

Title: “Heirs Through God”

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Galatians 4:4-7

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Service Readings: Isaiah 63:7–14, Gal. 4:4–7, Matt. 2:13–23

Christian hope is not wishful thinking but a guaranteed inheritance established by God.

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

She was just six when it happened, some thirty years ago, but she remembers every detail, every second. It had been close to Christmas, she knows, because the mall was decorated. Hundreds of trees and thousands of lights lined the concourse. But what *filled* the concourse were the people – and every one of them a giant!. There were thousands of them, millions even – at least that’s how it seemed through her six-year-old eyes. But she felt safe and secure in the midst of all this because her hand was held firmly by her mother. At least, until it wasn’t. In just a moment her world changed. The trees and lights were no longer a source of wonder but of fear. Every tree looked the same – she had no sense of direction. And those giants, once obstacles now became barriers, becoming walls of a maze she had no idea how to navigate through. She felt completely alone, abandoned, helpless. Panic set in. Her world stopped feeling safe and small and suddenly felt big, dangerous. Nothing looked familiar. Every adult was a stranger she could not approach. She was no longer “momma’s girl;” she was now just a small child, on her own, in a Christmas ocean that would utterly consume and drown her.

In her mind, at that moment, she had lost her identity. And when it escaped her, it left her empty, lonely, and afraid. If she was no longer the child of her mother, because her mother was now gone, who was she? And what would become her new identity? Where would she find it? Would she have to construct it herself? Would she have to find something to attach herself to, something that would define her? What if that something never appeared? Would she be just a lonely small child in the large ocean of commerce for the rest of her life?

Okay, I know this sounds a bit hyperbolic. She has not really lost her mother and she really will *not* be left floating on the sea of the shopping mall corridors. But hear me out. You know this because you are older; you know this because you are separated from this event. You are not living in the world of this six year old, you are living in the world of an adult.

And as an adult the life changing experiences you encounter are just as impactful on your own identity. Are you the teacher who has built her life around this profession? What happens when you retire or are let go? Are you the spouse who has had to face divorce? There are countless examples of this in our own lives. Think for a moment of your identity and that which defines it. Parent, doctor, child, spouse, or the like. What happens when that source is no longer present? What becomes of your identity?

Now, we can talk of rooting our identity in Jesus, and that would make for an excellent sermon, but that is not really what this passage is about. It is not about what we do. Instead, it is about what God has done through his Son, and so we will continue in that vein. The letter to the Galatian church was written for a people who were struggling with their identity. Many of them came from a Jewish background and were finding it difficult to abandon some Jewish beliefs and traditions that formed

their identity. If God had changed what it meant to be Isreal, and especially if that now included the Gentiles, where did that leave them? Who, even were they? Paul reminds them who they are. He says:

⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

He writes that it is not by their work but by God's that they have been freed from worldly identities and have been anchored to God as his children. This is now their identity and it has been done for them.

It is like that six year old child who was once left to navigate the world by herself. She was lost, and if not found, would be forced to build a new identity. But none of that happened because her mother came searching for her. And her mother found her. And her mother took her in her arms. And her mother whispered in her ear, "You are my child, I love you, and I will never leave or forsake you. I will always find you and I will always call you my own." All this the child will hear, and all this the child will believe. And the life she lives will bear the fruits of this reality.

In a real way, this is the same way with us. And I say "real way" because unlike the mother in the story, God can make these types of everlasting promises. Only he can be the one to promise to never leave or forsake, to always call us his own, and to love us deeper than we can ever understand. Only he can give us an identity that will never disappear.

When Jesus came into the world, he did so to give to us an identity that could no longer disappear because of our sin. He suffered on the cross so that the father could call us his own. He rose so that we could be assured that the identity he gives is an identity that is real, permanent, and everlasting. He sent us the Holy Spirit so that we could bear the fruits of this reality. He gave everything, did everything, and now offers us everything, because we are his.

You are God's child because the Son was born under the law for you.

You are redeemed because he carried your curse and your cross.

You are heirs because he rose and lives and reigns for you.

You cry "Abba, Father" because the Spirit has been sent into your heart.

This is not your doing. This is not your achieving. This is God's gift, God's work, God's declaration.

You are His.

You are His now.

You are His forever.

And now may the God who has named you his own keep you in the identity He has given you in Christ.

May the Son who redeemed you, born of woman and born under the Law, guard you in the freedom of the children of God.

May the Holy Spirit, who cries “Abba, Father” in your heart, strengthen you in the assurance that you are no longer slaves, but sons and daughters, and if sons and daughters, then heirs through God.

Go in the joy of who you are: God’s beloved child, now and forever.