

Sermon for July 13th, 2025
FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

READINGS

Genesis 50:15-21

15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." **16** So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died: **17** 'Say to Joseph, "Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.'" And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. **18** His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." **19** But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? **20** As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. **21** So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

Psalm 138

1 I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart;
before the gods I sing your praise;
2 I bow down toward your holy temple
and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness,
for you have exalted above all things
your name and your word.
3 On the day I called, you answered me;
my strength of soul you increased.
4 All the kings of the earth shall give you thanks, O LORD,
for they have heard the words of your mouth,
5 and they shall sing of the ways of the LORD,
for great is the glory of the LORD.
6 For though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly,
but the haughty he knows from afar.
7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve my life;
you stretch out your hand against the wrath of my enemies,
and your right hand delivers me.
8 The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me;
your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever.
Do not forsake the work of your hands.

Romans 8:18-25

16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, **17** and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.
18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. **19** For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.
20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope
21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. **22** For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. **23** And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of

the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. **24** For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? **25** But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Luke 6:36-42

32 “If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. **33** And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. **34** And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. **35** But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. **36** Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. **37** “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; **38** give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.” **39** He also told them a parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? **40** A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. **41** Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? **42** How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

Our text for meditation this Fourth Sunday after Trinity is on our Epistle reading.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction

St. Paul says that we are heirs with our Lord Jesus, meaning that we shall enjoy everything in eternity with Him. But what is it exactly that we shall inherit? Eternal life, we can mostly understand. Not being beset by disease or sorrow, these we can understand as well. But these all refer to a certain state of being, and it would be odd for us to inherit a state of being and not inherit any *stuff*. Can you imagine receiving such an inheritance? The executor of the will gets you in a room and lets you know that your dear departed relative has bequeathed upon you...a back massage, a health club visit and some time in a sauna – how would you respond? While of course our eternal life is of infinite value to us, far more than any massage or spa, what I'm getting at is that eternal life as a state of being is *part* of an inheritance, not the whole. God plans on giving us much more.

Christ tells the Apostles that He goes to prepare a place for them – and for us.¹ There remains an *inheritance* for us, something that goes *along with* death being abolished and sin being no more. Christ receives something in His inheritance, and He shares it with us! What is that inheritance though? What is that place? Thankfully St. Paul tells us in our passage today: we shall receive an unblemished, uncursed world. We are to inherit this world in a way that shall bring us joy beyond measure.

The Earth is Cursed

When Adam and Eve sinned in Eden, God made this pronouncement to the man: “cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you.”² The way things are now is *not* how they were supposed to be. Nature, designed to

¹ John 14:2-3

² Genesis 3:17-18

be man's friend and loyal servant, is often for his enemy and competitor as a result of this curse. We live in a world where our beloved pets die, where plants harm us with allergic reactions, where massive ocean waves destroy homes and locusts eat up our crops – the crops that man had to work *very hard* to grow.

Man has to struggle to receive blessings from nature, but even when we *can* use something it still bears the weight of the curse. To eat our food we have to work, or put animals to work for us, which itself requires work. We have to use bait to catch fish, but the bait is often found in worms that look like they should not exist; the bloodworm, for example, has venomous *copper fangs*, the only species that has it. Imagine getting a bite from one of those while trying to catch fish to feed your family! From the difficulties of life to the bizarre mutations all around us, everywhere in our world there is a feeling that something just isn't right. Haven't you ever walked outside and gotten that sense? Beautiful creation all around us, from the fragile butterfly to the majestic mountain, yet there is this daunting sensation that something heavy is hanging around the world's neck. I can name that feeling – it is *guilt*. Guilt over the fact that our sins are what caused this grave corruption.

Everything in nature feels the same way. St. Paul writes that creation “waits with eager longing,” and that it is “groaning” under the futility it was subjected to in the curse. I dare say, animals don't *want* to die. They don't *want* to fight each other. Parasites do not *want* to victimize other living creatures. Though their minds are far less intelligent than ours, creatures are aware that they are yoked to this curse despite never having fallen in the same way that mankind did in Eden.

Why then this curse? St. Paul says that creation was subjected to futility and corruption for the sake of hope. Let us imagine for a moment what life would be like without that creation being cursed. If fallen man lived without disease, discomfort, endless labors and hostility from nature itself, then we would all go about happily waiting for death. We would simply conclude that death is a part of life, but everything being so *perfect* around us that we would never be confronted with our need for repentance. Humans would simply wait around in bliss, sinning for 80 or so years until old age takes us out and then we get sent to hell. To put it simply, the curse placed on creation is the way God tells us that *we* are bad, not creation. But both need a Savior.

Christ Inherits a Purified Earth

So all of creation *longs* for this curse to be undone, so that it can finally be what it was created to be. God's promise is that when the sons of God are revealed, when believers are given the crown of eternal life in Christ Jesus, then creation “will be set free from its bondage to corruption.” Our sin led to the world being cursed, lest sinners never feel any need for repentance. But Christ, having died for our sin, shall receive a world where this curse is *removed*, and it shall be perfect in every way.

You might wonder at this message. Haven't we heard that the earth is to perish by fire? Indeed there is fire, as the Apostle St. Peter tells us that “the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.”³ But while the heavens are to be dissolved, the earth will be burned in such a way as to “expose” it.⁴ Oh there will be burning, but the burning that refines and purifies as the last vestiges of the curse are incinerated away from the world that God loved when He first created it.

Christ rose from the dead so as to be the firstfruits of the Resurrection. Upon His Return, He shall receive His inheritance. St. Paul writes elsewhere that there is a proper order observed here. First, He arose from the dead, and the first thing He shall receive is His Church, as we meet Him in the clouds with the rest of the risen saints.⁵ Then, the world shall be purified and freed from the curse as He slays death itself once and for all.⁶

3 2 Peter 3:7

4 2 Peter 3:10

5 1 Thessalonians 4:17

6 1 Corinthians 15:20-26

Conclusion

This purified world is what God promises as an inheritance. If you are a Baptized believer in Christ Jesus, then you shall be saved along with every other believer and all of creation. For the moment that involves suffering; the devil and all nonbelievers hate us for the message of hope that we proclaim. They hate Christ because they love evil, and they hate us because the Church represents Him here on earth. Thus we have even more difficulties in this life than *just* the curse placed on the ground; unlike the nonbeliever, we have to contend with terrors and persecutions on every side.

But beloved, it shall be *worth* it when we receive the eternal life and the new earth. Exploring the world without getting tired, swimming as long or deep as we like without fear of drowning, and delighting in animal companions without having to shed a tearful goodbye to them. We shall enjoy a newfound relationship with nature that retains everything we love about it in our current sojourn, but without any of the things that we hate about it. And after billions of years, it will be just as good – if not better – than when our ultimate deliverance began.

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.