**3-10-19 (First Lent)**

 **Who’s Your Daddy/Mommy?**

**By Rev. Sheryl Stewart**

Deuteronomy 26:1-11 Romans 8(b)-13 Luke 4: 1-13

RR: Psalm 91: 1-2, 9-16

**Summary:** Summary: *Near at hand*: my adoptive Dad and Mom were Dr. Alfred and Mrs. Maxine O’Donnell. *Back up*: my bio mother was Loretta Morrell; my bio father was Donnie Horgan. *Way back*: my father and mother were wandering Arameans. *All the way back*: God is my father, our Father. Hey, we’re related!

 Well, thanks to Rev. Don, I am smack dab in the middle of one of the most exciting adventures of my life – and, considering my life, that is really saying something! It wasn’t until I was 16 that I discovered I was adopted while I was being naturalized as an American citizen.

 People said I didn’t have to do that since my parents were Americans, but *they* said I did; so, that didn’t clue me in. Figuring everyone else was wrong, I listened to my Mom and Dad and got Naturalized. But, when Dad and I were standing before the judge, he asked Dad if he was my guardian and Dad said, “Yes.” At 16, I knew the difference between a parent and a guardian; so, I asked Dad about it on the way back home.

 Dad tried, and failed, to distract me; so, he confessed that Mom’s pelvis was too small to give birth safely; so, they adopted me right after I was born. Later, he came to my room to see how I felt about all this, but I told him I felt he and Mom were my folks and that I had no burning need to know more.

 I really was curious, but I figured my biological parents must have had good reasons to adopt me out, and I didn’t want to intrude. Also, it was obviously very important that my adoptive Mom wanted me to think I was hers. Her silence was her gift to me; so, I never told her I knew, and my silence was my gift to her.

 Both my adoptive parents are with God now; so, I don’t know if Mom ever guessed I knew all this. But my curiosity remained. When Don told me about the DNA tests and suggested I take one, I thought of it as an unobtrusive way to find out if I had any blood relations, since I’d only find connections who were registered and already wanted ties.

 Boy, did I! I have scads of first and second cousins, and a few potential half brothers and sisters! What most likely happened was that Donnie Horgan, a diabetic hospital breakfast chef who started working at age 14 at public facilities in Saint John, NB, Canada, was my bio father. He was a notorious ladies’ man with a wandering eye who left at least two other illegitimate kids, boys, who popped up on my DNA results.

A young woman, Loretta, was 15 and pregnant in 1949. Her own mother delivered a baby in April of 1949, a month before I was born. Loretta was listed as a waitress when she was married two years later to a longshoreman with the surname of Morrell. So, she probably worked in the hospital and had an affair with Donnie, with me as the result, and later married a faithful and forgiving man. My adoptive Dad was an osteopathic surgeon, doubtless in residence in the same hospital. Considering the stigma of unwed motherhood in 1949 and the potential disaster of two newborns in her Mom’s house, I can understand Loretta’s choice. I’m just glad she didn’t get an abortion!

Today’s Scriptures seem designed for my life story. In Deuteronomy, we have the ritual of first fruits and the famous connection all Jews have: “My father and mother were wandering Arameans.” Although Gentile, I’m a little transgendered branch grafted onto the olive tree of Israel, of which Jesus is the very root.

Paul speaks of God’s salvation given to those who walk, not according to flesh, but in the Spirit of Christ. He makes us all children of God, to Whom we cry, “Abba! /Daddy!” Psalm 91 reinforces the protection of God and our connection to Jesus, whose knowledge of these verses helped Him resist temptation and claim his connection to God’s plan, which we see in the Gospel lesson.

Hence, my summary: *Near at hand*: my adoptive Dad and Mom were Dr. Alfred and Mrs. Maxine O’Donnell. *Back up*: my bio mother was Loretta Morrell; my bio father was Donnie Horgan. *Way back*: my father and mother were wandering Arameans. *All the way back*: God is my father, our Father. Hey, we’re related!

This, as most everything does, reminds me of a hymn. “I’m so glad I’m a part of the family of God – I’ve been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His Blood! Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod, for I’m part of the family, the family of God.” That is from Bill Gaither. I wish you could all feel the excitement I feel today and that you would leave worship knowing we just had one heck of a family reunion!

We usually do this a little later in worship, but I can think of no better way to conclude than with Jesus’s Prayer. Let’s pray: “Our Father --*(continue*).”