

Ps 104:24-34, 35b

Acts 2:1-21

John 14:8-17, 25-27

Romans 8:14-17

For all who are led by the spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ - if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

The way I read this scripture, I hear it saying that God's children are led by God's Spirit and therefore we are all called to the joys and the responsibilities thereof. We are heirs to the throne. But what kind of Kingdom is our inheritance? Why does the Christian faith find this "Spirit" to be so vital to the theology of those who follow Jesus? This is Pentecost - the day we celebrate the Holy Spirit being given to those who believe in Jesus as their Christ. So what Spirit Kingdom are we inheriting?

There are plenty of examples throughout history of Kingdoms. Where a chosen few, very wealthy and powerful people, saw their position as one of **God giving them** the responsibility to care for those who lived in their geographical area of power. Some were better at it than others, and there were some who saw themselves alone as God's chosen and those "below" them were on this earth for the benefit of those chosen few. There still are, they rarely call themselves Kings anymore - just CEOs. Earthly examples of Heirs and kingdoms can be very distracting to some Christians in our search to understanding our callings as heirs.

Being *God's* child and heir - being a part of any **powerful structure** - can be an overwhelming responsibility, if you take it seriously! And there are many great dangers involved in this as well. I wonder at times if this "Heir mentality" is the foundation for many social ills that Christians are often criticized for. Some see Christians as being aloof, pompous, judgmental, and living double standards. Also, I wonder if this "Heir mentality" could be part of the foundation of the popular "theology of wealth"; where *if* you are right with God, pray a special prayer, are truly special in God's eyes, then you will be wealthy, or; the "*because I am wealthy God loves me more*" mentality.

No, our inheritance is the result of an amazing awareness in any human being. This awareness is that we are children. Not that we are powerful beings, but children. We are children of a Father who wants us to feel confident in our abilities. He wants us to love and share. This parent is fair and offers unconditional love. He allows us to fall, but encourages us to get back up again. God is the parent, who we can put our trust in fully and he will never leave us afraid and alone. He is the parent we all wish we could be.

Since this is a day when we focus somewhat on my ordination, I will share yet another personal example, with the hope and prayer that there may be a greater benefit from it, and not just narcissistic babblings. I believe it was Spring 1982, I had been waitressing, selling Triple A memberships and doing other odd jobs with a Bachelors of Science in Psychology, and I had been wandering about wondering what I was going to be when I grew up. I was getting increasingly restless and impatient. My family was down in Florida and there were all kinds of issues going on down there. I was lost, and needed something to happen, and I thought I might be able to help my family, so I left Lexington, KY and went down there.

It wasn't long before I realized that I wasn't going to be able to help the situation there, and again, I was at a crossroad. I wondered, should I continue to stay and tough it out? They are my family! How could I leave them in such turmoil? But on the other hand, I felt so hopeless about my situation. So I took my bible and went to the beach. I prayed and opened up my bible randomly to read whatever fell open:

Matthew 10:34- 39 'Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

For I have come to set a man against his father,
and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

I see that moment as my "born again moment". I realized that I wasn't going to save my family, and that God was calling me to return to Kentucky. Moreover, it freed me to break away from my family - to grow up and take responsibility for my own growth, my own life - so that I could attempt become wise and aware enough to serve others - so that I could learn to see the perfect Abba/Father in heaven as my guide and trust in him. Following God, being God's Child, keeping my focus on the ideals of Christ, helped heal me from being afraid and overwhelmed. After returning back to Lexington, I was in Seminary by fall of '83.

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There is a catch phrase - and I don't know who to credit it with - but it goes like this, "God has no Grandchildren." That makes my mother and I sisters, and it makes my son and I siblings. My mother and my Son are responsible for their own spiritual lives, and out of love and compassion, and with whatever skills and gifts God has granted me, I will offer them my life. I will do my best in raising my son, and being a friend to my mother, but I cannot give them the spirit they need to find their inheritance - as much as I would love to have that power - it is a very personal "God thing". The greatest we can do is rejoice together at our mutual awarenesses.

Now, it may seem like I am espousing an emotional separation from *relationships, which some feel should mean the most to us*, but the reality is, we have just broadened ourselves up. Now we look around and see other brothers and sisters, who are do not share our DNA. We can learn from and share our knowledge of God with a growing number of siblings. We can be supported and uplifted by *others who have suffered* and we can uplift and support others in their suffering. We look up and beyond our natural egocentric selves and see ourselves as part of an amazing universe of stars, plants, animals, humans of various cultures and traditions, and we realize - it is, in its essence, all good. And our DNA family is also a part of that.

However we know the story doesn't end there - good isn't always happening in these precious parts of our realms - and some of our brothers and sisters are suffering. We are called out of compassion to help do what we can.

Now this can be frightening - feeling as though curing the troubles of the whole world are our responsibility. Let us not forget - our sermon text said, "For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear . . . and . . . ***it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God***". We, who can recognize God in our lives and recognize our place in the universe - by the fact that we can see that - that alone proves that we are already in possession of the Holy Spirit. We could not know God without the Holy Spirit. And because we know we are part of God we can be courageous and inspired!

Now, this is, I guess, supposed to be, "My Day" - the celebration of my ordination. And I am so extremely grateful that you all want to help me celebrate this. But I so feel like I am not alone on this day - this is a celebration of the gift of the Holy Spirit - the beginning of the church - the joy of a calling - it is NOT mine alone. So many people are celebrating important milestones in their lives these days! Kelly, Colin, Phillip, and all those graduating from successfully completing structured education. The Blairs, the Hearls, the Griffiths, the Davis', the Huntmans (50!), the Flocks, and Steve and I all celebrating anniversaries around this time! And sometimes staying married and thriving in a relationship can be considered a tremendous accomplishment! This is a time for all of us to celebrate together. And there are also less obvious accomplishments that we carry in our hearts. May this day be a time of reflecting on those aspects of our lives when we can look at ourselves and say, "you have done well!"

However, I also recognize this day of uniqueness as a pastor - as YOUR pastor - and 20 years officially ordained - 27 years since I found my way to seminary - and even longer before that when I started getting my hints (which I quickly put aside and ignored as long as possible). I am still often astounded by what God has done with this lowly lump of clay, and am very thankful.

So please allow me to rededicate myself to my calling and to God. Before God and all you witnesses, I pray that I will become a better servant and witness to the grace and love and truth of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and our Father, who are all in one great power.

And I also want to rededicate myself to serving you. As God has been so true to me, you have as well. You have been patient and kind and generous with me and my family in all our adjustments and foibles. It is practically our 1<sup>st</sup> year Anniversary together, so happy anniversary darling Family of God. I thank you all, "Abba" my Father and you, my brothers and sisters. So let us glorify God and each other and celebrate all our callings to be with God to serve each other! Amen