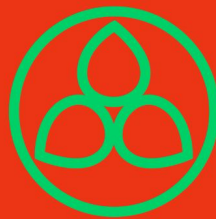




PENTECOST RETREAT



ARNA
Anglican Renewal Network Australia

ARNA PENTECOST PODCAST 2023 *The Holy Spirit and Study*

Today is Thursday, the 8th day of June and day 4 of this week's podcast series exploring the vital role of the Holy Spirit in enabling our study of the wisdom and ways of God.

A profound dimension to the Spirit's role in enabling our study and understanding of God's purposes centres on the word 'mysteries.' A notion very familiar to the world of the early church in the form of mystery cults, the Spirit provides something very distinct and ultimately counter-cultural to the secrecy of mystery cults. In the new age of the Holy Spirit, the things of God that were previously unknown and mysterious are now revealed and available to all who seek.

With that sense of anticipation, I focus now on being drawn into God's Presence

One of those former mysteries, now revealed, is the identity and nature of the relationship of those who are committed to the Lord Jesus: we move from a spirit of slavery to an identity as 'God's Son', a title designating all God's covenant people, male and female.

This is a phrase with a significant history:

Exodus 4:21-22 (CSB, using footnote alternative)

²¹ The LORD instructed Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, make sure you do before Pharaoh all the wonders that I have put within your power. But I will make him stubborn so that he won't let the people go. ²² And you will say to Pharaoh: This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son.

This is an established feature of God's redeeming work: freedom from enslavement and oppression into a place within the household of God; and not just a place, but adoption as a child of God.

See what great love the Father has given us that we should be called God's children—and we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it didn't know him. 1 John 3:1

And so I pause and pray:

Holy and loving God, I stand at the threshold of your dwelling place, the household where heaven and earth are at one, the true home for all who place their trust and loyalty to you. I have no right to enter. There is nothing I bring you do not already have or that you have not first given me. I come with empty hands, but with an open and contrite heart. I hear the Spirit's still voice, beckoning me forward, gently directing my spirit, my heart, soul, mind and will to bow before you, to be encompassed in the Father's embrace, to gaze upon our Lord's glorious face, and to be stirred, provoked, comforted and revitalised by the moving of your Holy Spirit.

May I find my true home, my place at your table, a place of refuge, sanctuary, rest and growth as I remind myself of the thrill, the honour, the awe of being in your presence. May your Spirit enable me to be attentive, respectful, confident in your mercy and joyful as a child of the light!
Amen

I Reflect.

Yesterday we saw that Paul has urged his hearers to set aside from the mindset of the flesh, assuring them that all 'those who live according to the Spirit have their minds set on the things of the Spirit.' By contrast to the mindset of the flesh, 'the mindset of the Spirit is life and peace' (verses 5 & 6 of Romans 8).

Paul now elaborates on the profound, identity-transforming teaching of the Spirit in the most intimate and personal of terms:

Romans 8:14-17:

For all those led by God's Spirit are God's sons. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father!" The Spirit himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children, and if children, also heirs—heirs of God and coheirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

A spirit of slavery leads to being overwhelmed by fear. Fear can be a dangerous and damaging feature of spiritual and religious abuse. The power of God's love is in stripping away such entangling messaging, to bring all who seek God out of darkness and shadows into light and delight.

The Spirit assures us, indeed is God's down-payment and pledge to us, that we have received the Spirit of adoption. This is our home, our place, our family. And the One who says so is no less than 'Abba, Father!'

This is not to say that God is more or less like human fathers: that is to have things the wrong way around. Remembering that God is beyond gender, neither male nor female, we recognise this as one aspect of God's ultimate and unsurpassed parental love and care. Broadening our scriptural imagery, we might express it in prayer: 'our heavenly Father, you care for us as a mother cares for her young.'

The richness of ‘Abba, Father’ is reflected in it being one of the few original Aramaic words that have been preserved in our gospel traditions. It is an essentially relational term, underscoring the intimate relationship with God that is enabled by the presence of the Spirit. The Spirit of the Son now abiding in us as believers allows us to address the Father in prayer as Jesus himself did (Mark 14:36): ‘Abba! Father.’ Now that is a truly awesome space to be welcomed into.

I Challenge Myself.

Humility is a good and right characteristic of Christian attitude of mind. We do not take anything for granted, we certainly cannot presume upon God or stand alongside him as an equal. Humility was ultimately modelled for us in the example of Christ, a willing acceptance and obedience to the mission of God grounded in God’s love for this world. Yet Jesus never doubted his identity as Son of the Father who is in heaven, and instructs us to approach him in the same manner – as children of the one heavenly Father.

Do I embrace this amazing outworking of the Spirit within me, the Spirit of adoption? I need establish no other identity, make a name for myself, or hide in the shadows in the household of faith. I am not trespassing, and freed from fear and accusation I can set aside the voices that accuse me of being unworthy or hypocritical. It is not about my worthiness, but my willingness to step into the light and receive the assurance that I am family. This is my family, I am welcome here, and this is my true home.

And so I listen once again to this profound truth, instructed and assured by the Spirit:

For all those led by God’s Spirit are God’s sons. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father!” The Spirit himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God’s children, and if children, also heirs—heirs of God and coheirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

I am struck by the phrase ‘*if children, also heirs—heirs of God and coheirs with Christ.*’ It is beyond my comprehension but am drawn into the great company of the co-heirs with Christ. I receive new life in him, I am raised with him, I shall be glorified with him, I shall be welcomed ever deeper into the fulness of the kingdom.

I bring to mind the cost of such a gift, a cost borne in the body and blood of Christ. Never let me doubt the depth of the Father’s love. And I am reminded anew that to be drawn into the company of Christ is to be called to the continuing mission of Christ, a mission that sets aside worldly gains and will prove to be an aroma of death to some and the fragrance of life to others (2 Corinthians 2:16). We are not to be surprised if we receive something of the persecution of Christ, suffering with him with the assurance that we will also be glorified with him.

And so I pray.

See what great love the Father has given us that we should be called God’s children—and we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it didn’t know him. 1 John 3:1

Lord, I cannot find adequate words to express how precious it is to be known and loved as your child, but I hold tight to your promise and receive your gift of adoption. As I do so only in and through your grace, I recognise the extent of your grace to all whom you have called into your family, my brothers and sisters known and unknown, equally valued and precious regardless

of status, reputation or culture, each known to you by name and enabled through your Spirit to be bearers of your grace.

Amen.

And now as I take these learnings into this day, may the leading of the Spirit keep us mindful of our identity as children of the heavenly Father, and approach the challenges and opportunities of each and every day accordingly. May our lives bring glory to the name of God whom we know as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.