



**December 2, 2007**

Preaching: Rev. Ronni Verboom

Romans 8:12-17

## “You are an Adopted Child”

Many of you know that my husband and I have four grown children. You may not know that our oldest son is adopted. I’ve felt a special appreciation for the Adoption Ministry of our church, and for the Adoption Awareness focus during the month of November.

We adopted our son at the age of three while we were living in Rimouski, Quebec. Our daughter Natalie was ten months old, and was doing very well following her brain surgery at the age of five months.

Denis Daniel Verboom was a sweet little boy- who went through a LOT Of changes in those early years of his life. First, he came to us from a foster family where he had lived since he was nine months old. That was a HUGE change.

Then, when he was four, we moved to Minnesota, where he had to SWITCH LANGUAGES and learn to speak English. (We all spoke French at home until that point.)

THEN, when he was five, we moved to Germany, which was another HUGE change. Then we were back in the U.S. when he was six, and he began first grade in Lincoln, Nebraska. When we lived in Lincoln, he became a U. S. citizen.

My mother, who was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, had told Denis that the DAR gave out flags to new citizens after the ceremony at the court house. He was very excited about the upcoming ceremony and talked about it often. As the day approached he grew more and more worked up—to the point of telling me one day: “If they don’t give me a flag when I get to be American, I’m

going to punch the judge in the nose!” And this came from a mostly non-violent, quiet kid!

We had a big party, invited family and neighbors, adults and kids. I made a cake decorated like an American flag and we truly celebrated. I had never seen our son quite so intense as at that time.

What was all that about? I think it came from a hunger for IDENTITY—which is actually universal. WHO AM I? WHERE DO I BELONG? WHOSE AM I?

Denis came to this country speaking French. Soon after, he told his Dad, “I don’t want to talk funny any more!” He had switched to English and that’s what he embraced. He wanted to BELONG here, and his citizenship was a big part of that—probably even more than his adoption, which was finalized when he was four and too young to understand very well.

When Denis was fifteen, his birth mother located us. She visited us in the U.S. a few times, and Denis has traveled to Quebec to visit several times. This has been important to him--- to understand and explore where he CAME FROM—which is all a part of understanding his identity.

Knowing WHO and WHOSE we are works two ways in our lives:

- 1) It boosts our self-esteem and self-confidence. We know we are acceptable and of value. We BELONG.
- 2) Our sense of identity will also guide our decisions and our behavior.

For example: think about being a U.S. citizen.

- 1) We feel pride and confidence that come from belonging to a country that is filled with beauty, energy and vibrant people.
- 2) The values espoused by my country guide and direct my behavior. I will cherish both freedom and responsibility, because those are both core values of our nation and government. I will work for justice and try to be a fair-minded person. I will accept and share responsibility to work for the good of my community and nation.

Today’s reading from Paul’s letter to the church in Rome provides us **ALL** with our **spiritual**—our TRUE identity. We are **adopted children of God**. This tells us WHO and WHOSE we are. This transcends our national identity. God’s children populate the globe, and we are part of that great family.

- 1) This identity boosts our self- esteem and confidence. The phrase “treasures of the church” brings to mind beautiful ancient cathedrals, stained glass, gold, tapestries and priceless statues like Michelangelo’s *Pieta* in Rome. But these are NOT God’s most valuable treasures. YOU are! Here, in these pews sit “treasures of the church.” The degree to which we claim this truth affects how we see ourselves and others.
- 2) As we see ourselves as God’s OWN- as his daughters and sons, we LIVE differently. Our lives are guided by GOD’S OWN values: cherishing all his creation and all his children- caring about justice and suffering; seeking humility and growth in grace; embracing obedience to Christ full of gratitude for the abundant and eternal life he offers.

Friends, on this Adoption Awareness Sunday it is good for us to understand that having concern for the world’s children, and concern for kids in need of homes is PART of living as God’s own sons and daughters.

We are honored this morning to have two members of our congregation, Molly Bolz and Cheri Hunt, with us to share their stories of being adopted.

(Molly & Cheri spoke about their lives as adopted children.)

Friends, this is also the First Sunday in Advent. Today we begin the time of waiting for a precious child, given to us by God. God gives us his only begotten son, so we might have life- life abundant and life eternal. May we grow to understand that ALL children are GOD’S children, and he asks us to love and care for them.

(People are invited to take a Salvation Army angel tag, OR contribute to our mission in Senegal which has feeding programs for mothers and children 5 and under, or contribute to our Adoption ministry.)