

IN HIM WE HAVE OBTAINED AN INHERITANCE, HAVING BEEN PREDESTINED ACCORDING TO THE PURPOSE OF HIM WHO WORKS ALL THINGS ACCORDING TO THE COUNSEL OF HIS WILL, SO THAT WE WHO WERE THE FIRST TO HOPE IN CHRIST MIGHT BE TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY. IN HIM YOU ALSO, WHEN YOU HEARD THE WORD OF TRUTH, THE GOSPEL OF YOUR SALVATION, AND BELIEVED IN HIM, WERE SEALED WITH THE PROMISED HOLY SPIRIT, WHO IS THE GUARANTEE OF OUR INHERITANCE UNTIL WE ACQUIRE POSSESSION OF IT, TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY.

What did you get for Christmas? That's the questioning you're hearing a lot these days.

So, let's get to the crucial question: What did you get for Christmas? I'm guessing you got some good things, some nice stuff: toys, new laptop, new clothes, a Playstation, gift certificates, and, maybe, some cold, hard cash.

Want to know what I got for Christmas? Sure you do. Even if you don't, you know I'm going to tell you anyway. I got lots of good stuff. I got running shoes, the universal Christmas gift. I got a hoodie; a shirt. One son got me golf lessons. To that, I can only ask the Lutheran question, "What does this mean," because I'm not sure what it means, but I am considering changing my will. I received a very generous gift from the congregation, and many of you remembered my family, as well. I got a lot of really nice stuff for Christmas.

But, you want to know what the best gift was that I got for Christmas? The best gift was that I got an inheritance. Don't be envious or jealous, because you got an inheritance, too. This inheritance is the best thing ever because it involves things like a mansion, a gold crown, a white robe, eternal life lived in your own body – a body transformed, resurrected,

glorified, which has no disease, no illness, no aches or pains in it; an inheritance where we get to live in a kingdom, and this inheritance can never perish, fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you.

The reason you received this inheritance is because God works all things according to His good and gracious will. This is what Paul is teaching us in our Epistle lesson this Sunday. It is God's will that you live with Him as His own, in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

The problem with that is that righteousness, innocence, and blessedness doesn't describe us as we are, in and of ourselves. Sinful, unholy, destined for eternal damnation – that describes us as we are, in and of ourselves. The reason we are like this is because that's the inheritance we got from our first parents when they ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden. And, this sin shows itself in our daily lives, in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and it shows itself especially at Christmas time. Think of how much greed, and lust, and coveting, and jealousy are part of the days of Christmas.

Think about how it is when the family gets together and how often those wonderful moments get turned into bickering, knockdown, drag out, bare knuckle free-for-alls. Think about how easy it is for a holiday get-together to turn from a joyous occasion to a drunken gossip fest.

These things happen to us because we are sinners and the wages of our sin means we are destined for the destruction of death. Yet, God wants us to be with Him. The joy for us this Christmas is that God's will is greater than our sin.

So that you would have this inheritance, Jesus came to us at His birth in Bethlehem to save us from our sin, cancel our guilt and give us eternal life in place of eternal damnation.

Jesus did all that for you by being born of the Virgin Mary and becoming like you – taking on your flesh and blood so that He could take on your sin, your guilt, your damnation.

As Jesus journeyed to the cross, He met and interacted with many people – the sick and infirm, and social outcasts, tax collectors, sinners. He healed them, went to their homes, ate with them, touched them, and allowed them to touch Him. But, Jesus did more than that – He took their sin and their guilt and even took their place, so that when He gets to Calvary, He stands before His Father having their sin, their guilt -- your sin, your guilt, as well -- saying “I have it all. Punish Me instead of them.” And the Father did. When the Father turned His back on Jesus and abandoned Him, that was your damnation. Jesus did it for you, in your place. And because He did, all of your sins are forgiven, all of your guilt is gone, all of your eternal damnation is replaced with eternal life in heaven with God. Because Jesus died, you have this inheritance.

There are a few things you need to know about this inheritance. This inheritance is yours, Dear Child of God. It is yours because God has given it to you. It became yours when you heard the Gospel of your salvation and you came to believe and have faith in Jesus Christ.

For most of us, that happened at the font of Baptism. As little babies, the Word, along with the water, gave us faith and we believed. For others, it came later in life, when they heard the Word of God and the Holy Spirit used that Word to bring them to faith in Jesus. Either way, God the Holy Spirit did all the work. *Faith comes by hearing*, Paul teaches us in the book

of Romans (Ro 10:17). And, the Holy Spirit used that Word to bring you to faith, so that you trust, rejoice, and find comfort in Jesus.

Paul teaches us in our lesson that the Holy Spirit is “*the guarantee of our inheritance*.” That means that the Holy Spirit has brought you to faith, keeps you in that faith in every joy and sorrow of earthly life, and He will raise you from the grave on the last day.

Something else you need to know – this inheritance is yours, but you don’t have full possession of it yet. This inheritance means that you will live in a mansion, wear a gold crown and a white robe, and live in a resurrected, glorified body. The Scriptures guarantee all these things are yours, but you will not take full possession of them until the last day last day when Jesus comes again in glory.

Another thing about this inheritance – you did nothing to earn it. God simply gave it to you. You got it the way you typically get an inheritance, someone died. Yes, Jesus died for you, so that you would have all these gifts.

And one last thing about your inheritance: it is not an afterthought. God did not look at Adam and Eve the day they ate of the apple and say, “Oh gosh, they sinned! Now what do I do? I better send Jesus.” No, Paul teaches us that God had this all planned out before the foundation of the world. Paul says that God “*predestined*” us to receive this inheritance.

In these days of Christmas, people are asking you, “What did you get for Christmas?” So, tell them what you got --- toys, clothes, games for the Playstation, and tell them of the greatest gift – the inheritance of heaven that you received from God.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

