

ADOPTED

At 15 years old a young girl by the name of Crystal Anne had all but given up on the thought that she'd ever be a part of a family. In the five years since her mother delivered her to a hospital because she could no longer care for her, she went through a series of foster and crisis homes as well as treatment facilities. She believed she would never have a family again until a Texas family spotted her on adoptuskids.org and everything changed. They didn't actually meet face-to-face for a while but they corresponded by letter. Crystal Anne still has the best letter that she has ever received from Kim which stated 'I believe in you Crystal.' She was jumping up and down because no one had ever said that before. They had their first phone conversation on her 16th birthday. Kim and Lori flew down to visit at her group home two months later with the first meeting being magical and full of joy. Crystal Anne was adopted on her 17th birthday and it brought the gift of hope to her. She goes on to share 'teenagers our kids too. We need homes of love and patience. Don't overlook us because of our age or the labels other put on us. All we want is the love that we should have been given our whole lives.'

Everyone in the sanctuary today has actually been adopted in a spiritual sense. Anyone who has come to Christ becomes part of God's family because of their relationship with him. He has been adopted and Romans 8:15 shares 'you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry Abba father.' The good news for everyone today is that you are one of God's adopted children and part of his family. The Roman law of the day affirmed that the process of legal adoption for the chosen heir entitled them to the reversion of all property and civil status, the burdens and benefits of the adopter becoming one with them. That meant that whoever was adopted is part of the family legally, both for benefit and challenges that that would present.

I believe that adoption was part of Abba's plan from the very beginning. He wanted a family that would be brought back home through his son Jesus Christ. Every one of them is invited to rejoice in being part of a family again in a very real and powerful way. We have been created for a purpose. We weren't just born into this world by chance, but God brought you into the world for a reason and part of living our life is discovering that purpose and living deeply into it.

We see this in Jeremiah 1:4 which states "The word of the Lord came to me saying before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I set you apart." Knew in Hebrew means foreknowledge, but it also means choice and purpose. God knew you from the very beginning and had a choice and purpose for your life before you entered your mother's womb.

The reality is people are still arguing about when life begins: is it at conception, four weeks, three months or right before birth? I realize that even within this congregation and the Naples community there are many and varied views on abortion, very passionate feelings on both sides of this issue. But 54 million abortions later and with baby body parts being sold for fancy cars or personal gain, what does Jeremiah 1:4 say to us today?

I believe what we hear from Jeremiah is every human life begins in the mind of God. He was thinking about you, had a plan for your life and was excited about your birth. God, mothers and fathers are part of creating sacred and beautiful life in the womb. They're all involved together in the formation of new human beings.

It's important that you and I hear that and embrace that God had you and I in mind long before we were physically manifested in the wombs of our mothers. Psalm 139:13-16 affirms this in David's proclamation that God knit us together in our mother's womb and that we're fearfully and wonderfully made. This only affirms Jeremiah 1:4 and the idea that God had intention and purpose in your life. God chose life for you and has promised a unique destiny for you!

Every human being is special. Unique fingerprints, one of a kind DNA, some have hair and some don't, there are introverts and extroverts, some function better in the morning, others in the evening. Every one is powerfully uniquely with different destinies, gift clusters and abilities to effect people. Humanity is a celebration of the tapestry of love, beauty and creativeness of God and humanity working together.

This weekend we're celebrating artistic creation at St. John's in numerous ways. After our service today, I invite you to come back to the patio for the coffee hour and then visit Jamie Treadwell, St. John's artist in residence this past week. He has been busy fashioning artistic creations, creating works of art right before our eyes. Dean Hunt will be sharing autographed copies of his latest book 'Aristocrats of the Spirit' on the patio, an artistic creation for our enjoyment. We also blessed artistic works of quilts, baby dolls and these precious hearts from Stitches of Love. One heart goes on the mother's heart, the other on the heart of her baby in ICU. They are then switched, the mother holding her baby close to her heart and the child gaining the scent of the mother.

Of all the artistic works in life, one of the most beautiful will always be love's creation of a baby. May we treasure all life, from one's conception to death, embracing the gift of God in one another.