



## December Sermon Series: What Child is This?

### Message #4: Whose is He?

Getting the Nod

Skit: What Child is This... Whose is He?

**One of the worst things to experience at Christmas is to not belong.** To not have a family to belong to and to share with. To not have someplace to go to where everyone knows your name. To not be welcomed with a hug and made to feel wanted and loved. Just ask those who know... Christmas is most special when experienced with those who you belong with!

Maybe that is why five times in the New Testament the reference to ADOPTION is made... in the context of God's children. Like in Romans 8:15... NLT | Ro 8:15 **So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father."**

**Christmas is in one way a story of adoption! A heavenly Father that wants to adopt us out of sin and death and into His arms... again.** We are God's most loved treasure. When we accept the purpose of the Christ Child... we are made new creatures in Christ and we are adopted into God's family where we will belong forever!! Forever loved... forever known... forever to belong. Forever to be like our heavenly Father!!! Not like the turtle...

**Joke of the Adopted Turtle:** Deep within a forest a little turtle began to climb a tree. After hours of effort he reached the top, jumped into the air waving his front legs and crashed to the ground. After recovering, he slowly climbed the tree again, jumped, and fell to the ground. The turtle tried again and again while a couple of birds sitting on a branch watched and laughed at his sad efforts. Finally, the female bird turned to her mate. "That turtle is an idiot to think he can fly!" she chirped, "I think it's time we tell him he's adopted."

**We all recognize Joseph's part of the Christmas story.** This is the man who would raise the Son of God. What a major player... but this entire sermon series has been based on a famous Christmas song, "What Child is This? **When William Chatterton Dix wrote the lyrics...** he included all the story characters... of course the Child and His mother... the shepherds... the angels... the wisemen. All the characters normally present in a Nativity display were accounted for... except for one. Do you know which one? Joseph.

The Gospel of Mark did the same. No Joseph mentioned. And even though Joseph is mentioned in the other three Gospels... none of them give him a speaking part. Only his actions of obedience, care, and presence are mentioned. **NO... Joseph was not mentioned in the song... but in a powerful way He is allowed to relate to God the Father in his role as the Father of God!!!**

**Yes, Christmas is an adoption story!** There are three blessings that are connected to adoption...

**The Blessings of Adoption:**

- **It fills the void in the heart of the One adopting.** They finally get to love someone as their own.

- **It becomes a gift of love and belonging to the one adopted.** Those longing to be loved... are finally loved and brought into a family to belong.
- **It serves as a daily reminder that the adopted were not abandoned but chosen.** They are chosen to be loved and chosen to be a part of a new chance at life.

**Illustration of Roman Adoption Customs:** Adoption is the process by which a person who does not belong to a given family is formally brought into it and made a full, legal family member with the rights and responsibilities of that position. It was no better represented than in the public portion of the transaction. When a Roman of Royalty would adopt a new son, they would undress the boy from his past clothes and be redressed in the new clothing of his new family. They would now take on the image of their new father. **It was an outward act of a newly established family. A new child with no separation of rights.**

Adoption may have made the difference in a part of our American history...

**Illustration of the Boy That No one Would Have:** In 1952 a probation officer in New York City tried to find an organization that would assist in the adoption of a twelve-year-old boy. Although the child had a religious background, none of the major denominations would assist in his adoption. He was a problematic child with a deep need for acceptance and love. The office tried for a year to find an agency that would care for this needy youngster and help find him a family... but to no avail. If someone would've just loved him and adopted him in 1952... perhaps the child would have found the right environment to know balance and a foundation to succeed in life. In fact, providing a better environment in which to grow up might have changed history. For, you see, the 12-year-old boy was Lee Harvey Oswald - the man who assassinated John F. Kennedy. (Source: Green, M. P. (1989). Illustrations for Biblical Preaching, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.)

**Transition: Christmas is God's Adoption Story!!! And Joseph is the central character to study...**

### What's God's Take on This?

NKJV | Mt 1:19-25 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. 20 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." 22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." 24 Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, 25 and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.

### Joseph's God-Like Love

#### 1. Jesus was adopted by a father who loved Him.

- **Joseph loved Mary... and He loved His God... and both were connected to the coming Child!!!** 24 Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, **did as the angel of the Lord commanded him** and took to him his wife, 25 and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son.

- The word “**did** as the Angel commanded him...” is the word **poieo** which means Joseph acted rightly. He made the commands happen! Everything was welcomed! The pregnancy was welcomed... the task before him was welcomed... the Child was welcomed!!
- **Christmas is God the Father willingly accepting and loving us!!! John 3:16 “...so loved...”**
- Secondly...

## 2. It was the father’s responsibility to name the child.

- **And he called His name JESUS.**
- The intention of God was for Joseph to adopt Jesus as his son and become his earthly father. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem on that Christmas night, Joseph named the child, his adopted child, Jesus. It was his responsibility as his adoptive father.
- On the night Jesus was born, Joseph not only gave Jesus His name but also likely took this newborn baby and symbolically placed Jesus across his knees. Such a symbolic act was the way a first-century husband in biblical days acknowledged the legitimacy of his newborn descendant. Subsequently, for a man to place someone else's child across his knees was a sacred and symbolic act signifying adoption.
- **All those who adopted by God are given a new name!!! NKJV | Re 2:17 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.” ’**
- **Thirdly...**

## 3. It was the responsibility of the father to legitimize the child.

- **Look at Joseph’s identity to be the adoptive father...NLT | Lk 2:48 His parents didn’t know what to think. “Son,” his mother said to him, “why have you done this to us? **Your father and I** have been frantic, searching for you everywhere.”**
- **Again we have Joseph being recognized as Jesus’ earthly father... NLT | Jn 1:45 Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, “We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth.”**
- **Joseph in an act of adopting this Child as his own was not a secondary player in the Christmas story!!!**
- **He has orchestrated the adoption of us for eternity...NLT | Ga 4:5 God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children.**
- **Lastly...**

## 4. It was this adoption that made our adoption possible.

- **Just as Joseph experienced an adoption of his own, God’s purpose for sending His Son is for us to be adopted by Him. He had already rejected by us in the Garden of Eden and yet by His own grace and mercy... He has paid for our adoption back into His Family!!**
- NLT | Ro 8:14-17 **For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. 15 So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God’s Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, “Abba,**

Father.” 16 For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God’s children. 17 And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

- **This is what He wanted... more than anything!!** NLT | Eph 1:5 God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.

**Transition: I ask you today this question... Have you been adopted by God? He sent His Son to pay for your adoption into His family! All you have to do is say “Yes”; acknowledge your need for His Salvation; and receive your new name! It’s your eternal name!!!**

### Drawing the Net

**Final Illustration:** Several decades ago A young couple visited a boarding care home which housed children for adoption. The care taker brought out all the children who were clean (freshly bath), well dressed, properly schooled in manners; for this couple’s inspection and selection. As they passed down the line and spoke to each child, they did not find the one they were looking for to adopt.

They asked the care taker: “Do you have any more children?” He replied: “Yes, but he has not been cleaned up or dressed for viewing today.” The couple said immediately: “That alright, can we see him?” After a few minutes, the child was brought out and stood with the rest of the children. He was dirty, face unwashed, hair uncombed; clothes ragged and torn, no shoes; and his head was hanging down in shame, as he stood next to the other children. After a few minutes of somber discussion; and wiping the tears from their eyes; they said to the care taker: “We want this child!”

The man immediately replied: “But he is not as nice as the other children; he's unmannered and has been unloved by his own parents.” He continued: “And we have been unable to get him to behave; why do you want him?” The couple paused, to regain their composure and replied: “We see in him, the blessings of God for our home, and a better hope in life for him.” With shame the man asked: “Do you want us to clean him up?” They coupled replied, lovingly: “No, we want the child just as he is right now.”

**We are not desirable to God by our wealth and success in life; or by our winsomeness; or by any special qualities that we possess. God loves us because He does. And He will adopt all of us just the way we are!** That's how God sees us; and he will take us, just like we are right now.

Solomon: “When my mother and father forsake me, the Lord will take me up,” Proverbs 27:10