

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen

The main focus of our message this morning is on adoption and inheritance.

- It is entitled, “Whose Giving And Whose Receiving.” Or said more formally, who is giving and who is receiving?

Weston Widauer, former professor at Concordia St Louis Seminary gives this account.

- Before I begin, I should also tell you that before he came to the seminary, he was a math teacher.
- And so, while at the seminary he also tutored local students in math.

One day, while he was waiting for a student to come, he got a call from the boy’s mother.

- She said he’s not really in the mood to do math today.....so maybe you could just talk to him.
- I do not know the young man’s first name but for purposes of this account I will name him Jeffery.

Now professor Widauer knew Jeffery had been having problems.

- To say that Jeffery had had a rough life was an understatement.
- You see, Jeffery didn’t remember his mother.
- She had battled with cancer and the Lord called her home before Jeffery got to know her.

Jeffery did remember his father.

- He remembered how his father injected himself with drugs.
- Jeffery remembered that his father was stoned and drunk and violent.
- Jeffery remembered that his father overdosed when he was 5 years old.
- And so Jeffery remembered.....the bad things in his life.

And it didn’t end there. Jeffery went to live with his aunt and his uncle and they adopted him.

- They took him in but tragically their marriage ended in divorce.

And now Jeffery was in high school and he had been adopted again.

- And he was getting bullied and picked on and he was struggling with anger and depression.
- And his anger was against his family and everything that had happened.

Professor Wideaur and Jeffery just talked that day.....they didn't do any math.

- And Jeffery got to the point where he was asking a lot of questions.
- He was asking how God viewed anger and if it was alright for him to be angry.

And he was asking how we should live with one another.

- And finally he asked.....how do you know that there is a God.....
- I don't even know my real parents.

And so professor Widauer looked at Jeffery and said, "I know there is a God just by looking around."

- Look at creation and all the things God has done in my life and the things He has done for you.

And Jeffery thought a moment and asked, "What has He done for me?"

- Where is He in my life?
- Why is He not looking out for me?

And then professor Widauer told Jeffery, and it is something we all need to be reminded of, God is in our lives.

- The Lord has given us His only Son, Jesus Christ, and through Him we have eternal life.
- Believing in Jesus you have an adoption and inheritance with Him that is much more important, a much higher level, and much more significant that will never end.....greater than anything you have or will face on this earth.
- Professor Widauer told Jeffery, and they are good words for us also, that the Lord has blessed us and it is important that we see and know that.

Adoption and inheritance.....as I studied the assigned readings for today, these 2 nouns jumped out at me.

- Adoption and inheritance.....they do go together.

And there is a key point that helps link these 2 words together.

- Adoption and inheritance is not something you earn or even have a part in.

Joe and Heather decided to adopt their first son.

- They began the process by deciding on the geographic area from which they might adopt.
- They put a map of the world on the table and prayed, “Lord, direct us to the child You desire for us.”

They said, God led them to adopt internationally from the country of Kazakhstan.

- Joe said he barely knew Kazakhstan existed before the process, but after months of praying they submitted their application to adopt a Kazakh child.

Joe and Heather then went through the process and was able to adopt little 10 month old Caleb.

- But Joe relates the story and how it parallels our Gospel story, especially in one significant way.

Joe said.....adoption like this begins with a parent’s initiative, not a child’s idea.

- Before little Caleb was even born in Kazakhstan, he had a mom and a dad working to adopt him.
- While little Caleb was lying alone at night in an orphanage in Kazakhstan, he had a mom and a dad planning to adopt him.

And one day when Caleb was placed in the arms of his mom and dad, he had no idea of what all had been done, completely apart from any initiative in him, to bring him to that point.

- Joes said, this precious ten-month old boy did not invite us to come to him in Kazakhstan to bring him into our family, he didn’t even know to ask for such a thing.
- No, this orphaned child became our cherished son because of a love that was entirely beyond his imagination and completely outside of his control.
- He did not pursue us, for he was utterly unable to do so.
- Instead, we pursued him.

And likewise with inheritance.

- Whatever is passed on to you is not a result of what you bring to the table.
- Some may be left with a big estate while others may not inherit anything and in fact even have a funeral bill to pay.

And because of that.....worldly adoption and inheritance can vary by person.

- There is Jeffery in our account that certainly was not born with a silver spoon.
- And what is inherited can also vary greatly.

But no matter who you are, there is a much more important, a much higher level, and more significant adoption and inheritance that will never end.....and it is greater than anything you have or will face on this earth.

- And it is equal and available to each of us.

Our assigned Scripture readings for today talk to us about this.

- Let's break this down a little bit.

Our Old Testament reading begins with God calling Abraham to go from his country and his family and his father's house to the land of Canaan.

- And God told Abraham that in him ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH WILL BE BLESSED.
- And so Abraham makes the journey.
- About 700 miles from his home to Canaan.
- He left his homeland and his kindred.

So that's how Abraham became great? He earned it?

- No.
- Just like with worldly adoption and inheritance, our salvation in Christ, our standing, our adoption, our inheritance is not something we can earn.

Look at the beginning of our Epistle Reading from the Book of Romans.

- "For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, BUT NOT BEFORE GOD."
- It goes on.....
- "Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness."
- "So Abraham was blessed and God said in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

I'll sign up for that. I want to be a child of Abraham. I want to be in and with that family. I want to be blessed. I want that adoption and inheritance.

- That's what the Jewish leaders at the time of Jesus thought also.

John, chapter 8 we have the dialogue Jesus had with them.

- Jesus had told them that if you abide with My Word you are truly My disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.
- And the Jewish leaders responded, we don't need any of that, we are offspring of Abraham.

And Jesus replied.....

- I know that you are offspring of Abraham, yet you seek to kill Me because My words find no place in you.
- That is not what Abraham did.

The Jewish leaders and man speaking at one level.

- Jesus at a much more important, a much higher, a much greater level, than anything you have or will face on this earth.

Nicodemus in our Gospel reading had the same sort of problem.

- He came to Jesus at night.
- Jesus said, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."
- Born again.....a different adoption, a different inheritance.

And Nicodemus asked Jesus how he can be born again. He cannot enter into his mother's womb a second time.

- And Jesus takes him to a much more important, a much higher, a much greater level that will not end.
- Jesus says, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.
- You were born into this world.....all of us different backgrounds, situations and challenges.
- Including Jeffery who wanted to talk and not do math.

But now to be born again.

- Replacing our inheritance of sin and death with adoption as children of God and brothers and sisters of Christ.
- Sin and death replaced by righteousness and salvation. An inheritance of the kingdom of God and eternal life.
- And that is much more important, a much higher level, and much more significant that will never end.....that is greater than anything you have or will face on this earth.

Hear the words of verse 16 of our Epistle reading.

- That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law, but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

You, as a child of God, You can sing with the children the song we sing each year at Vacation Bible School.....

- Father Abraham had many sons. Many sons had father Abraham. I am one of them and so are you. So let's just praise the Lord.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

- Just as you cannot earn your adoption.....
- Just as you can't earn your inheritance.....
- Your adoption as a child of God and your inheritance of the kingdom of God is all, 100 percent, the work of Christ.

Look at the cover of your bulletin.....

- “Whoever believes in Him.”
- Verse 13 of our Epistle reading.
- For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.

I entitled this message, “Whose Giving And Whose Receiving.”

- It is Jesus who is doing all, 100 percent of the giving.
- And believing in Christ, trusting in Him, we are doing the receiving.

But that doesn't happen for everyone does it?

- There was a Michigan factory worker earning less than 10,000 dollars a year.
- He was struggling to get by. Barely surviving.
- It seems 24 years previous, he had a falling out with his dad and broke off all contact with him.
- Never returned home or even called and talked to him.

His father passed away.

- When the investigator caught up with the Michigan factory worker, many, many years later.....
- He realized that his father had died and when he did....his father had included him in his will and he had inherited 500,000 dollars.
- Did you know that in the United States there is right now in excess of 45 billion dollars in unclaimed inheritance.

As tragic as that sounds, as what a great lost opportunity that is....that is nothing as compared to the lost much more important, much higher level, and much more significant that will never end adoption and inheritance available to each of us.

Dear Christian friends.....

- You remember Jeffery from earlier.
- Jeffery was distraught.
- He didn't feel any belonging. Any real father.

Jeffery and you and I have a real Father.

- A Father who created us.
- A Father who loves us with an enormity beyond anything we can compare or imagine.
- You are never alone.

You have a Father in perfect love and wisdom who will always provide for you.

- He has adopted you and He has a very great inheritance ready for you that is beyond what you can imagine.
- He understands where you are at. He understands your emotions.
- He knows your needs. He knows your fears.
- And He will never leave you or forsake you.....even for all eternity.
- And He is faithful to His promises.

We are on this Lenten journey.

- Where He has gone, we will go. Where He is now, we will be.

Claim that adoption and inheritance that is offered and given to you.

- That's exactly what Jesus welcomes and wants for you. Each of you.
- Amen.