

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Jun 14th 2014

Back when I was in law school, I spent some time working in our Elder Law Clinic. We assisted the low-income elderly with a variety of legal issues. The vast majority of work was doing wills, powers of attorney or living wills, and help with social security issues. What surprised me, and, often, moved me, was the desire, even among those of modest means, to leave something for their children. An inheritance did not need to be big or fancy, but they wanted something to show that they cared, that they tried to leave their children better off.

It was a touching desire, and a not uncommon one. To say that a parent wants to protect her child, to make things better for that child, to take care of the child, this is not a surprising statement.

Inheritances, big or small, can signify a final gift – a true legacy – the way in which one generation passes on, in a physical or tangible way, that desire or ability to take care of the next.

And the Scriptures remind us constantly that God not only provides us with our inheritance but, more than mere provider, God is our inheritance. This what the Psalmist sings for us today: “You are my inheritance, O Lord.” The radical love of God is not just that God gives us all good things, or that God provides for us in our time of need. No, the radical love of God is that God’s provisions are God’s own self, poured out for us. Our share, our “allotted portion and [our] cup” is God’s own life, given to us.

It is a radical gift, an uncompromising one, a gift that we are not worthy of. God’s presence comes to us, as a parent for a child, and gives us safety and refuge. We receive not just tangible goods (as important as those may be), but new life.

We may not know what to do with so great an inheritance, this new life. Scripture, though, offers us some clues of where God invites us to live. Elisha demonstrates the absolute freedom of one who embraces the call of God; he surrenders what is his and gives it to his people, passing on the gift in the ways that he knows. The Psalmist invites us to abide in confidence with God our savior, resting in the absolute trust that God will preserve us from the nether world. And Christ, too, invites us to trust the new life. He instructs us to simply be honest, to be women and men of integrity. With Christ, we can know that trusting in God means we can let go of the need to prove ourselves, whether by fancy oaths, cunning wordplay, or otherwise. Instead, we allow God to be our guiding light, ever before us. For God alone is our inheritance.

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