

Why Just One? (Ephesians 1:11-23)

10:00am Holy Communion – 2nd November 2025

(All Saints Sunday)

Ephesians 1:11-23

In Christ we have also obtained an **inheritance**, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our **inheritance** towards redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious **inheritance** among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

<Prayer>

So, November brings us into a new season – The Kingdom Season – it's the final few weeks of the church's year before we begin again with Advent, the coming of Christ. The season brings a bit of judgement into our lives, but also a reminds us of the hope we have in the resurrection.

Next week is Remembrance Sunday, bringing up once again that sadly familiar theme of war and conflict on a mass-scale. There are always two sides to the story of Remembrance, be that of friends and foes, or thanksgiving and respect. The account of two world wars, in the final reckoning, tends to be told by high numbers – how many dead and how much cost. Once again, we are invited to hold in our minds the millions of fallen, and **at the same time to hold in tension the dreadful knowledge that we – humanity – are together capable of doing such things.**

But today I want to consider less about our collective struggles, and more about the glory of people – **single, unique people.** *We are each fearfully and wonderfully made.* What could **one person** do or be, that speaks of the best of all humanity? What of the arts, of sporting achievements, of leadership, of incredible ingenuity, and literature. From the same billions of humankind can come the potential of beauty and love **in just one person.** It takes an army to invade a continent, but just a single individual to write a symphony.

Have you ever stopped to consider how it is that God sought to address the mass failure of humanity by sending just one person? Would it not have been better to have had hundreds of Sons' of God to achieve more across a greater area, and much quicker? Our capitalist growth and progress society would expect greater production and profit from the discovery of such an asset as

divinity. So God's plan of one Christ was not exactly efficient according to our usual terms, was it? **So, I ask, my point today, why just one?**

The doctrine of the Christian faith, right down to the baseline of what we believe, is that Jesus was a man of flesh and blood in a way that is no different to ourselves. Further Christian doctrine holds that he was also the Son of God and therefore divine, *at the same time*. In physical terms he brought together humanity and divinity in **just one person**. I could get all technical in explaining to you the *hypostatic union*, under which name all of the theology of Christian *oneness* is understood. What I will quickly just say is that if there is a substance of flesh (as we know), then there is also a substance of God. **We consist of stuff and God also consists of stuff.** It's important to know this because otherwise we end up describing God in terms that make him sound as nothing more than an idea we created. We can so easily speak of God as a divine spirit, with glory and love, but these could be held as nothing more than ethereal traits of personality like talent, attitude, manner and emotion. But Christ was more than just a pile of ordinary flesh and blood with a very good attitude. **Somehow it is possible for humanity to be something very close to divine.**

The reason, I think, that God sent his only son – **just one** – is that we, **as individuals ourselves**, can relate to the full potential of a person at their best. We share a lot in common with Christ. **Can we, should we be, somehow, both human and divine ourselves?** It's an incredible question. Plenty of people have had Messiah complexes – it's what fame, wealth and power can do to a person. You might be able to think of some particular people.

But that is not quite what I'm asking. Can we be *like* the divine, ourselves semi-divine, to the point where we are greater than the average flesh and blood - the very best kind of humanity in our being and in our nature. Well yes, and thankfully our Christian theology has some recognisable words for that. Degrees of closeness to God for us are described as people: **blessed, sanctified, angelic, sacred, exalted, hallowed, consecrated and holy. You cannot be God, but you can be all of these things.** It is Christ who makes that possible – we inherit that from him.

Today is All Saints Sunday. It is a major high day in the Christian calendar. It's purpose is for us to remember Christians from the past who lived according to the pattern of Jesus Christ - some of them as exemplars such as we remember of the canonised saints. Saints are the best of people who lived as we can and do, showing how *Christlikeness* is possible for each of us. One of those saints is St Paul, who wrote many of the letters in the New Testament, such as his letter to the Ephesians we have today.

A good way to work with Paul's letter is to pick up the word *inheritance*, where it appears three times for us.

In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.

St Paul takes our past, present and future, and then overlays them with a greater inheritance, which is that we can live as Christ lived. **That is what is supposed to happen, that is our destiny.** From then until now humanity has had in its memory, in its inheritance,

the greatest example in which to set our lives. **We have not been left to make it up for ourselves.**

Have you heard of Rene *Descartes*? He was a Frenchman of the 16th century – the period of the early Enlightenment in which all the old inherited values were being challenged with new thinking. Descartes is thought of as the father of modern philosophy. His famous phrase is: '*I think therefore I am.*' Descartes posits that the only thing we can be sure of is – ourselves. Watch out, that is the beginning of atheism.

In him you also, when you had **heard the word of truth**, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were **marked with the seal** of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our **inheritance** towards redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

We are capable of receiving a truth which we can live with a transforming belief that is as if God himself dwelt within us.

Well in fact, *he can* by His Holy Spirit, which marks us for life. And by the way, we shall then provide the same to our children as an inheritance. **That is something we can give, if we have sought it for ourselves, helping others to see.**

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may **give you a spirit** of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, **with the eyes of your heart enlightened**, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious **inheritance** among the saints.

You see, being a Christian gets you out of the collective failure of humankind (the bad inheritance), and into a personal transformation because of Christ. You have the same flesh and blood as Christ, and the best examples of all the Christians how have gone before us. **This is how society gets better, this is what the church is for.**

I visited a newborn this week, just a week old. Do you know, I wish I was young again! A whole new life in front of me in which to know and live a better example of humanity – that of Christ.

Don't teach your children or your grandchildren that life is only what you make it, or that hard work is the only way. We have wonderful examples and guides for ourselves - in Christ and the Saints **as an inheritance that will not perish or fade.**

My sermon today, and the reading from Ephesians, is limited by the 12-15 minutes I have to stand here. There is much more to be found, so please (as I always say) take the sheet home and think about these things deeply in your time.

And may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and your minds in knowledge and love of God, and in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen