on. The church is part of the story. The church is God's plan to heal the world but the big story is really that the Kingdom of God has come. Because the King walked among us, everything was turned on its head. The Kingdom of God has come.

And the thing is your life changed at the point in History when Jesus died on the cross. How Paul puts it is that we became a new creation. We were adopted into God's family. We became sons and daughters of the King, children of God.

Here is an excerpt from a letter he wrote to the church in Ephesus. And I want us to read it together because there is power in God's word and there is power in doing it together.

*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace, you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,*

***Ephesians 2:1-6***

And baptism represents this, dying with Jesus and being raised up with him. Reflecting on Easter the point that really split our history into two. A time when we were dead to sin and a time when we became alive in Jesus. A time when we were sons of disobedience and a time when we became sons of God seated alongside Jesus.

Not under him, not second row, not behind him but seated with Jesus. What this says to me is that God sees you the same way he sees Jesus. God sees you as His child. This was what the death and resurrection of Jesus accomplished. That anyone who believes in Jesus can become a child of God. We are sons and daughters of the King.

Now I know it is what you hear in church the sad news is that often we do not realize what that means and we do not let it translate to our lives. What I see often is often people who are children of God living as though they were guests in God's house.

Last year some friends of mine and I went to visit my dad. I don't get to be home often anymore. But the moment we got home there was a feeling that just came over me. I was at home. Now my 3 guests knew how welcome they were by me and my dad but they were cautious about what they say, how they act. They were sitting cautiously not to upset anyone.

I got into the house and immediately put my feet on the table. I was at home. The person sitting opposite me is my dad. Nothing can change that. I do not need to act with a lot of caution.

Then we got into a conversation and my dad is not always an agreeable person. And my friends were careful about how much they would push the limits. They were guests in his house. Me, I was just going at it with him. Why? I am my father's son and I have come home.

I was very respectful. Though I would disagree with him in the conversation I would not bang the table. but not out of fear but out of honour and love for my father.

We talked into the night and it was time to go to bed. Now my culture is very specific about by what age I should have my own small hut in the homestead and I am way past that age. Nothing superstitious at least for our family. it is a measure of honour that from a certain age you no longer, at the homestead, should sleep in your father's house.

And I think we need to say it out loud that we are free to express our cultures. To the extent that they are not against the Kingdom of God, they are worth celebrating. I say that because for some years it has felt that to be Christian is to stop being African.

A friend once said to me that they will only give their kids Christian names. What is that? And by that, it often meant, not African names. And I just want form this stage to give all of us the freedom to express our cultures and bring out their beauty as they are gifts from God even as we repent for where they are broken and have caused brokenness around us.

Anyway, I have not yet built my little hut. My dad would be gracious enough to let me sleep in his house but I thought it would be honourable to carry a tent.

So I go outside to pitch my tent and my dad in the excitement of the cognac I had bought him comes and says, "Edgar If you are going to pitch a tent, you need to do it at the spot your house should go"

But here is the thing, it is a big homestead and being the last born my spot is at the very end next to the gates. There was no way I was going all the way out there. I mean, I am not afraid but still not taking chances.

So my dad keeps talking telling me how important it is that I pitch my tent where my hut should be and I stood and looked at him and just said, "Dad, I'm not doing that. I am sleeping right next to your house" and he just walked away. Why could I do that? I am his son.

There is only freedom and safety I feel around him. The new morning for just 4 of us he offers 2 of his fattest sheep. What we were going to do with all that meat. That was not just provision, it was extravagant. Because that is how a father is with his children.

What was happening is, my father was just as excited to be with me as I was to be with him.

As I tell this story, I know some of you relate. It's not such a unique story. But do we know that this is only a glimpse of what it means to be God's children? Many do not realize that because of what Jesus did, we are sons and daughters of the King in. A way that we have freedom with the father. In a way that the father is just as excited to be with us as we are to be with him. He longs for us just as we long for him. And in this excitement, his provision for what we need is even extravagant and spoiling.

And here is the thing, all of you who are parents in here know you would do that and more for your children, how much more would God?

Think of what it means to have freedom in your father's house and still honour him? For me, it means I can put my feet on the table but I could never bang the table at my dad. When I walk into God's presence, I feel like I can put my feet up and I honour him enough for he is holy and will not bang the table in disrespect.

Do you walk into God's house, among God's people and live in God's presence as a child of God or as a guest? And even worse as a slave.

Slavery has never been godly in the centuries gone and even in this century. People being sold into servitude. And in this century that still happens. The stories of helpless unemployed Kenyans working in the Middle East being mistreated and their passports taken away, that is modern-day slavery.

Stories of young girls being sexually abused often by people close to them and being forced into silence, that is modern-day slavery. And the church has to not just pray against this, we have to speak and even rise up against all this.

And someone who has been in these situations can go free, be in their own house, be with a family that loves them and still act as if they are back where they were. That is why often most of them need counselling and healing.

It is unfortunate that even in God's house you have children of God acting as if they were slaves.

Most Kenyans have been around a domestic help situation. And here is the difference, when the owner of the home moves, the help springs into action to clean the house and clean the tables, why? They wanna keep their jobs.

At the same time, the children of the house couldn't care less that their father has moved or just finished eating. They will clear the table when mom finally says, "Will someone clear the table?"

What I am really pointing out to is the freedom of being God's sons and daughters. We do not have to, we get to.

Do you lift your hands in worship because you have to or because you get to?

Do you give financial contributions, tithes, offerings or any other name you wanna give them because you have to, or because you get to?

Do you read scripture and spend time in prayer because you have to or because you get to?

Do you come to join the community of God for celebrations and worship nights because you have to or because you get to?

How do you know the difference? Is it fear or is it love? Where the spirit of God is there is freedom. Paul says to another church, "It is for freedom's sake that Jesus set us free". You are free, free to love God and others. Not because you have to, but finally you actually can because of what Jesus did in his life, death and resurrection. You are a son, a daughter not a guest, not hired worker and certainly not a slave.

If there is anything in your spiritual walk that you feel you have to do or God will be very upset with you even very great spiritual things, that is the voice of oppression and not the voice of being a child of God.

If you do not pray hard the locusts will finish Kenya. In fact, they are God's punishment. No. If you do not pray hard Coronavirus will wipe Kenyans out, in fact, it is God being upset. No. That is the voice of oppression, not the voice of sonship, the voice of the spirit of God.

Jesus did not come to live among us and even die and rise up from the dead just to buy us off from being slaves to sin and fear only to make us slaves again. No, we were bought into freedom.

The voice of truth, the voice of the spirit of God tells a different story, it says do not be feared, it says you are no longer slaves, you are no longer strangers you are home.

In the next few weeks, we will be looking at the life of Jesus leading up to the cross and Easter. And there is a very important milestone in his story that I would like us to wind up today's conversation with.

Jesus had just been hidden from the public. No one knew him much other than as the son of Mary and others as the son of Joseph the carpenter. But there was a fiery prophet in Israel. He was making religious and political leaders very uncomfortable.

Yet he kept pointing to another. Saying repent because the time is almost, The Kingdom of God is about to appear. He would often tell people that he is not a big deal. That the real deal was on its way.

Then Jesus showed up at the shores of the river where John was preaching and baptising. Probably 30 years old. A 30-year-old who had achieved nothing of mention. A 30-year-old who had no name of mention. A 30-year-old who many believed had a shady birth story.

So if you are 30 and you are wondering what you have to show for yourself, do not worry, Jesus started around now. If you are older and it feels like you have nothing to sing about your life, maybe God has been keeping you for this time.

So Jesus walks to the banks of the river and John the most reckoning force at that time stops and says, guys, this is the person I have been telling you about. I am not even worthy to untie his shoes. From now on, he must become more famous than me.

Jesus convinces him to baptise him anyway like we will be doing with one of us today. And as Jesus rises from the water the heavens open, the Holy Spirit comes on him like a dove and settles on him and people hear an audible voice from heaven, something that has not been heard in Israel for a long time and it says, "This is my son, I am very pleased with him".

Long before Jesus healed any sick people, long before Jesus opened any blind eyes, long before Jesus preached the Kingdom of God, long before he did any of the things we think he had to because he was the son of God, God was already so pleased with him precisely because he was the son of God.

Long before you do any of the things you think you have to, realize that God is pleased with you precisely because you are his child. Because Jesus did what he got to.

Let's pray