

Claiming Our Inheritance

5 November, 2017

All Saints

Reading: Ephesians 1:11-23

Open our hearts and minds to your message through Christ Our Lord

The old woman leaned back in the armchair, gratefully allowing the back of the chair to support her tired body. "Have a rest Gran, while I put the kettle on, and we'll have a cup of tea, before the kids get home from school." Linda returned with a steaming cup of tea in her grandmother's favourite cup and saucer. Her Gran was gazing out the window and playing with the string of pearls at her throat. They sat for a while sipping the tea. Linda reminded her of the time her Gran had told her the story of the pearls: how she called them her 'touch of class', and how her late granddad had worked night shift for 6 months to buy them.

"You are a grown woman now," said to old lady to her granddaughter. "I think it's time." "Time for what?" said Linda who was more than little confused.

"Well," she said, "Your granddad and I had a wonderful life. We were very happy. We had some hard times to be sure, but it's time you had a 'touch of class' in your life." "I'm not with you Gran," said Linda, thinking quietly to herself that Gran might be losing the plot.

"Even though we were always short of money I never once thought of selling these pearls, Linda. And now I want you to have them, with my love." "I couldn't Gran, not when they mean so much to you."

"It's precisely because they mean so much that I want you to have them. Just think of it as an early inheritance."

Linda, overwhelmed, didn't know what to say, except "Thank you" and the two hugged tightly.

I wonder if you have ever had an unexpected inheritance. It's pure grace to get an inheritance - something that you never work for, nor even deserve and yet it means so much.

Today is All Saints Sunday when we celebrate all the saints: the saints with little "s" and the ones with the big "s" that have gone before us. All Saints was a day brought in by the reformers of the church because the saints' days had got so confusing. They thought they would honour them all on one day. Many Anglican churches have the name of All Saints as a result.

Saint Paul in his letter to the church in Ephesus describes the faith as an inheritance. Paul wrote many letters to the early Christians to encourage them. Some of those letters form part of our Bible and the technical term for them is the epistles. Ephesus was a port city on the western shores of Turkey. In Paul's day it was the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire. Paul is writing this letter to remind the Christians of the blessings they have as Christians. Reading between the lines we understand that this

means they had started to forget some of those blessings. It is a good letter to us today as we also may have begun to forget some of the blessings we have, like them, received. In verse 11 Paul reminds them that "In Christ we have obtained an inheritance."

A little later on he writes, "You were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit, and this is the pledge of our inheritance." In other words we, the baptised, have received an inheritance. Today on this All Saints tide I want to remind us of our inheritance - of all the things we have received in Christ. We could do a list. In fact the Good News Club did one last week. They listed eternal life, a caring family, to belong to the church and meaning for our lives. They listed the friend we have in Christ who knows our every need, the challenge of serving others, forgiveness for past mistakes, daily nurture and encouragement along the way.

On Wednesday we baptised Naveen. He is the newest of the saints. He has just begun. One parishioner who was dying asked me to read the canticle for Wednesday morning: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whose great mercy we have been born anew, born to living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Born to an inheritance which will never perish or wither away, one that is kept in heaven for us.*

Those words really spoke to her as she faced her death. But I hope they speak to us too. It's hard to imagine a person being told they have received an inheritance saying "No thank you, I don't want it. I'm too busy at the moment." If we receive an inheritance we grab it with both hands. In my experience nothing causes a family to argue more than who gets Grannies antique clock, (especially when they discover it's worth few bob).

We need to be equally passionate about claiming the inheritance that is ours in Christ Jesus. This is what it means to be the saints of God. My prayer is the same as Paul's. May we come to know what is the hope God has called us to, what are the riches of our glorious inheritance among the saints.

Linda was deeply moved by the gift from Gran. May we be equally moved by the gift of Jesus.