

Sunday Sermon: November 17, 2019

Sermon Text: Isaiah 65:17-25

Sermon Theme: The Victorious Inheritance

¹⁷ “Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.

¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.

¹⁹ I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.

²⁰ “Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.

²¹ They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

²² No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands.

²³ They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them.

²⁴ Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.

²⁵ The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent’s food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,” says the LORD

People like to plan things. We plan get-togethers, vacations and other important things to make sure that every detail is order and everything is as it should be. But what about our funeral? Have we taken time to plan this important event? What are your favorite Gospel passages that you will want read at your funeral. What favorite hymns would you like sung? What will your last spiritual will and testament be to the ones you've left behind?

The Christian funeral is something that is being lost today. There is nothing wrong with end of life celebrations or wakes or memorial services, but a Christian funeral has something that these other things often miss. A Christian funeral praises and thanks God for the promise that he has fulfilled to a believer even in death.

A Christian funeral provides the opportunity in these times of sadness to focus on the joy and comfort of what Christ has done for us. It is a Christian's last will and testament of faith, the last declaration of their faith and trust in Christ as their Savior.

This last declaration of a Christian is all about an inheritance. It is not an inheritance given by family to family, rather it is a victorious inheritance that is given by Jesus to us as children of God. This morning we will look at that inheritance that Jesus gives to us. It is a gift that has already been given, but we will not fully take hold of it until we meet our Savior in death.

Today is Saints Triumphant Sunday. The word saint means holy one and it applies to many more people than just those who have died in faith. This word applies to all that Jesus has made holy.

Let's do an exercise this morning. It's one that has been done before, maybe some of you were here when Pastor Stroh did it with us. I want you think about how you see yourself as a Christian. You have to choose one of two choices. I will tell you your choices and then you have to choose. How do you think about yourself? Do you think about yourself as a sinner or as a saint?

If you think about yourself as a sinner there is nothing wrong with that. You know that by nature you were born in and we commit sins, we have even confess those sins this morning. We all feel the weight of our sins and struggle with those sins that we can't seem to escape. We all have sins that we try to hide from other people and from God. Because of this sin, sometimes we feel like we have sinner in blazing lights on your forehead.

There is nothing wrong with knowing we are sinners as long as we do not let our sins overwhelm us. God doesn't define you by your sins and he doesn't want you to do that either. God wants you to define yourself by something better. He does not want you to find your identity in what you do, rather he wants you to find your identity in what Jesus has done for you. He wants you to know that you are victorious. Sin has no power over you because Jesus has won the victory.

If you think about yourself as a saint, that's good because that's how God sees you in his children and that is what God calls you. That does not mean that you are blissfully ignorant about your sins. It does not mean that you are better than anyone else because your sins are less. It does not mean that you do not have the same amount of guilt and anxiety about your sins as someone else. If you think of yourself as a saint, you know what Jesus has done, he has done for you.

The Word saint means, "one who is holy." That's what Jesus did for you when he died on the cross. When Jesus died on the cross he defeated sin, death and the devil. He took all of our sins and their eternal consequences on himself and washed them away in his blood. The victory he won, he did not win for himself, he won for us. He includes us in his victory, not just as spectators and guests, but as full victors ourselves. We hear Paul tell us, **Thanks be to God, he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

We hear Peter call us God's own special holy nation, **But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, the people who are God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.** ¹⁰**At one time you were not a people, but now you are the people of God.**

Jesus gives his victory prizes to us freely and fully. We are given faith, forgiveness, life and salvation. This victory, these gifts are ours even if we have not experienced heaven yet.

As saints and heirs our life on earth is lived differently. If you are the heir to something big, there are probably parts of your life that are lived because of that inheritance. Look at the royal family. They all live in a certain way. They are not the king and queen of anything yet. In fact, they don't really know who will be the next king or queen. Yet, all of the royal family live and act in a certain way because they are heirs in the line of the throne.

We are saints triumphant. Heirs to the glorious inheritance of heaven. While we are here on earth waiting to take hold of this glorious inheritance, we like that royal family, live our life in a certain way. Living our lives thanking God for the glory of heaven that will someday be ours.

And what a glorious inheritance heaven it will be. Isaiah gives us a small description of what that will be like. ¹⁷ **"Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.** ¹⁸ **But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.**

Many times the joys of heaven are described in terms of what will not be in heaven. Our frame of reference for heaven is so skewed by sin that we cannot even imagine what it will be like. Even when we do try to rid our minds of the terrible things that sin does, we can't fathom the greatness of eternity without sin stained thoughts, actions and words. We can't imagine not holding onto our hurt and pain and letting go of hurtful memories and emotions.

But that is what God promises is part of this joyful inheritance. The former things that have been stained with sin will no longer be held onto or remembered. There will be a new life that is free from all those harmful and terrible things that sin does here on earth. Instead of pain and hurt, we will experience joy and gladness in the greatness of God and the glory of heaven. This is the joy that awaits us in heaven.

²⁰ **"Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years;** ²¹ **They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.** ²² **No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat.**

There will be an absence of the things that caused us grief and sorrow. There will be an absence of loss because we will be with our Savior forever. We will not toil over the next dollar. We will not be greedy over what is ours and selfish in the way that we use our gifts. Instead, We will be blessed with eternal blessings that will last. No one and nothing will be able to take this glory away from us. They cannot be taken by force, or death or schemes or anything because the joys of heaven is ours forever.

They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. ²⁴ **Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.**

One of the things that marks parenthood is the anxious worry of parents that their children make good decisions and grow up to do the right thing. This starts in infancy and just continues as they grow.

But children, don't always do the right thing or pick the right path do they? The sinfulness of children leads to anxious nights sitting in a chair waiting and waiting. That leads to long-suffering patience where we

wait for our children to understand that the choices that they made are not correct and that they should change those choices.

Heaven will be free of this anxious worry that bring fear and doubt into our lives. In the glorious inheritance of heaven there will be no reason for anxious doubt and the worry and fear that it brings. We will finally be totally and completely trusting in God for all that he provides. We will look to him in faith and see his hand of goodness as it is extended over us. We will finally understand just how good God has been to us while we are here on the earth.

²⁵ The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD.

Once again we see the peace and perfection of heaven without the shadow of sin hanging over it.

We simply don't know what the peace and perfection of heaven will be like. However, God gives us these examples that even the natural laws as we understand them will be replaced with God's peace and perfection.

There will be no fear and danger in this glorious inheritance because all of those things are gone.

Even though looking forward to death might seem like a strange thing, it is something a believer can and should do. We have something wonderful to look forward to that we will only experience after we pass from this world: the glorious inheritance of heaven.

We are saints triumphant already thanking God for the glorious inheritance that already waiting for us.