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Haustafel

“Haustafel” is a German word, first coined by Martin Luther, which means “house-table.” It describes the passages of scripture that explain how the members of a household should treat one another in the light of the gospel - specifically, Ephesians 5:21-6:9 and Colossians 3:18-4:1.

In a sense, though, everything in the second of half of Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians could be called haustafel. In each of these Epistles Paul begins by talking about the gospel and then, after he has explained this good news, he talks about what the gospel tells us about how to treat one another.

We could think of it in the terms “Belong, Believe, Become.” (Notice that I have changed that slightly from previous articles and sermons when I used to say “belong, believe, behave.”)

The good news of Jesus is the good news that you *Belong* to the household of God. The Father’s Son has become human like us, healed our sin, anointed us with the Father’s Spirit, and brought us into the life he shares with the Father. Jesus’ Father is the Father of humanity and we all belong to the Father’s household.

We struggle to *Believe* this good news. Jesus is the only person who has ever really believed it and so he shares his belief with us by pouring out the Father’s Spirit on us. The Holy Spirit testifies to our souls that we are the Father’s children in Jesus and gives us the power of Jesus’ faith to believe this truth.

When we look at our lives, our relationships, and our behavior in the light of this good news about our adoption we see that we are not really living correctly as the Father’s children. We see that we need to *Become* new people in order to really be who we are. We need new minds, new ways of thinking, and new ways of behaving.

This is where the haustafel comes in. All those instructions in the New Testament - the ones that tell us to love one another, not get drunk, keep in step with the Spirit, etc. - are the haustafel of the household of the Trinity. Now that we know that we belong because of Jesus, and now that we believe that we belong because of the Holy Spirit, we can become more like our Father in heaven as we let Jesus teach us the haustafel of the Trinity’s Life.

That’s the theme of this month’s issue of *The Adopted Life* - the haustafel of the Trinity. In our worship during Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, and Easter, we have told the story of how humanity belongs to the Father in Jesus and the Holy Spirit has empowered us to believe. Now, as spring turns to summer, we reflect on the ways in which the Holy Spirit is empowering us to become the children of the Father that we really are.

~ Jonathan Stepp