

20JUN10 Text: Gal. 3:29 ***“And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.”***

"Anchor babies" isn't a very endearing term, but in Arizona those are the words being used to tag **children born in the U.S. to illegal immigrants**. While not new, the term is increasingly part of the local vocabulary because the primary authors of the nation's toughest and most controversial immigration law are targeting these tiny tots - **the legal weights that anchor many undocumented aliens in the U.S.** - for their next move. Public opinion polls suggest that Arizona is on the right track with illegal immigration, **Arizona Republicans will likely introduce legislation this fall that would deny birth certificates to children born in Arizona - and thus American citizens according to the U.S. Constitution** - to parents who are not legal U.S. citizens. The Arizona bill essentially requires of-age migrants to have the proper citizenship paperwork, the potential "anchor baby" bill blocks the next generation from ever being able to obtain it. **The idea is to make the citizenship process so difficult that illegal immigrants pull up "anchor" and leave.** The question is whether that would violate the U.S. Constitution. The 14th Amendment states that *"all persons, born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States."* It was intended to provide citizenship for freed slaves and served as a final answer to the Dred Scott case, cementing the federal government's control over citizenship. But that was 1868. **Some leaders in Arizona feel that the 14th Amendment has been "hijacked" by illegal immigrants.** Some feel that the 14th Amendment is being used as a wedge, as an orchestrated effort by illegal immigrants to come here and have children to gain access to the great welfare state that is being created before our very eyes. 58% of Americans polled by Rasmussen think illegal immigrants whose children are born here should not receive citizenship; others who oppose the bill say it would lead to more discrimination and divide the community. Wherever you stand on this controversial bill, it points out the fact that **U.S. citizens are indeed people of a privileged birth!**

Far above and beyond our U. S. citizenship is the fact that **we are people of a privileged birth!** We are citizens of heaven!

WE ARE CHILDREN OF PROMISE!!

Our epistle lesson from the third chapter of Galatians reminds us of some of the many blessings of our salvation that came through our spiritual birth in Holy Baptism.

1. We have been **reborn** as children of God and we are now **heirs** of eternal life.

2. We have been **clothed** with Christ,
we now stand **justified** by God's grace through faith in Him.
3. We are now **unified** as the people of God in that glorious **freedom**
which is found only in Christ.

First of all, WE ARE PEOPLE OF PROMISE because we have been reborn as children of God and are now heirs of eternal life. Our first birth into this world was a fleshly birth, a birth whose only inheritance was sin and death, as Jesus once said to Nicodemus. Do you remember Nicodemus, that Pharisee and member of the Jewish ruling council? He came to Jesus one night, under the cover of darkness and said, "*Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.*" Jesus' reply startled Nicodemus: "*I tell you the truth, **no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.***" Nicodemus was puzzled about what Jesus meant to be born again and he asked Jesus, "*How can a man be born when he is old? Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!*" In response to Nicodemus' misunderstandings and questions, Jesus replied: "*I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is **born of water and the Spirit.** Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.*" We are people of promise because we have been born again in the waters of Holy Baptism, born of water and the Spirit! We have been cleansed of all our unrighteousness. **Our sins have been forgiven!** Where once our only inheritance was sin and death, now we know forgiveness and have been made heirs of eternal life. The apostle Paul writes to Titus about the blessings of baptism when we were reborn and made heirs of life when he writes: "*But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. **He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,** whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become **heirs** having the hope of eternal life.*" (Titus 3:4-7) As reborn children of God, we are no longer led by our sinful nature, but rather led by the Spirit who begins His work of sanctification in our lives. Paul writes to the Romans: "*For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of **sonship.** And by him we cry, "**Abba, Father.**" The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are **heirs --heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ...***" (Rom. 8:15-18) WE ARE PEOPLE OF PROMISE. We have been reborn as children of God and are now heirs of eternal life.

Another part of our inheritance as PEOPLE OF PROMISE is this: we have been clothed with Christ and now stand **justified** by God's grace through faith in Him. We heard in our epistle lesson today, *"All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."* What does it mean to be clothed with Christ? **It means that His spotless righteousness covers all of our sins.** Our sermon hymn put it this way: *In Baptism we now put on Christ—Our shame is fully covered With all that He once sacrificed And freely for us suffered. For here the flood of His own blood Now makes us holy, right, and good Before our heavenly Father.* (LSB 596:4) Where once we stood before God covered with the filth of sin, God has now covered our sin with the spotless righteousness of His Son...just as this weekly reminder of my white alb which symbolizes Christ's righteousness and which covers my black clergy clothing underneath, black clothing that is meant to symbolize sin, just like the white baptismal gown symbolizing Christ's righteousness covers the infant, just like the white funeral pall symbolizing Christ's righteousness finally covers the Christian's casket. Indeed, this is the reason the apostle John writes in the 7th chapter of Revelation about those who are in heaven clothed in white robes: *"These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; **they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**"* (Rev. 7:14) As PEOPLE OF PROMISE, such is our heavenly inheritance too as we one day will also join those white-robed saints in eternal praise of God and yet we can know that even while we are on earth, Christ's righteousness covers all of sins. What joy is ours to consider that we are clothed with Christ and His holiness! We too join the psalmist and declare our praise for God: ***"You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give you thanks forever."*** (Ps. 30:11-12) WE ARE PEOPLE OF PROMISE! We have been **clothed** with Christ and now stand **justified (declared 'not guilty' of our sin)** by God's grace through faith in Him.

A final aspect of our glorious inheritance as heirs according to the promises of God and PEOPLE OF PROMISE is this: we are one in Christ and enjoy that **glorious freedom** which is found only in Christ: the freedom **from** the curse of the Law, freedom **from** the power of sin, freedom **from** the fear of death! This freedom Jesus Christ gained for us at great cost to Himself—it cost Him His own life when He shed His holy, precious blood for us on the cross! Thanks to Jesus Christ's work of redemption, we are freed **from** all these negative things **for** something very positive: **free** to hear and follow His Word and **free** to serve Jesus Christ in all we do. Jesus declares, *"If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."* (John 8:36). Again He tells us, *"If you **hold** to My teaching, you are really My disciples. **Then** you will know the truth and the **truth** will set you **free.**"* (John 8:31-32).

With this freedom in Christ, like any freedom, there also comes responsibility. As PEOPLE OF PROMISE we are **unified** in our freedom. We are freed **from** divisive and particularistic prejudices, free to move **toward** responsible and **inclusive** unity in Christ's kingdom. There are no racial divides in the Christian faith, no laws to keep one group of people from being born again. As we heard in our epistle lesson today, *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all **one** in Christ."* Those things that cause division in society—ethnic and racial differences, social and economic levels and gender biases—are to find **no place** in the Church of Jesus Christ! We are brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus no matter what the color of our skin, no matter how fancy or humble our homes, no matter what gender we are. We are free to be **one in Christ** to love and serve one another as members of His family.

Of course the **greatest** freedom we experience in Christ is **freedom from the bondage to the Law** and our slavery to sin. Because of Christ Jesus, we are, in the words of our epistle lesson, *"no longer under the supervision of the Law."* Through God's Word and the enlightening grace of the Holy Spirit, we have come to see that we will never be justified by the Law, instead, as we read in our epistle, *"the Law was put in charge to **lead us** to Christ,"* to show us **our need for** a Savior. Now that WE ARE PEOPLE OF PROMISE, the promised inheritance of salvation first proclaimed to Abraham has now become ours as well, an inheritance not earned, but **freely given** by God's grace. Yes, as we heard in our text today: *"If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."*

Praise God! We are people of a privileged birth! Jesus Christ Himself has purchased us and made us very own and baptism joins us to His saving work! We are indeed His PEOPLE OF PROMISE, **reborn** as children of God, **heirs** of eternal life, **clothed** with Christ and now stand **justified** by God's grace through faith in Him! We now free to live each day in that glorious **freedom** which is found only in Christ! Amen.

SDG