

## *Being A Child of God - our inheritance*

*(Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist, July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024 - Ephesians 1:3-14)*

If you are like me, you will have inherited some traits from your family. As a kid, a woman rudely told me she knew who I was because I had my grandfather's nose. My brother inherited a serious medical condition. Some would say I got my stubbornness from my father and hopefully the gentle side from my mother. What did you inherit from yours? Your looks, your voice, your mannerisms, your sayings – you will be glad to know I didn't inherit that from my Pa or I would be saying, 'I'll just chew it over' all the time.

We inherit a lot from our family – do you have your mother's cook book, or perhaps some family jewelry. In our family we have two clocks that have been passed down through many generations – we call them heirlooms.

That is the physical inheritance but what about our emotional inheritance and spiritual inheritance. Do we deal with conflict or grief in the same way as others in our family? Do you share a sense of humour? Do you share the love of a particular pastime – a craft or a sport or gardening? In Victoria, often the AFL team we follow is an inheritance. I barrack for Geelong, in part, because my Grandpa bought me a membership ticket and took me to all the games at Geelong from the age of 5, it gets into your blood.

Are you a Baptist because your family were Baptists? Are you a Christian because your family were Christian? What is your spiritual inheritance?

In our readings today we learn of inheritances. David and the whole community are singing and dancing in the streets as they celebrated their spiritual inheritance, which was contained in the ark, the ark of the covenant. It held the tablets on which the ten commandments were written, some manna that kept the people alive in the wilderness and the rod of Aaron. The ark was the symbol of God's presence with and God's leading of the people, hence the great celebration as it was brought into town.

Paul reminds the church at Ephesus of the spiritual inheritance they have received from God because of Christ. This same inheritance is for us too. It seems to be an amazing inheritance, let's list what he says – you have every spiritual blessing, you are chosen from the very beginning, you are children of God, you are redeemed, you are forgiven, God's grace is lavished on you, and God has shared with you the mystery of what he is on about.

Blessing on blessing, what generosity and what a great relief to any who feel abandoned, or shame or despair. And all freely given. What an inheritance!

Let's have a closer look at our inheritance. I think the first thing to notice is that all of this is ours because of Jesus, because God chose to be present with us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and we hold that in common with Christians all over the world.

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We were chosen from the very start. Now I don't want us to think that this a special elect group, rather the opposite, it is meant to be inclusive. Paul is writing to an inclusive community, a community where Jews and Gentiles lived side by side. This is not about an exclusive club, it is about God who chooses to enfold all the people with love and take away any blame.

We are meant for family life, we are adopted as God's children. Adoption to me implies choice. I have three adopted cousins. When my nana died there was an argument about which grandchildren would share in her tiny estate. My uncle told my father that his children would miss out as they were adopted. My father told him that was utter nonsense, as all the grandchildren were loved equally by our nana and no one would ever miss out. God adopts us all equally; none are more special or more worthy than another. We are all his children and by implication we are all brothers and sisters, no matter our background, our culture, whether we have been Christians for a long time or a short time, we are all loved equally by God.

We are all redeemed. I don't know if you have ever taken something to the pawn shop. People who need money fast often take an item to a shop and leave it there in exchange for some money and then plan to come and buy the item back – providing it isn't sold in between. It has cost God something to ensure we are all kept safe in his enfolding love.

We are forgiven. It doesn't matter what we have done or not done God's grace extends to us. God's desire is only to be reconciled with us, to be in relationship with us no matter how often we turn our back or hurt God. God will do everything to bring us back into his love and care. Doesn't mean we don't have to change and perhaps see the error of our ways, but we are never beyond the reach of God.

We are given an insight into God's plan for the world. God shares with us what God is doing in the world, the whole world. He takes us into his confidence. So, what is that plan – the plan is UNITY. God's plan is to bring the entire creation (all people, all creatures) together in love and compassion.

We are all gifted with the Holy Spirit – the sign of the continuing presence of God with us. Perhaps a bit like having the ark of the covenant with us.

Are we ready to claim our inheritance which is so freely given? Can we live out of the love and forgiveness that God so lavishly pours out on us? Are we ready to live out the implications of such blessings? Like we live out the physical inheritances (noses, voices, mannerisms) we have received from our earthly families, we are called to live out the spiritual inheritances we have received from God – inclusion, forgiveness, grace which all lead to the God's great plan – UNITY.

Together, we, us are lavished with God's grace and blessing. It is all God's doing. We are loved, we are accepted, we are blameless, we are free – we just need to believe and live it.