



## **“The Glorious Inheritance”**

Homily by Rev. Greg Batson

*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 toward 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 toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers, 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 perceive 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.*

Today we celebrate All Saints Sunday, the day that we remember those who have died in the past year and entered new life with God. Following this homily, we will remember loved ones by speaking their names, lighting candles and tolling a bell in their honor. This is my 26th year in ministry as a pastor, and each year more saints are added to the roll call of those who have changed my life and the life of the church. I’ve officiated the memorial services for many of them, and as their names are spoken aloud, I remember the closing prayer that is recited:

O God, all that you have given us is yours.  
As first you gave our loved one to us,  
now we give them back to you.  
Receive them into the arms of your mercy.  
Raise them up with all your people.  
Receive us also, and raise us into a new life.  
Help us so to love and serve you in this world  
That we may enter into your joy in the world to come. 1

It is a beautiful prayer for it captures the mystery of death and life, sorrow and celebration, loss and gain. It states very succinctly a fundamental tenet of our faith: resurrection. Every Easter, we proclaim that Jesus Christ has conquered death and been raised by God into new life. That same Easter promise is realized for all—death is not the final answer for us, for we share with Christ in the power of resurrection.

In today’s scripture from the Letter to the Ephesians, we are reminded how we are part of something much larger than our own personal relationship with God. We are part of the universal Body of Christ, the Church. As part of that living body, we are the beneficiaries of all those who have come before us. The writer of Ephesians calls it our “inheritance in Christ” (1:11). “I pray that the eyes of your heart will have enough light to see what is the hope of God’s call, what is the richness of God’s glorious inheritance among the saints” (v. 18).

Tania and I visited the ancient city of Ephesus a few years ago during a trip to the Mediterranean. Located near the coast of modern-day Turkey, it is a massive archaeological site reflecting the power and reach of the Roman Empire. (Only

©Rev. Greg Batson 2025. Permission is given for brief quotation with attribution. All other rights reserved.

First United Methodist Church • 1008 Eleventh Street Santa Monica, CA  
90403

[www.santamonicaumc.org](http://www.santamonicaumc.org) ■ 310-393-8258

about 25 % of the site has been uncovered.) It is filled with public buildings such as the amphitheater and temples to Roman gods and goddesses, aqueducts, and thousands of homes. It was filled with thousands of residents and visitors, reflecting the diversity of people from all over the world. And within this city a church was established, visited by the apostles Paul and John, and is believed to be where Mary the mother of Jesus lived out her final days.

Think of how important this message of the “glorious inheritance” was for this church when it was established in the first century. It was a promise that what Christ had begun would be carried on by them. The church had been born in the midst of many religions proclaiming that it was the true connection to the divine. When compared to the more established religious traditions in that cosmopolitan place, one would have expected Christians to disappear fairly quickly. Yet even in the midst of a campaign to eliminate the Ephesian church, it survived and grew as the message was spread.

It is this inheritance that we give thanks for today. It is the inheritance of new life given through Christ’s death and resurrection. By conquering death through the power of God, each of us has been given the same gift. It is this belief upon which the Church is founded, passed on from generation to generation. That new life is now enjoyed by all of our loved ones. Even as we grieve the loss of their physical presences, we are assured that each has been embraced by God as they began their new life.

I am always grateful we share the sacrament of Holy Communion with one another on All Saints Sunday. Along with the bells that are tolled and the candles that are lit, the bread and cup are tangible reminders of the new life that arises out of death. We proclaim it together in our liturgy as a mystery of faith: “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. And that is what we proclaim, without fear or anxiety, on this All Saints Sunday as we remember our loved ones and celebrate their new lives with God, as well as the promise of new life for us all. Amen.

1 The United Methodist Book of Worship (UM Publishing House, 1992) 150.