

The Brotherhood Christ Gathers

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[0 : 0 0] Our reading tonight, you'll find in page 1170 of the Pew Bible, we're in Galatians 3, and you'll notice from the sheet that Darren's going to read from the, or teach from the beginning and the end of this passage, but we're going to read the whole thing through.

We're starting in Galatians 3, verse 23. It says,

The spirit who calls out, Abba, Father. So you are no longer a slave, but God's child. And since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

Thanks, David. Yeah, if you've not met before, my name is Darren. And tonight we're looking at a final part of a four-part series we've been looking at called Loving Your Church.

As I know, a lot of you have been away this weekend, so it's going to be a bit of a challenge having a monotone Western Scotland accent speak at you for the next 25 minutes. But it'll be a good challenge to help us all try and stay engaged.

[2 : 3 4] I'm going to use Stephen's eyelids as a gauge of the temperature of the room for the next wee while. So this is our final part. The rest of them, if you're just joining us for the first time, are all online.

But tonight we've called our talk, The Brotherhood Christ Gathers. And usually we work through a passage and we will launch out of Galatians as it's been read for us. But we will be dotting around quite a lot of the Bible tonight.

So, as I said, this is the final talk in this series, the sermon in this series, The Brotherhood That Christ Gathers. So you take even the briefest look through the New Testament.

There's a phrase that you will notice over and over again. In fact, it's used over 270 times. And that phrase is brothers or brothers and sisters, as it's often translated.

Most of the New Testament letters start that way and it's peppered throughout most of their teaching. And the word, which will come up on the screen at the moment, in the original Greek, which is the language the New Testament was written in, is the word adelphoi, which means a, I don't know Greek that well, but from what I've read, a, from, and delphys, womb.

[3 : 4 4] Literally meaning from the same womb. And of course that can mean literal biological brothers and sisters, but the vast majority of the time it is used in the scriptures is not like that.

It is about common believers having the same birth. And with Christians, this idea is tied to this idea that we are born again in Jesus. It's a deeply intimate, committed, and connected, and communal word that describes how believers are to see and think about one another, and to treat and act towards one another, as though we were actual brothers and sisters.

Now, for a lot of us, that might sound like quite a utopian idea, especially if you have actual family relationships, like every single human in the world. But I think for most people in the world, we kind of really, really love this idea.

I think you take a kind of scan of any modern media, whether it's things like the Guardians of the Galaxy movies, or TV show Friends, or if you're old enough, Band of Brothers, or literally any sitcom that has been made in the past 10 to 15 years, they all present us with this contemporary idea of the new family.

Some group of people who feel they don't fit, discovering a new community which is made up of a chosen people who have a shared idea of how the world works.

[5 : 05] And again, I don't think you need to be a political scientist. When you put a group of humans together with that idea, it's a great idea, but very rarely it pans out in this peace-loving group of people as we experience our tension of what it means to be human with one another.

But the picture that we have from media is not the same as the one the Scriptures are talking about when we use this language. It's a far wider scope of who is involved, and a far fuller meaning than simply a group of misfits who kind of band together to create some sort of meaning and purpose in life.

So tonight we're going to explore that in a thematic way, that what the Scriptures are talking about and speaking about is fundamentally something more different and fuller than simply a group of people who like to hang out with each other because they like the same things.

So I'm going to pray, and then if you want to follow, there's points in the service sheets if you want to, which will outline some of the passages we're going to look at too. So I'll pray, and then we'll get into this a bit deeper.

Lord God, I pray that as we sit here tonight, you'd help us to raise our eyes, raise our minds, and raise our hearts to see you as a God who's engaged with each and every single one of us because you love us and you are calling us into something new in your Son.

[6 : 22] So I pray you'd help me to speak well of you as Father, Son, and Spirit tonight. I ask that in Jesus' name. Amen. So the first point I would like us to think about tonight, which might be a pretty basic point for a group of Christians to think about, is this idea of God as our Father.

So the reason the early Christians started talking about themselves with this language of brothers and sisters was not just because they believed deep down if they treated each other really well, they'd create peace on earth or have some sort of utopian society.

No, it was and still is rooted and related in the way they think about who God is to them. So in the reading that David said, read for us there from Galatians, and Paul is writing to this new church in Galatia, there's a lot of new Christians there.

And one of the things he's trying to challenge is the fact that they've been made to feel lesser, not worthy enough, because they don't have the same background or cultural practices as those who have been religious their whole lives.

And he's trying to encourage them that these are not the things they are to look to when they take confidence in who they are and what their faith is. And so he says, and this is from chapter 3, verse 26 onwards, So in Christ Jesus, you are all children of God through faith.

[7 : 38] For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free. There is neither male or female.

For you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. So Paul is telling them very directly that because of their faith in Christ, not only do they become fully acceptable, but far more than that, they are now children of God.

And this is the heart of the Christian life, that they are children of God. Now, some translations translate that the way we heard it tonight in the NIV, you are all children of God.

And that is done in order to not create confusion that somehow this is only talking about men. But the more literal translation is, you are all sons of God. That's what if you look at some other translations, that's what we'll say.

Now, which is fine to translate it the way it is, I'm not going to argue with Bible translators, but sometimes when you're too quick to correct the Bible language, we miss the revolutionary nature of what Paul is saying.

[8 : 45] Because in most ancient cultures, well, daughters could not inherit property. Therefore, son, in this context, meant legal heir, which was a status forbidden to women.

But the gospel tells us we are all sons of God in Christ. We are all heirs. As we were thinking about last time when Jonathan was helping us think about the bride of Christ, in the same way there that all people, men and women, are the bride, in the same way in these passages, when it talks about sonship or brothers, it's referring to all of us together, regardless of our gender, to being heirs and being able to partake in this thing that culturally they would have never been able to do.

And this sonship comes through faith. It says, through faith in Christ Jesus. We are only sons when we have faith in the son.

Our sonship is based on our faith in him as the son, not on anything we particularly do or bring to the equation. It is through faith that God adopts us, is the language he uses again in Galatians.

We are his children. The logic therefore goes, we are now brothers and sisters. And this is present tense language when we look at it in the New Testament.

[10 : 01] In Christ we already are God's sons and daughters. It's not something we're aiming at. It is not a future attainment. It's something that we have right now in the here and present when we are clothed in Christ.

And that's what it says. This is your new identity. It says in Galatians, you are now clothed in Christ. Christ, meaning the way brothers and sisters see one another and think about one another is through that new primary identity.

Nothing else. It's a new identity that trumps every other single identity you might have about yourself. And it's the heart of the brother and sister language. Whoever you were or were seen as before, we are going to choose to look at each other differently like the one we put on, Christ.

That is what we are to see when we look and think and treat and act towards one another. Now, obviously this has today, as it did then, radical social implications.

It means that how I think about myself and how I think about all of you as a Christian with other believers is that we are brothers and sisters clothed in Christ before we are anything else.

[11 : 12] Anything else. Not my race. Not my class. Not my sexuality. It doesn't really matter what it is. I see you and you're to see me as brothers and sisters clothed in Christ.

And in that, it starts to break down all the barriers of how we faction off one another in society. And you see that in this passage. You see the cultural barrier fall apart where he says neither Jew nor Greek.

So people of one culture do not need to become like people of another culture in order to be brothers and sisters and accepted by God. So we are to accept and love one another without one group of people declaring the superiority of their cultural ways over another.

So if you went to an East Coast church and they demanded that you spoke in a funny accent because that's the way they speak over there, you should say, no, here's my West Coast values and I will keep them. The class barrier falls down too.

Neither slave nor free. Economic differences should not extend into the church when we think about ourselves as brothers and sisters. That's often how the world works, isn't it? We were thinking about that this morning.

[12 : 13] You associate often according to the people who have the same amount of money as you. This is not to be the way in the church. Those who have less financially are not to be made to feel inferior in any way.

And on the other hand, the well-off are not supposed to be shunned or resented either. You see the gender barrier fall apart in this passage in Galatians. Neither male nor female. This was perhaps the strongest barrier of Paul's day.

Women were considered absolutely inferior in the ancient world. But because women and men are equal in Christ, they're not supposed to be treated differently in how we see value. This is a new reality where Christian siblinghood, our brother and sisterness, transcends all human communities and is based on what God has done for believers rather than things we have in their background or common interests.

I think this is one of the reasons the Bible is so harsh on things like gossip and slander and division, something unfortunately Christians are quite well known for because we're supposed to see each other first and foremost as brothers and sisters in Christ.

And unfortunately, we can be quite tribal in the way we see different practices, whether we have different styles of worship or different opinions or different backgrounds. But when we're all clothed in Christ, that's the challenge of how we begin to see one another.

[13 : 29] So next time you might find yourself in a disagreement with a Christian, what's it mean to start with, to think about, this person is literally in Christ, my brother and sister first.

That doesn't mean we ignore things and just be like, brush things under the carpet. That's not what I'm saying. But it's a real challenge to how we actually embody this and do this with one another. But what Paul goes on to describe is even more than you're just accepted and included.

He says you're adopted and you're actually heirs. So in chapter 4, verses 4 to 7, he says, but when the set time had fully come, God set his son, born of a woman, born under the law to redeem those under the law, that we might have adoption to sonship.

Because you are his sons, God sent the spirit of his son into our hearts, the spirit who calls out Abba, Father. So you are no longer a slave, but God's child.

And since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. It's hard to try and, I think, I find it quite hard to try and capture the fullness of what Paul is saying here.

[14 : 37] Because he's saying you're accepted, but he's going further than that. You're adopted. And I don't know about you, one of the pictures that comes to my mind, I don't know if you've seen the many, many videos that seem to appear on my Instagram feed of adopted children who, it's like a birthday party or something, and they get a present from the parents, their adopted parents, and it's a certificate saying you're now fully adopted.

Maybe I'm the only one that sees these videos. And then everybody cries and everybody's very happy. And there's something about the fact that you know in that moment the child is part of a family, you know they've got a loving community around them, but there's something in that moment where the parent has made a choice to make it official.

You're now completely in. And usually you have this explosion of joy, because it's not just, oh, I'm accepted and I'm tolerated and adopted and made new with my brothers and sisters.

It's a radical shift to sons and daughters that gives us a new quality of relationship with God, as it says here, to call him father, to call him parent. This new familial relationship with God is extended into how we think about one another as other adopted children.

And it's the foundation for how we think about what that looks like for one another. Now there's many, many, many implications to that, but given what we're talking about tonight, one of the ones we're going to think about next is the fact that Jesus is right now in this moment our brother.

[15 : 56] Right now in this moment, Jesus, as well as being our Lord and our Savior, is one of the ways he's described as our elder brother who brings others into the family.

So what does that mean? Well, the book of Hebrews gives us some insight. So Hebrews 2, 10 to 12, all the verses should come on the screen. Sorry, I've not put any page numbers. But you have the references.

So it says in Hebrews 2, in bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God for whom and through whom everything exists should make the pioneer, which is Jesus, of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.

Both the one who makes people holy, which is Jesus, and those who are made holy, which is all of us, are the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.

He says, I declare your name to my brothers and sisters. In the assembly, I will sing your praises. Jesus, now, in the present, is not ashamed to identify with me and you as brothers and sisters.

[17 : 03] Again, I don't know how that lands with you. Maybe this is very familiar language with you and you're constantly thinking about Jesus being your brother. But for me, it's still a kind of slightly mind-blowing concept to think of that's one of the ways I engage and relate to Jesus.

It's not the only one, but it is a picture of how Jesus relates to us. Now, consider what he's saying here. Jesus, as our brother, is happy to be associated with us. He's not ashamed. I don't know how often you think about Jesus' relationship with you, but to think about him like that, as a brother who's like, I'm not ashamed to call you, you or you, my brother and sister.

He there is also, it also tells us, he is the one that makes us holy and those of us who are being made holy by him are the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to associate with us. More so, he says, I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters in the presence of the congregation.

I will sing your praises. Here's what Tim Keller says of these verses. He is not ashamed to call you sister. He's not ashamed to call you brother.

It doesn't matter what you've ever, it doesn't matter what anyone has ever said about you. It doesn't matter what your parents say. It doesn't matter what their verdict is. It doesn't matter what your siblings say.

[18 : 15] It doesn't matter what the world says. You're not ruled by what they say anymore. It matters what he says. It matters what your brother says for we have a brother who is proud of us.

And Jesus is intimately involved in our lives in this passage as a brother. He is making us holy is what it says. And he is glad to call us brothers and sisters.

Unashamed when we struggle with fear, sin, discouragement as we all do. And this is not Jesus kind of giving you a random pep talk when you feel bad. This is Jesus coming into your life as his brother, as family members and making us holy.

It is not a passive thing. Being a brother with Christ and how we model that with one another is not passive. An example of that which I think you see later early in the scriptures is in Matthew's gospel.

And it tells of a time when Jesus' blood family, his mother and his brothers are come to find him. They're trying to get his attention. And when someone tells them this, he says to the crowd, who is my mother and who are my brothers?

[19 : 21] Pointing to his disciples, he said, here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother. Now Jesus isn't saying that because he has a low value of family.

That's not possible. In fact, Jesus criticizes the Pharisees for their lack of care of their parents. Instead, he is talking about what it means to be the family of God with one another. And one of the things we see here that marks the relationship of being brothers and sisters with each other is characterized by what we're pursuing, doing the will of the Father.

Jesus says, this is what I do with my brothers and sisters. This is what makes us partly brothers and sisters as we pursue and do the will of the Father. There's many pictures I think you could use that.

But does anybody watch the TV show The Bear? Again, it's like, okay, one person, excellent. On track with more culturally relevant things. So the TV show The Bear, which I absolutely love, it follows this group of people who are brought together through the tragedy of a death of this small restaurant owner and they are kind of connected through this tragedy.

One of the things I love about this show and I think it does really well and I think it's why people find it so engrossing is it presents a broken, dysfunctional group of people slowly learning to become family with each other.

[20 : 38] And actually, they start to use family language in the show. They call each other cousins even though they're not cousins and they call each other uncles when they're not. And it doesn't do it in a very sentimental way. Instead, it presents their relationships as something that are forged as they pursue something together.

These characters don't always like each other but they show up. They grow when they learn to listen, to apologize, to carry one another's burdens. The kitchen, which is the picture they all gather around, works.

Not because everybody agrees and likes one another but because they're committed to a shared vision and they're learning together. It's one of the reasons I think the way we relate to each other as brothers and sisters is fundamentally different from any other type of relationship outwith the family of God.

Now, don't hear what I'm not saying there. I'm not saying that friendships between two people of different faiths have no value or can be meaningful or life-changing. That's absolutely not what I'm saying. But part of what we're talking about tonight is pursuing life as brothers and sisters and how it means having a shared vision for reality and who we are and what we're becoming.

A reality that forges and directs the relationship. This will obviously be a point of tension with someone of a different faith and no faith. Our vision for life is the vision for the family, as Jesus says, which is the same as our brother Jesus.

[21 : 57] It's the common commitment to live a life together defined by the will of the Father. So just doing random tasks that are nice things to do. It's this idea where a family who are seeking to do the will of the Father who has already adopted us and we pursue that together.

And because in Christ we now know that we are adopted as God's children, we know we can speak to him as Abba, as Father, we have Jesus not just as our Lord and Savior but as a brother, we have a brother who's not ashamed of us, we have a brother who's making us holy, and we pursue the will of the Father together with Jesus.

These factors all merge and create this beautiful picture of what it means to actually go and do that, to live that and free us to do that with one another. So to end, what I'm going to do is we're just going to look at different biblical examples of some practical stuff, hopefully, about what that means for us to live that out together.

And now, there are many, many places in the Scripture you could go to to look for this kind of stuff. You could look at 2 Peter and the way it talks about this idea that brothers and sisters are so committed and loved to one another.

You could look at the Old Testament, there's tons of examples in there. The ones we're going to look at tonight I think capture some of this. And so for me, the first one that I think tenderly and beautifully encapsulates this is a scene in John that John records in his Gospel.

[23 : 18] And this picture of the scene, so Jesus is on the cross. He's been crucified and he's about to die. To literally inaugurate everything we have just described there. And we are told this.

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and some other people. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, Woman, here's your son.

And to the disciple he said, here's your mother. And from that time on, the disciple took her into his home. Now remember, every time we look at Jesus and what he's like and how he speaks and how he acts, we're seeing what God is like, his heart.

Jesus sees his mother who at this point of time is likely widowed, her son who's a picture of shame that's being killed. And there too is his disciple, his brother. And on the cross, Jesus begins to initiate the reality of what the family of God looks like.

I think it's a stunning scene of compassion, of what Jesus is not just dying to do, but what he's rising, he will rise to create. A new way of engaging and loving and caring for one another.

[24 : 31] And I know for some of us, even exploring the topic of family is a complicated and a sore one. Like I don't have some sort of Kenziean childhood, but my parents have been remarried a number of times now.

And whilst there's the pain of what that meant to grow up with some of those decisions, it's also hard to watch how those decisions have echoed through the generations. And families have so many forms of brokenness, don't they?

I mean, there's the obvious ones of divorce and betrayal. Right through to the not so immediately overly obvious ones, which I saw a lot of when I worked as a therapist, of the kind of quiet behind the scenes ones of emotional manipulation, of power games, of parents who are married but might not be present, of over-controlling people and lives.

You have such an emphasis in your success, it's suffocating. It's all part of the fall of how we experience human relationship and it can also make us incredibly cynical to family language when we think about doing this in practice.

I know that's been part of my journey. Yet on the cross, as Mary is about to lose her son, Jesus inaugurates a whole new way of being family to one another where he connects people together who know him and bring something new out of something dark.

[25 : 44] when we model family well to one another, God is at work and changes things. This has deeply impacted my own life as I became a Christian when I was under, I don't know, somewhere between 20, 22, somewhere in there.

And as people came alongside me and sought to be brothers to me throughout the mess of my own family, it reshaped not just how I saw what community looked like, but actually has informed how I've sought to love my actual family well too.

It's not supposed to be a binary enclosed thing, it goes outward too. In fact, a moment that sticks in my head is from last year. A guy I've been meeting up with for years who, he's my brother in Christ and the way we talk and speak, we try to make sure we try to be people who walk in the light together, that's the language we might use.

What does it mean to be brothers well together? So we were at a Celtic game and I was there with my younger brother, like literal, actual blood, younger brother, my half-brother on my mum's side and my adopted brother on my dad's, just to give you a flavour of the intermarrying in my family.

And all three of these brothers who would have probably said ten years ago if you asked them about faith, none of them would have believed anything. They would all now express some sort of relationship which is very complicated, it's very messy, but they'd all express some relationship with Jesus.

[27 : 03] But actually, I've seen as God is doing something new in there, they've watched how me and this first person, this other Christian, talk to one another, how we love one another and it's informed how I seek to love my brothers.

And in the midst of all this mess, and it is messy, you see God starting over years, this is not like a, oh, three days later, but Jesus rises three days later with a promise of a new creation.

So I'm talking ten, twenty years later, you can see God start to knit together something new out of something dark. Something I could never generate, in fact, more than I could never generate, never actually dared to hope for because it all seemed a bit too dark.

But learning what family is with one another raises our eyes and expectations of how he is up to that movement in the world around us. Another picture is from the book of Acts.

This is Acts chapter two, the early church. It says, they devoted themselves, this is the new community of brothers and sisters, to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to breaking the bread and to prayer.

[28 : 07] And everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

And every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and they ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. There's loads you could take from this passage here, but briefly, what we see here is the way they engage with one another is clearly far more than a casual social activity, isn't it?

It's pretty intense actually when you think about it. It involves a deep love and commitment to one another who are believers, share their lives, their resources, their worship with one another. They gathered around the truth, the apostles' teaching, as well as prayer and communion.

They ate in each other's houses and their homes. They lived sacrificially and generously. They clearly did this in a way where the rest of the world saw it. It wasn't hidden because people were being added in.

[29 : 13] They sacrificed to share their resources, their space, their time, their stuff with anyone in the community that had need. Their commitment to sharing their lives with one another is tangible and action-orientated.

Part of being brothers and sisters is seeking to take the initiative of one another to actually live it out and do it as opposed to keeping it as an idea. And do you know what a community of Christians or people would have to have in order to make that happen?

Well, you'd actually have to have a group of people who let their needs be known and who model vulnerability and weakness. Not in shame and not in abdicating responsibility but in a way that completely smashes any religious narrative that you might have inherited that you do faith by yourself.

And success in faith is not having to rely on others. The gospel is the opposite of that. The core of the gospel is you need to rely on your brother Christ.

And as you do that live like that with one another. People who are not afraid to say this is what's going on in my life. People who are not afraid to feel shame because they're met with their brothers and sisters who equally have as much going on in their lives and hearts.

[30 : 29] And we can be so what's the word hesitant I know I can be hesitant with stuff like that. Like I help run prayer ministry in the corner on a Sunday morning at 11.30 and I know I've spoken to a number of people in the congregation of like say things like I'd love to go up for prayer but I just wonder what people would think about me.

They might think something's going bad in my life. I'm like well yeah exactly that's why we're all here. We gather around because we don't have perfect lives. We have brokenness in all parts of who we are and so we're to carry that with one another.

And finally to end for me is the go-to picture in the scriptures when I think of this is Paul and the Thessalonians. So this is 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 7 to 12.

Instead we were like young children among you just as a nursing mother cares for her children. I don't know how often you think about Paul as a nursing mother but that's how he describes himself here. so we cared for you because we loved you so much we're delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.

Surely you remember brothers and sisters our toil and hardship. We work night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preach the gospel of God to you. You are witnesses and so is God of how holy righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.

[31 : 45] For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children encouraging comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God who calls you into his kingdom and his glory.

Now look at the language Paul is using here it's so deeply relational he's like a nursing mother who cares for you as brothers and sisters they again they share burdens and as a father he comforted and urged which could be corrected them to do the same thing Jesus was talking about as we read earlier to live lives worthy of God.

Living as brothers and sisters in Christ is something which is forged and discovered as we do it together and it is deeply relational. Often the fact that we say these things is not matched by our lived experience is it?

We can come to the same place each week but that can be where our relationship ends. Many will have experienced the initial connection with people of faith which can be warm or exciting but our connection seems to not go far beyond that beyond superficial spiritual engagement or maybe at best monitoring each other's behaviour.

Paul says because we loved you so much we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel but our lives as well all of who we are.

[33 : 03] Now that's not me saying tell everybody everything about you all the time but it's a posture towards one another as brothers and sisters which says we're family so love one another like this and we can have these really high ideals of what this should look like but fundamentally one of the challenges is if you want to see this happen you actually have to be part of doing it.

I myself have been very guilty in the past of assuming this is somebody else's job to create this community and I just jump in and enjoy it but that is not what Jesus says he says you follow me and we'll build this together you're part of his kingdom so if we're serious about following Christ in all his life then we'll need to take the initiative to seek to live like this with one another.

Faith is not supposed to be a lone ranger activity but instead through community not only do we experience God's love but it's also the place where we're made more holy like Jesus says I am making you holy like so for example you can think you're a really patient person but until you start hanging out with people who test your patience you're never really going to know if you're really growing in patience and if there's one place that might test your patience it's usually the church so as you hang out with one another you'll rub up against each other in the wrong ways and then that pushes us back to Jesus who says I am so patient with you my younger brother my younger sister and that person is also your brother and sister and so the gift of life I've given you share that with one another it changes how we think about each other that can only happen if we're actually engaged in each other's lives just to finish God wants us to receive and reflect the generous fellowship he enjoys his father son and spirit that's something I think every single human being wants relationships are so authentic and generous and secure there's no space for fear anymore where real love is shared and demonstrated sacrificially and we are no longer threatened by abandonment rejection or betrayal because we've been adopted into something new

I'm going to pray and then the band will come up Jesus we thank you that this sibling language is not optional or poetic but a new spiritual reality where you gather each one of us and call us brothers and sisters and in doing so you create a new people for yourself empowered by your spirit to live out your kingdom in this world to bear witness to your love through acts of worship and fellowship and sharing and serving so would you help us to know what it means to function as brothers and sisters in relationship with you as the foundation that helps us say as we say in our communion liturgy that we are brothers and sisters through your blood and that we have died together we will rise together and we will live together Amen Amen