

Father's business

Pray

Does anyone know where this is?

Jordan River – real place

Real time - 15th year of Tiberius Caesar

Real place, real time, real story

John – leading people in baptism of repentance, preparing people for Jesus, as written about in Isaiah

Then Jesus comes and he is also baptised

Then after he is baptised God tells us in the bible that the Holy Spirit comes down on Jesus in bodily form like a dove – still real story – not suddenly gone into something imaginary

And at the same time, a voice comes from heaven ‘You are my Son whom I love, with you I am well pleased’

Jesus hadn't done any miracles at this point. Luke tells us this is when Jesus STARTED his ministry; the Father is expressing his love for Jesus because he has already loved him for all eternity past

When we talk about the Father's business and our place in the Father's business we need to know that the Father's business is not about us earning our Father's love by getting involved in his business, it's about us receiving the Father's love, and then because we know we are loved we then get involved in his business

God says to us in the letter that Paul wrote to the early church in Ephesus that out of God's love he chose us before he even created the world, he decided long before we were born physically that he was going to adopt us as his sons through Jesus

In the letter Paul wrote to the Galatians God says to us

' Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “*Abba, Father.*” 7 So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. '

Under Roman law which was the ruling law during Paul's life adoption was a highly thorough process. (Demonstrate with 'volunteers')

In the first step the biological father would symbolically sell his son to the adopting father twice and twice he would buy him back from the adopting father, then a third time he would sell him again and then this time the biological father would not buy him back and at that stage the authority of the biological father over his son was broken..

In the second step the adopting father would go to see a Roman magistrate and the adoption would

be officially recognised in Roman law. Roman law would have recognised this child as now having a new person with a new life and was absolutely the son of his new father.

Those of us who follow Jesus are now fully adopted sons of our Father in heaven. We are not just born again but we are born again into a new family.

We've been talking about family for the last few weeks and being reminded of the fact that the church is not just a club but it is a family brought together by Jesus, we have a wonderful heavenly Father, we are his adopted children, we are brothers and sisters all with the same Father God.

This morning we're going to be looking at the Father's business.

In Tajikistan we have a car which is great but we have to get it repaired on a fairly regular basis.

The place I go to is a family business. There's the Dad who is always there giving advice, there's his two sons who are now experienced mechanics working together with their Dad getting their hands dirty taking apart and rebuilding engines, and then there's the grandson who sometimes makes an appearance, playing in the midst of the activity and getting to see what's going on.

As a family of people who are brothers and sisters in Jesus, we have a Father who is in the business of increasing the size of his family across the world so that his name will be glorified across the world, and as a family together God's desire is to get us involved in his business so that although primarily this is the Father's business it's the family business as well.

Sometimes we can think that God's plan to enlarge his family and to glorify his name across the earth is an idea that is from GOD that he expects US to get on with, with the occasional encouragement or help from him.

The truth is if you look at what God says in the bible is that glorifying his Name across the earth is not just an idea of his but it is something he has been doing throughout all of history and will continue to do as time goes on and he has given us a wonderful opportunity as his children to play our part in his work.

We're just going to very briefly look at some things in the bible to try to help us get a sense of the huge scale of our Father's business – it helps to know what our Father's business is.

If we were born into a family of farmers and expected that we were going to be getting into the family business it would seem to make sense that we learn all we could about farming.

As those who have been born into God's family it would also seem to make sense to get to know what the family business is.

I've already referred to it as the enlargement of God's family across the world so that God's name will be glorified across the world which gives us somewhere to start to look at this, but I want to look briefly across the bible to see what God has been doing and saying about this.

So right at the beginning we are told that God created the heavens and the earth

Just to give us a reminder of how amazing our Father's creation is I wanted to show you this picture

This is about 45 million times the distance between here and the Sun
You might have thought Tajikistan was a long way from here but this is a huge distance away.

At the same time as being amazingly distant from here it is also amazingly beautiful, some people have called it 'the eye of God'.

So the one who created this and not just this but in fact created everything is our father in heaven and the one who is inviting us to get involved in his business – its just stunning

On the last day of creation he creates his final creation - man.

He says something about man that he says about nothing else he has created

He says "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"

When he makes man God creates people who in some way reflect the nature of God, they are not equal to God, they are HIS creation but they are made in God's image and have friendship with God and are told to multiply and fill the earth so that God will be glorified across the earth

Tragically this wonderful situation is corrupted and polluted and death enters the scene because man decides to try to make himself equal with God.

But God our Father has a plan. He still plans to glorify his name across the earth but he chooses not to do this by destroying his creation that has been corrupted by man and then starting again, he plans to restore his creation by sending God the Son to take the punishment for man's terrible mistake so that men can have their relationship restored with God their father and go into all the earth to fill God's creation with God's glory

Our Father's business is a great business, it's his business to spread His glory across the world and he has chosen us, as those he has adopted as his children to play our part in his business.

It's very easy to forget we are part of a great work of God as we get caught up our day to day challenges but God's desire for us is to use us in our day to day challenges to bring glory to his name.

Even at the time that God is banishing man from his presence after man has tried to make himself equal with God, God gives us a hint of his plans for the future. He speaks to the serpent, who tempted man to rebel against God and says that in the future, one of the descendants of the woman, a male descendant of Eve will crush the serpent's head.

As we read through the Old Testament we see God's plan being worked out.

We see God choosing Abram, he chooses him and blesses him and promises that he will make his name great and make him into a great nation so that through him all nations across the earth will be blessed so as a result God's name will be glorified across the whole of the earth

God speaks to the nations of the earth in Psalm 2

He speaks about how the nations of the earth look to rebel against God and how useless it is them rebelling against him because he is THE ruler of ALL the nations

And he speaks again of a man who is yet to come at that time in history, asking him to ask God for the nations as his inheritance and the ends of the earth his possession

- ¹ Why do the nations conspire
and the peoples plot in vain?
- ² The kings of the earth rise up
and the rulers band together
against the LORD and against his anointed, saying,
- ³ “Let us break their chains
and throw off their shackles.”
- ⁴ The One enthroned in heaven laughs;
the Lord scoffs at them.
- ⁵ He rebukes them in his anger
and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,
- ⁶ “I have installed my king
on Zion, my holy mountain.”
- ⁷ I will proclaim the LORD’s decree:

He said to me, “You are my son;
today I have become your father.

- ⁸ Ask me,
and I will make the nations your inheritance,
the ends of the earth your possession.

Then again in Isaiah we hear more about this man who is going to come, a man who is going to suffer the punishment that we deserved, a man who will be like a lamb to the slaughter, a man who will be crushed by God, a man who will bring us peace with God through being punished.

So then about 2000 years ago this man came to the earth

He came and proclaimed that the Kingdom of God had come because this man was not just a man but was also God the King himself.

He also demonstrated the Kingdom of God to people by healing the sick, casting out demons, by loving the rejected, by confronting people’s own attempts to get close to God

He drove the market sellers out of the court of the nations, the area of the temple where people from all nations could go, because he was passionate about the nations being able to come to what he called 'My Father's house', he was passionate about them being able to come to worship God.

And then as God had planned all along, he was killed by people, he was killed by people who were part of his own creation. He took the punishment we deserved and the rejection from God that we deserved and took it all upon himself. Then he rose from death and conquered death so that we can find new life in him.

After Jesus has risen from the dead he speaks to the first Christians about how THEY are to get involved with the Father's business of filling the earth with his families to bring glory to his name.

Jesus tells his disciples to make disciples of all nations, to teach people from all nations about following Jesus and to teach them what it means to live their lives following Jesus

Jesus says to the disciples that they are to receive power through the Holy Spirit and that they are to be his witnesses right across the earth.

That is God the Holy Spirit is going to empower them because without God himself being involved there is no way they are going to be able to get involved in the Father's business.

Then with God empowering them they are going to be Jesus' witnesses right across the earth. They are going to be witnesses of the fact that Jesus' death and resurrection has totally changed their lives. They are going to be witnesses of the fact that they were once slaves to sin but they are now adopted sons of their heavenly father because of what Jesus did.

They are going to be witnesses of the fact that Jesus is the man who God had been promising all through history as the one who was going to save them. They are going to be witnesses of the fact that Jesus is God the King by preaching and demonstrating the kingdom of God on earth just like Jesus did.

So a few days later the Holy Spirit comes on them and straight away Peter is witnessing to the fact that Jesus is the saviour who has been promised by God all through history and straight away 3000 including people from many different nations across the world believe in Jesus and the first church family in history is born.

Then as we read through the book of Acts we read how these early followers of Jesus continued to be filled with the Spirit and continued to be witnesses of who Jesus is and continued to do this across the nations by making disciples, by starting more and more church families across more and more nations across the earth, and so getting involved in the Father's business of filling the earth with His glory

Our part?

So thinking of this morning in October 2011, what does it mean, 2000 years or so on from the book of acts, what does it mean for us to get involved in the Father's business.

I'd like to start by saying the answer to that question is exactly the same as it was for the very first church that came into existence 2000 years ago on the day of Pentecost.

We have the same heavenly Father as the members of the very first church. We have been forgiven and adopted as sons of our Father through the same Jesus that brought salvation to the members of the very first church family. We have the same God the Holy Spirit here to empower us that was poured out at Pentecost.

And we are to be involved in the Father's business the same way the very first church was, we are to be empowered by the Holy Spirit so that we can be his witnesses to the nations of the earth.

We are to be involved, just like they were in being witnesses to the fact that Jesus' death and

resurrection has changed our lives. We are to be witnesses to the fact that we have been set free from sin to become sons of our father in heaven, we are to be witnesses of who Jesus is that he is both man and God, that he is the King, and we are to demonstrate that his Kingdom is here by talking about Jesus the King of all, and by praying for the sick and seeing them healed.

Being a witness is being someone who says what they know and what they have experienced. We know Jesus has transformed our lives, we know Jesus is the King, so our part in the Father's business is to tell these things to those around us.

When I've finished speaking I'd like to pray for us all to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that we can be empowered to be his witnesses. We need his help to be his witnesses. Being filled with the Spirit isn't just about the experience but it's about God blessing us and helping us so that we can be a blessing to others. God blessed Abraham and made his name great so that he could be a blessing to many nations and God wants to bless us with his Spirit so that we can be a blessing to the nations.

When we first arrived in Tajikistan I used to hate going to the local market because it was huge and busy and I would get people stopping me and wanting to speak to me because I was a foreigner, and in particular the men who exchanged local currency for dollars really hassled me as I was a prime potential customer, and I'd usually try to go in there and out again quickly because I found the whole experience too stressful.

Then after a few months I was convicted by the Spirit to have a better attitude to the bazaar and was reminded about a prophetic word I had received before leaving the UK about meeting with men in the bazaar.

So I started going to the bazaar with a different perspective, I started to take my time and talk to people when I could and talk to people about Jesus when I could. I've now started to spend time worshipping God and getting filled with the Spirit before I go.

I started to go each week and out of that I've met a man who is now my best local friend whose mum got healed of a severe leg problem after we prayed for her, and I've met a man who has spent time with Christians and wants to spend more time with Christians. I've had opportunities to talk to many of the money changers about what I believe.

We're to be involved in making disciples just like the first followers of Jesus made disciples wherever they went.

We read in the book of Acts that when the first church first came under persecution many people from the church fled to different nations but when they got there they didn't hide away but they continued to be filled with the Spirit and witnessed to people there, and they disciplined people, they taught them about what it meant to follow Jesus.

A friend of mine in Tajikistan had a dream about Jesus – he had a powerful encounter with Jesus and he is really hungry to know more, so I have been witnessing to him more about Jesus, I've been telling him more about Jesus and I've told him about what Jesus has done in my life, and I've also been starting to disciple him.

I've been starting to teach him about what it means to live a life following Jesus. I've got him to

pray for me for things I've needed, when he's been keen to learn about what he can and can't eat as a follower of Jesus I've been talking with him about the fact that what we eat and don't eat doesn't affect our standing before God, that we are adopted sons whatever we eat or don't eat.

Then finally we are to be involved, just the same as the first disciples, in being his witnesses and making disciples to the ends of the earth.

To the first disciples the UK would have been the ends of the earth, and here we are today worshipping Jesus together as a family together. To reach the ends of the earth we need to start new churches right across the nations of the earth, we need to see families of our Father in heaven started and growing and thriving and witnessing and making disciples of the nations that live in their neighbourhoods. Again – we need help with that. We need the Holy Spirit to empower us so that we can do these things.

It might mean that we never leave the town we were born or it might mean travelling to many different places but I want to encourage us all to have a vision for the nations wherever we are, and then working that out could involve praying for particular nations, or friendship with people from other nations or giving financially or making visits to nations.

Just before we came back to the UK we had a skype message to tell us about Zac's accident and it was fantastic to be able to pray for him and get the news about how he was doing – it helped expand our vision beyond our home town, it helped us to lift our vision again to the nations.

It's very easy to just get focused in on just where we are. God wants us to be about his business wherever we are. In our town in Tajikistan it is so easy to get focused in on our town and what is happening with our friends and neighbours and we need to be focused on that but we need to remember who our father is. He is the creator of the whole Universe. He's not just the God of Handsworth or Erdington or Birmingham or Tajikistan but the God of every nation and tribe and tongue.

Our Father's business is to glorify his name through spreading families of his children in Jesus across the earth and we are called to be part of that right where we are today.

Pray empowering of the Spirit – not just for individuals but for the church

Encourage – engage with God – not just about touchy feely bit but we need Holy Spirit to empower us so we can get involved in our Father's business

But also pray for God to speak to individuals – about work colleagues, neighbours, friends

Pray for faith for salvation, healings

Be open to prophetic