

LENT 2020
(26 Feb – 11 Apr 2020)

Jerusalem: The Week of Weeks

Luke 20:9-19 (NRSV)

“Bad Time to Be an Heir”

Marty Johnson knew he was the product of two young college students who had a brief affair. Neither parent was prepared to deal with raising a child, so Johnson was given up for adoption and grew up in a loving home in Minnesota.

Years later, as an adult, he started digging through past records and got in contact with his birth-mother.

Then a letter arrived one day that said, “Welcome to the Ogike dynasty! You come from a noble and prestigious family.”

The letter went on to explain that Johnson was the next in line to inherit the position of village chief from his biological father, John Ogike, the current chief of Aboh village in Nigeria.

Johnson flew to Nigeria to meet his new family. He went from having no knowledge about any blood relatives to a noisy celebration in the village. There he was united with brothers and sisters, numerous aunts and uncles, cousins, and of course, his father.

Hugh Poland, Kingwood, Texas; source: "Adopted Minnesota Man Learns He Is a Prince," ABC News (6-2-05)

Marty Johnson experienced the joy of becoming an heir to not only a new family but of becoming the village chief!

As followers of Jesus we are heirs of God, heirs of the kingdom of grace, heirs in a new family called the Church. As Galatians 4:7 states,

“Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a child and if a child then also an heir, through God.”

We are truly blessed!

Our inheritance in Christ is awesome and complete, lacking nothing.

Being an heir calls us to be about building the kingdom of God by sharing Christ and caring for those who are experiencing, illness, loss or who are lonely.

Being an heir of God may involve risk and sacrifice. Continuing to care for people may expose us to illnesses such as COVID-19 that we are experiencing at this time.

We trust God for our lives and health as we take the necessary precautions for our own safety and wellbeing. We can still care for people as we wash our hands often and do the best we can not to do those things which place us at greater risk.

There are many doctors, nurses and other health care professionals who have tested positive for the Coronavirus

As heirs we need not fear because we have a God bigger than any virus!

In our Scripture this morning, Jesus is telling a parable about a Vineyard and an heir.

It says in Luke 20:9 that a man planted a vineyard, leased it to tenants and went to another country for a long time. The owner was most likely a seasonal visitor!

When the time came to harvest the grapes, the owner sent three servants to collect his share of the produce. The tenants beat these three servants and sent them away empty-handed. The tenants did not want to give up any of the produce, even though it was not theirs to keep, they were tenants. But, they wanted it all!

The owner decided to send his son, surely they would not do to my son what they did to my servants. But, not only did the tenants throw the son out, they killed the owner's son.

“Bad Time to be an Heir”

After Jesus told this parable, he looked at the scribes and chief priests and said (Luke 20:17-18),

**¹⁷ But he looked at them and said,
“What then does this text mean:
‘The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone’?
¹⁸ Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to
pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.”**

The scribes and chief priests knew Jesus was speaking directly to them that they would be the ones conspiring to send Jesus to the Cross. These religious leaders did not want to give up their hold on faith to follow Jesus. They wanted it all and they did not want Jesus to prosper!

The chief priests had asked a question of Jesus in order to trap him so that they could hand Jesus over to the Romans for destruction.

But, Jesus knowing what was in their hearts told this parable and after Jesus spoke this parable the religious leaders went away because they feared the people. They feared the people because the people were responding to Jesus' message with joy!

Jesus declared by this parable that He is the first heir, that He is God and the cornerstone of faith. That all who are against him will be broken, but Jesus will be victorious even though he will be broken on Good Friday, Jesus will rise on Easter morning to show death cannot break Him and death will not break us!

Hebrews 1:2 states,

“..., in these last days {God} has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.”

Jesus, as God Himself, is the great landlord, the great benefactor who has everything good and holy in Himself.

Because He is good, holy and completely righteous, He has the authority to declare us heirs to His righteousness.

This is glorious as we live under grace and not fear, that we have been made new through faith, that we are sons and daughters of God with the authority to go out and proclaim the great salvation in Jesus.

We give not the half-hearted hope of the world, we share with others a hope and a living that overcomes anything the world can throw at us.

John 16:33

“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

Do these words give to you hope and courage? I pray that they do!

As heirs of Christ, as members of God’s family the church, Jesus will be with us and help us to overcome this virus.

As heirs we are called to action, even though it might cost us, place us at risk, or change our lifestyle as has this virus.

As we take the necessary precautions, we can do the following.

1. PRAY:

- for our church members’ safety and health
- for your family and friends’ health
- for the health care providers in harm’s way
- for those who are currently sick and for those in the hospital and rehab facilities because of accident or illness
- for those seeking to curb this virus that the Lord will give to them strength, stamina and the insight to stop and fight this disease
- for our leaders as they have to make tough and life-changing decisions, that they will seek the Lord with all their heart and mind

2. CONNECT:

- call those who may need to be encouraged during this time and can’t get out or won’t leave the home to protect themselves.

---call those you know in older adult communities and rehab facilities as those communities prohibit visitors at this time.

--- connect with those of your neighbors who may be sick and need a hot meal while taking precautions at the same time

I intend to continue working and will be in my office this coming week. I will also be available for phone calls, texts and emails. I will also make hospital calls as warranted.

Even though we may not meet for the next few Sundays, we are still the church. Though separated physically, as heirs of Christ, we are connected spiritually. I will be sending to you a daily devotional until we gather again.

I encourage you to pray, connect, read the devotionals and send to me your questions, concerns and comments. Please also share this devotional with your church neighbors who are not connected by the internet. I will also have some copies available at the office.

Wanda and I will be praying and connecting with you all and we are grateful to you for your prayers. God bless, stay well, wash your hands, while singing the first verse of amazing grace- that will meet the recommended time and don't touch your face. Continue to be heirs of Christ with power, authority and protection from our Lord!

Jesus' blessings on you all!

Tom and Wanda

PS: Just a reminder, a while back we talk about a gratitude journal. This would be a good time to review that, refresh it, or if you didn't start one, consider doing that now. It would be good to remind ourselves of the things for which we are grateful. **We are always grateful for each of you.**

Pastor Tom