

Hurry, Your Inheritance is Waiting!
Romans 8:9-17

There are questions all of us have about life, the age old questions that we are told have perplexed humans from the beginning of time, the questions that have led people on pilgrimages, holy quests, in search of prophets and seers and gurus to get the answers, and have even led persons to churches, synagogues, mosques, temples. You see, the definition of religion is an understanding of beliefs that answer the questions to the meaning and purpose of life. So when we ask, ***Who are we? What are we doing here? Where are we going?*** This is the place that we should get some help. And the scripture just read helps us this morning to answer those very questions.

We are a people longing-yearning-searching on our journey called life. We yearn for something that will give us a sense of meaning and purpose to our daily lives. We are seeking because. . .

We live in a world where there is a lot of disappointment, dis-ease, and disconnectedness. Who are we in the midst of this? And what are we to do?

We live in a world where holy wars and the politics of fanaticism are tearing nations into warring tribes and filling highways with hordes of refugees. And who are we in relation to all of this? And what are we to do?

We live in a world where we are bombarded with violence, division, fracturedness, hatred, betrayal and scandal. And who are we? And what are we to do?

We live in a world after September 11 where security is blown wide open and the very mail we touch or air we breathe could be contaminated. And what are we to do?

We live in a world where our cities are filled with huddled masses of the homeless and wandering gangs of hopeless youth, and who are we and what are we to do?

This world is not a Garden of Eden—it is not perfect. I think Adam probably said to Eve as they departed from the Garden: *Dear, we're in a state of transition now.* Because from the beginning there has been transition, trying to get to the place where everything is good and we can say we have arrived and yet we long to go back to the good ole days—we see the past and yearn for what was or we seek something to fill the voids or to be better than what we are presently living through.

The Religion Editor for the Washington Post stated that in the 60's we looked to the government to fill our needs, our longings—to answer our questions of life—we got out and picketed, or had sit ins, or politicked and it failed us.

In the 70's we looked to sex to fill our needs, if it feels good, do it, and that should fulfill our longings, be our answer to those questions of life—and it failed us.

In the 80's we looked to money to buy our needs, if we had it all, we would be satisfied, and no longer would we have to question our purpose and yearn for something better—but that failed us.

Into the 90's and into the 21st century, we have been looking to spirituality, so this editor says, and I believe it being an avid reader and looking at the prolific outpouring of books on spirituality in the last 5 years. Bill Moyers stated that, *“Any journalist worth his or her salt knows the real story today is to define what it is to be spiritual and we will be able to define ourselves and answer those questions we have been searching for. This is the biggest story of our day!”*

It is the biggest story. Tom Cruise and John Travolta are speaking out for Scientology—as to where we get our spirituality. Deepak Chopra is on the best seller list. We flock to places to help us meditate and teach us yoga to get in touch with our inner self, the essence of who we are.

We are created and let free to wander, and decide and choose and we can either continue to substitute things to fill our longings and answer the questions of who we are and what are we doing here and what is the use of it all, OR as Paul said in our scripture, (and I love this translation that was just read) *we don't owe a thing to this old do-it-yourself life—but get on with our new life in the Spirit.* Listen again to the words in Romans: *When God lives and breathes in you, you are delivered from that dead life. This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike, What's next Father? God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who God is, and we know who we are: Parent and children. And we know we are going to get what's coming to us—an unbelievable inheritance.*

We are restless until we realize our spirit is one with God's spirit—then we understand we are God's children—And that provides the answers to our questions.

Having both my parents die a short time apart was very difficult. I never thought I would be an orphan, and then at 46, I was. My parents' deaths came at a particularly hard time in the life of my sister and myself. We felt a sense of dis-ease, we both needed confirmation and affirmation, and support, and those that knew us so well, gave birth to us, were basically our foundation, were gone. I went to my sister's home and told her that I thought I knew what we needed, and so I took my sister out to the cemetery to our parents' graves. Right there in front of their markers, we ate Kentucky Fried Chicken—which they loved, had a picnic right there at 7 p.m. in that cemetery—we remembered them, reconnected, cried, laughed, we told stories, sang songs we had sung growing up and we even danced—and then we went home—we found who we were again, to whom we were connected—it helped.

That's what church is all about. Remembering that we are from God—connected spiritually—God is our Abba, a word that connotes a most close, intimate, personal relationship. We are spiritual souls longing to be complete with our Creator, God, the Holy Spirit, Abba, our Parent. And we do not rest, we do not feel whole, we are not completely complete, feel completely satisfied until we make that connection.

Paul goes on to say that the spirit of God affirms our spirit that we are God's children. The Quakers have a wonderful phrase, which applies to Paul's writing: *There is that of God in everyone.*

Perhaps, to translate it into modern notions of identity and relationship. . . . we have God's DNA! Think of that, we have the essence of God in us.

And you know we are not merely children, meaning we are the small little spirits in relationship to the great Spirit. We are heirs; that is, we receive what God means to give us. Some translations say we are *sons*—and I would not change that, though it implies a certain gender—because at the time Paul was writing, it was his intent to call both females and males sons of God because sons, back then, were the only heirs to the family's inheritance—and Paul is saying that *all of us* become like the son of the 1st century—we, men and women, girls and boys are all sons, heirs equally to all that God has to give—and, get this, all that God has given our brother Christ. It is a

radical thing to be told that we are the children of God, the sons and daughters of God, as Jesus is, and we share in the precise same inheritance as God's heirs—so Paul tells us, and we become heirs when?

When we die? No, now! We do not have to wait to get all that God has for us. Kingdom living begins now, the Kingdom has come. We can have our inheritance right now.

When we were looking to buy a house many years ago, my father and mother called to say, *We want you to take your inheritance now in order to get what you need now. It only makes sense. It will help you now.*

I believe that is what our heavenly Parent says to us. . .

You need the understanding that I am with you NOW.

You need the strength to cope with the uncertainties and the hard times in this world NOW.

You need all that I can give you to endure and make it and make it so that others will be blessed. When? NOW

You need not to be afraid of the future, NOW

You need your birthright, your inheritance. . .NOW. And here it is, Hurry! It's waiting!

I told our Bible Study class that when I first began preaching, I had a friend call and say that she didn't want to criticize me, but I made everything sound like it was so important for us to accept the life that we have been offered by God—as if we needed to do it right away. The other ministers on staff were so much more low key. I might want to think about pulling back on my enthusiasm.

I said, *But that is exactly what I want to do.* It is important for us to live our lives now, to accept God's kingdom now—not for fear that we will walk out of the church and be hit by a bus and die and not go to heaven. But for fear that while we are here we do not take advantage of the inheritance of being the children of God.

Who are we? Children of God.

What are we doing here? As children of God we are blessed to live not in fear but love, to live not in dis-ease but hope, to live not in worry but in peace, to live not in the past but in the present and into the future.

Where are we going? Well life continues, and Paul says, *You ain't seen nothing yet—compared to what God has in store for us.* We have the hope and confidence in our future. The future that begins now and continues—forever—what an inheritance!

