

Daily Devotional Guide

Monday – Read Ephesians 1:3-6. These verses remind us how special each of us are to God. Verse 4 tells us that before the world was created God chose us! God had each one of us in mind and delighted in creating us. God chose you! Whenever you are feeling discouraged, say to yourself, “God chose me!” You are unique and special to God. You are God’s idea. Revel in that truth today.

Tuesday – Read Ephesians 1:7. Paul explains that God loves us so much that “in Christ” (a phrase Paul uses more than 30 times in Ephesians) we have been redeemed and forgiven. The word “redemption” means a divine power that makes us whole, divine power that does something for us that we could never do for ourselves. An important part to God’s redemptive power in Christ is forgiveness. We have been forgiven of our sins and therefore have been empowered to live the abundant life in Christ. Why has God done this for us? Twice Paul uses the word “grace.” God’s grace is God’s unmerited favor, his unconditional love, a gift that is not earned but given out of God’s extravagant love for us.

Wednesday – Read Ephesians 1:13-14. Paul reminds us that we have received the Holy Spirit, which means we belong to God. The Holy Spirit is God’s guarantee that we have been redeemed and that we will one day reign with God in the Kingdom forever. It is important to realize that if you are a Christian, the Spirit of God lives inside of you and is there to guide and empower your life. Have you utilized this amazing resource through prayer?

Thursday – Read Ephesians 1:17-18. In these verses Paul is praying that we would receive one of the blessings of the Holy Spirit – revelation. The Holy Spirit draws us closer to God and reveals to us more about who God is and the life we are called to live. Paul uses an interesting phrase, “with the eyes of your heart enlightened.” This means the Holy Spirit will give us a spiritual vision to understand God and his joyous plan for our lives.

Friday – Read Ephesians 1:19-23. Four times in these verses Paul uses the word “power.” This is no accident. God’s spirit gives us the power to be victorious in and through all of life’s challenges and obstacles. What’s more is that God’s power empowers the church of Jesus Christ to live out its mission of spreading God’s love and making disciples (verse 22-23).



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Claim Your Inheritance

Sunday, November 7, 2010

Sermon by: Dr. Charley Reeb, Senior Pastor

Scripture Lesson: Ephesians 1: 3-23

I want this wonderful passage of Scripture to love on you today. This is what it does. It loves on us by telling us that we all have an inheritance from God that is priceless. Most people don’t know they have this inheritance. Most people live their lives in discouragement because they are not aware of their inheritance. There are many of you here today who remain stuck in your life because you don’t know anything about your inheritance. Well, your attitude about yourself, your life and your purpose is about to change. Because I’m about to tell you what God has done for you and given to you. And the great news is that you can start enjoying your inheritance today. But you have to claim it. God has given it to you, but you have to claim it. Are you ready to claim it?

God Chose You!

This is what the Bible says in verse 4 and 5, **“He (God) chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of his will.”**

Before the world was ever created – before you were an idea in your parents mind – before you were ever born God chose you, God thought of you and wanted you as his child. You are God’s idea! Your hair, your personality, your laugh, your voice God chose and created. And God had great fun in choosing you and creating you. It is the most fun God has ever had. That’s what the “good pleasure of his will” means.

I have a lot of fun in ministry. I believe ministry ought to be fun. And it is for me. And one of the most fun things I do is infant Baptisms. I love carrying around a baby in the midst of you as we sing our lullaby. I love watching your facial expressions. Some of you cry. Some of you laugh. Some of you smile. And I love watching the parents as they proudly watch their baby. I love feeling the child in my arms with the child’s eyes in complete awe over what is happening. And I often think this, on a smaller scale, is how God must have felt when he chose us, created us, and brought us into the world. God gets the biggest kick out of choosing and creating each of his children and watching us grow.

People often ask me, “Why do you Baptize infants? They have no idea of what is going on?” And I say, “Exactly!” Before the foundation of the world, God chose each of us and created us. We didn’t have anything to do with it. God did it. We are God’s children and God claims us. We are a gift to God that God gave to himself.

And I tell you, there are days when this is a solid rock for me. When I have had a bad day or when I am discouraged I remind myself, “God chose me. I am God’s idea!”

But so often we forget this. We forget our worth and our value. We forget that God has a purpose for our love. We forget how much God love us and we act in ways that go against our worth. We hurt ourselves. We hurt others. We say things we shouldn’t say. We do things we

shouldn't do. We sin. But don't be discouraged because God has done something for you that is simply amazing.

God Forgives You

Verse 7 tells us so, **“In him (In Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us.”**

Did you hear that? God lavished grace and forgiveness on you in Christ. You know what lavished means? It doesn't mean God sprinkled you with it. It doesn't mean God dabs you with it. It means God showers you with it, saturates you in it. God covers you in it. You are forgiven. You are free from guilt and shame. You are drenched in God's forgiveness!

But I wonder how many of you know that and have accepted God's forgiveness for you in Christ. It is amazing how many I come across who have not accepted and embraced God's forgiveness for them. Many have been in church all their lives and still have not received God's forgiveness. I don't know what you have brought into church today, but if it is guilt, you need to hear that you are forgiven. No matter what you have done, you are forgiven. God forgives you and sets you free. Remember he chose you. You are his child.

A couple of months ago a note landed on my desk. It was on the yellow attendance slip that we give to you. It must have been a Sunday that I was talking a lot about Jesus because the note said, “What is so important about Jesus? And why is it so important to believe in him?” Great question. The note got me thinking. Perhaps I talk a lot about Jesus but maybe I don't often explain *why* Jesus is so important. And I thought about how I could best explain why Jesus is so important. Then it came to me. The best way I can explain it is through an unusual event that happened at the parsonage several months ago.

I was taking our dog out before going to bed. As I was waiting for her on our screened in porch, I heard a flutter behind me. When I turned around, I couldn't believe what I saw. There perched on one of our patio chairs was a screech owl. Its big eyes were just staring at me. It was a beautiful creature. I wondered what it was doing on my porch. Soon it dawned on me that the poor thing could not find its way out. The whole porch

is screened in, and only one of the doors is left open to the back yard. It was clear that it flew in through that open door but it could not find that open door again to get out.

Well, I called the dog back into the house and let Brandy know about it. She ran out with her camera and took pictures. She couldn't help herself. The first thing I did was open the front porch door so two doors would be open, and I foolishly pointed to both of them as if the owl understood human behavior. The owl just kept looking at me with those big eyes. The next thing I did was walk outside both of the doors and try to wave the owl out, “Come on, Come on!” The owl continued to stare at me. Then I remembered that the porch lights were not on, so I turned them on, and the owl just stared at me. Suddenly, another owl swooped down just outside the porch wanting to free its friend and bring it home, but it couldn't find its way into the porch.

I finally gave up. As I was walking up the stairs to bed, I thought, “Now, this will preach!” There is a sermon everywhere, you know. I thought, “The only way I could free that owl and bring it home is to become an owl myself.” This is what Jesus has done for us and this is why Jesus is so important. God thought, “How can I show my children that I love them and forgive them? I have given the law and prophets but my love still has not been communicated effectively. Here is what I will do. I will become human being and show them myself how much I love them and set them free.” This is what God did in Jesus Christ and this is why Christ is so important. (For those of you who are still wondering about the owl, the next morning the owl was gone. It had obviously found its way out).

God in Christ has forgiven you, and if you have embraced God's forgiveness for you another great truth happens in your life – God comes to live within you!

God Is Within You

Verse 13 says, **“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit. This is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people.**

Now, this is amazing! The same God who

created the world –the same God who chose you and created you comes to live inside you when you embrace his love and forgiveness. You see, God is not some distant God. God is a personal being that wants to live within you, to have a relationship with you. It is incredible when you think about it.

But if you are still not convinced how incredible it is, let me share this verse you. Verse 20, **“God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.”** What power? The power of the Holy Spirit. This means that the same spirit, the same power that raised Jesus lives in you! This power is there to guide your life, empower you, instruct you, encourage you! All you have to do is acknowledge it, receive it and follow it.

The migratory plover is a marvelous bird. It spends its summers in the far arctic regions of the north and its winters in South America. When it migrates it makes a non-stop flight that covers about 12,000 miles. As the plover flies, it never veers from its course more than a half a mile unless driven by wind or danger. If it does fly off its course, there is a powerful radar system within the plover that brings it back on course. Well, if God will do that for a bird, God will do that for you and me. And God has through the power of the Holy Spirit, God's guidance system for us.

There is also a larger reason why God's spirit is within us and within his church.

God Is Counting On You!

Verse 22 and 23 state, **“And God has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”** Christ is the head of his body, the church, which means he is counting on me and counting on you!

“Counting on me for what?” How many of your friends or family don't know they are loved, chosen and forgiven by God? What about the girl you see at the checkout counter every week? Does she know? What about your neighbor that you have known for years. Does he know? If he doesn't, do you believe he should know? You see, if you had the cure to cancer would you keep it to yourself? No. Well, you know the greatest truth in the world that can change a person's life – God's love. So, why would you want to keep it to

yourself?

There is an old legend about Jesus. He went back up to heaven after his time on earth. The angels were talking and Gabriel said, “You suffered a lot down there. Do they all know about how you loved them and what you did for them?” Jesus said, “No, not yet. Only a few people know right now, a few of my disciples.” Gabriel said, “Well, what have you done to make sure everyone knows about your love?” Jesus said, “Well, I have asked Peter, James and John and a few others to tell others about me until others know and then others will know and eventually all the world will know.

Gabriel laughed and said, “Are you kidding? With all due respect, Lord, you have overestimated human beings. What if Peter and James and John get tired? What if the people after them forget? What if all the way down into the 21st century people just don't tell others about you? Don't you have any other plans?” Jesus said, “I haven't made any other plans. I'm counting on them.”

God chose you. God forgives you. God is within you. God is counting on you to tell others about his love. You have just received the greatest truth in the universe. Claim this inheritance today. Claim your inheritance as a child of God. But, for goodness sake, don't keep it to yourself. Amen.