

In Nomine Jesu!

7<sup>th</sup> Sunday a. Trinity

July 26, 2009

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

Hecla, SD

**Text: EPHESIANS 1:3-14 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved, in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth – in Him, in whom we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory, in Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.***

**Theme: THE RICHES OF GOD'S GRACE**

- HE chose us from eternity
- HE redeemed us by His blood
- HE sealed us by His Spirit

Dear fellow pilgrim partners, *elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. (1Pt 1:2)*

What does it mean to be rich? In a sermon a few years ago, I gave the definition of being rich as someone who “has a lot of something.” A person who is financially rich has a lot of money. A family that is rich in love showers their children with affection. A person who is rich in real estate, owns a lot of valuable property. A person who is rich in the stock market owns a lot of valuable stock. It was following that service that someone joked that he must be rich in junk and rich in debt because he has a lot of both.

We all understand what it means to be rich in something - it means you have a great deal of it, even an excess. In these eleven verses from Ephesians chapter 1, Paul writes at length about the riches of God's grace - His undeserved love toward sinners. These verses are pure Gospel. While there may be some hard sayings in these verses which deal with election and predestination, the emphasis of these verses are clear: it is all about what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. As we view everything God did to save us we see the riches of His grace toward us was. Let us join Paul in praising the Triune God as we see His grace in choosing us, redeeming us, and sealing us.

## - HE CHOSE US FROM ETERNITY

How long do you suppose your parents have loved you? Some parents would say that they loved you the moment they found out they were pregnant with you. Still some might say that they loved you from the moment they got married and knew they wanted to have children. That is pretty impressive. They loved you even before they saw your face or knew what they were going to name you. And they loved you with that special love because you were their own special child.

But your father and mother didn't always love you. There was a time when each of them were babies and young children, and gave no thought to having children of their own. Yet, what do we learn of the love of God? Paul writes that God loved you even before the world was created. ***"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world."*** Even before the earth existed, God was thinking about you. And not in a general sort of way, but in a specific, personal way. God was thinking about each one of you. He knew you before your parents even existed. He knew you even before Adam and Eve were created.

Before the foundation of the world, from eternity, God wanted to save you and so He chose you to be His child. This choice wasn't based on anything you did, but solely because of the riches of His grace. Paul writes that He ***"predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will."*** The reason you, today, believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior is because God from eternity chose you to be His child. And why did God choose you? He chose you from eternity according to the good pleasure of His will. He chose you because He loved you and wanted you to be a part of His family.

Think of what this means! Before you existed He decided to adopt you as His child. He needed to adopt you because you were not His child by birth. You were a sinner in whom nothing good dwelt. From eternity God knew you would be conceived in sin and born in iniquity. He knew your own sin would separate you from Himself. He knew that you could not save yourself. And so from eternity, according to the riches of His grace, God chose you to be His child. The evidence of His choice is seen in your faith today. You are a believer today because God from eternity chose you! This is the riches of God grace, His undeserved love toward you!

## HE REDEEMED US BY HIS BLOOD

Part of this plan to save you had to include atonement for your sin. God could not simply ignore sin. That would be contrary to who God is. God is a God of justice, in the truest sense of the word. Everything He does is just. Justice is to punish the guilty and protect the innocent. To ignore sin would be to ignore justice. To ignore sin would be to endorse sin and to love evil. So to ignore sin would be for God to act contrary t

Because He is a just God who cannot let sin go unpunished, His plan to save you had to include atonement for your sins. Here too we see just how rich God's grace is. Verse 7, ***"in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."*** Like a slave whose freedom needed to be purchased by another, so too you needed someone to purchase your freedom. You needed someone to pay the price to release you from your captivity of sin. Though it was your sin that had separated you from God, it was the Son of God who purchased your forgiveness by the shedding of His blood.

This is grace - God's undeserved love for sinners. And God is extremely rich in it - He has a lot of it. Paul writes that God has made the riches of His grace ***“abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself.”*** God wants you to know all that He did to save you. God wants you to know that He chose you from eternity. God wants you to know that He gave His Son into death because of your sins and raised Him again because of your justification. God wants you to know that your sins have all been atoned for by Jesus' sacrifice. And so of the riches of His grace He made known to you the mystery of His will. By calling the Gospel a mystery, Paul means that no one would have known about it unless God Himself had revealed it. And according to the riches of His grace He has. He has revealed to you His plan of salvation. He has made known to you that by the blood of His Son Jesus, your sins are forgiven!

### HE SEALED US BY HIS SPIRIT

God is indeed rich in grace. Paul writes to the Romans that ***“where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.”*** As much sin as there is in the world or in our past, God has even more grace. His undeserved love is seen in Him giving His own, dear, precious Son as a sacrifice for our sins. God gave His best to save us from our worst. We also see just how rich God's grace is that even before He created the heavens and the earth, He chose us to be His children. All this is His doing freely in love. God is indeed rich in grace!

But we haven't quite crossed the finish line yet, have we? Some of us may be closer to the end of our race than others, but none of us knows when our last hour shall be. King David writes in Psalm 31, ***“My times are in your hands.”*** (Ps 31:15a) Our time on this earth could be another 30 years or another 30 minutes, but we recognize it is in God's hands. Some of us have a long time before we reach the completion of our salvation in heaven.

As you await the fulfillment of our faith in heaven, what is it that you worry about? Do you worry whether or not you are a good enough Christian to be saved? Do you worry whether you will remain faithful unto the end? Do you worry whether you are one of the elect of God?

All that Paul has written in these verses are intended for the Christian believer. For the believer that is struggling in his faith. For the Christian that feels weak. For Christian that feels uncertain. Recall that in these eleven verses God is the subject and you are the object. His grace in Christ is what moves Him. By grace God chose you in Christ. In grace God predestined you by Jesus Christ. By grace God redeemed you through Christ. Your salvation is not dependant on your efforts or your feelings, but solely on the riches of God's grace.

As you journey through this barren land God gives you further comfort. Having brought us to faith through the Means of Grace, God has sealed us by His Holy Spirit. Verse 13, ***“In (Christ) you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.”*** When the president signs a bill into law or an official decree, he places his seal on it. His seal is intended to show that it is official and cannot be changed. Paul says that God has made you official. He has sealed you with His Holy Spirit. This was done when you were brought to faith through the gospel. The reason you believe in Jesus as your Savior from sin is because of the Holy Spirit, for ***“no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.”*** (1 Cor 12:3b)

God has also given you His Holy Spirit as a sort of down payment. When someone is looking to buy a house or a car, the agent or salesman often asks how much you are willing to put down as a down payment. This down payment is intended to show your seriousness about the

purchase. It is as though you are saying, “This down payment is evidence that I am going to buy this and make it my own.” Evidence of God giving us an eternal inheritance in heaven is His Holy Spirit. We read in the last verse of our text, “*(the Holy Spirit) is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.*” The Holy Spirit at work in your heart is God’s down payment for heaven. Your faith today is both evidence of God’s choosing you from eternity and evidence that heaven is your eternal home. You have been sealed and secured by His Holy Spirit. Behold, the riches of God’s grace!

God knew you were not strong enough to hold onto the inheritance He promised you. He knew that the things of this world would draw you away. He knew the devil could easily snatch it out of your hand. God also knew that left to your own devices you would have abandoned the faith long ago. Therefore from beginning to end God has provided for your salvation. Before He created anything, He chose you to be His child. In time God sent His Son to ransom your soul from hell. In your life He made sure you were exposed to His Word, whereby He worked faith in your heart. Until you reach heaven you have His holy seal, His Holy Spirit, marking you as meant for heaven. As we say in our explanation to the first article, “All this out of Fatherly divine goodness and mercy without any merit or worthiness in me.” God did all this for you solely because of His grace. It is His undeserved love for you that has brought you to this day and it is His undeserved love which will sustain you until the end. And so we join the Apostle Paul in saying, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ!*” AMEN!