

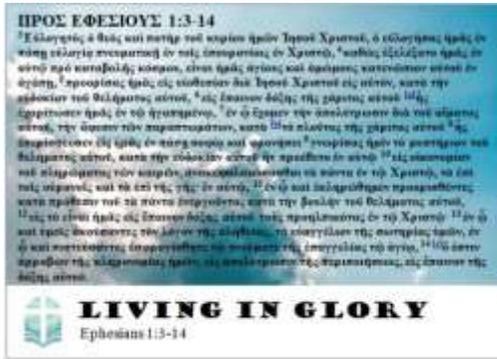
“Living in Glory”

Second Sunday of Christmas
5:30 p.m.

Saturday, January 2, 2016

The Reverend Dr. Jack M. Horner
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:1-18



Grace and peace be to you from God Our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

A couple weeks ago I did a sermon over in the nave, the traditional service, and I talked about sometimes having those moments where you just want to break out into song. Like the Disney movies, you know what I mean. . . like all of a sudden the cartoon characters, they just break into song, and I was talking about a movie called “Enchanted” where they took the characters who were cartoon characters and they placed them in Manhattan. And, they acted like they were the cartoon characters which was completely out of place in gritty Manhattan, but it made for a delightful, delightful film.

So tonight, I feel like rapping. Now don't be offended if you don't like rap, okay, and just hold on to me just for a little bit and believe me it will make sense.

[Rapping]

*My father had a few last words to give
In telling people the reason to live
The reason to die, united with the King in the sky
This life is passing us by, I got no reason to lie
You'll never give the world enough, they'll hunger for more
They figure out their ways are nothing in the wondrous lord
More security than the man that left you
More love than the moms who kept you
He'll always accept you
Be everything you're supposed to be
Let Christ rule in yer heart, body, mind and soul because He chose you
And if the world don't know you
If it don't matter you're Gods child he'll never disown you
Ya purpose on earth is far from worthless
That's why ya glorified like ya life's been purchased
And it don't matter if the world don't seen us
We still mean the world to Jesus*

Peace out, I added that little last part.

(Take me as I am by Lecrae)

So I am sure you're thinking, well now nice pastor, why are you rapping to us? What I find interesting about rap, whether you like the genre or not, is how the steam of thought is conveyed. The verses just go one after another, after another. There's no exclamation point, there's no period, there's no semicolon, it just keeps going, and going, and going, and going. And I appreciate that about it, that idea of this stream of thought. Now what I just did is from a song called "Take me as I am," by Lecrae, a Christian rap artist.

What's interesting about it for me is that if you take a look at your bulletin cover right now, take a look at your bulletin cover, you're going to see that it is from Ephesians, the first chapter. And you're going to notice immediately as you look at the Greek, now I am not expecting you to read Greek, but I do want you to understand you're not going to see any punctuation. This lesson that we read, in English, we had four or five sentences is actually one-sentence in the Greek. If Jesus wept, is the shortest sentence in the Bible, Ephesians 1:3-14 is the longest sentence in the Bible. And much like a rap it is a stream of thought, and amazing thoughts at that. So as I am talking about this sermon, you may just want to keep that handy, that Ephesians 3 reading.

Now the theme, the overarching theme of this Ephesians text is living in the glory of God and it focuses on what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. And the thoughts behind it are really quite amazing. But it wants Christians, Paul wants Christians to understand that our life is centered in Jesus Christ. Our life begins with the recognition of that fact, the recognition of God's overwhelming blessings for you, and our response then to offer Thanksgiving to him. And so this Ephesians text is one long sentence of what God has done for us in the person of Jesus, the Messiah.

The promise that it speaks about is that same promise that was sung by the angels. For you and me to **live** in the very glory of God. Glory to God in the highest heaven, the same song that was sung by the angels. That state of being, of being surrounded by God's glory. And Paul offers us nothing less than a summary of what the Christian faith and life is about, so let's take a look at that, let's break it down.

First three; He has **blessed** us in Jesus Christ. See our whole human experience begins with the understanding that we have been blessed by God. Now for Lutherans we love this, why because so many people would like to tell you what you're supposed to be doing for God, and Paul instead, talks about what God has done for you. You see, we have been blessed by God in Jesus Christ. And then we get these wonderful, again, sentences one after another.

He has **chosen** us, he's chosen us. Think about that. Times in your life when you've felt alone, times in your life when you felt like you didn't matter, times in your life when you just felt like the world was just bearing you down, do you think it would make a difference for us to know that we have been chosen by God?

He's **adopted** us as his children. (Verse 5)

He's **poured** his grace upon us. (Verse 6)

He has **saved** us from sin and death. Those things which separate us, which break down relationships that we have between God and other people. He has saved us from that and promised us life eternal. (Verse 7)

He has set out a **plan** for us and he has gathered up everything in him. In other words, the message of salvation is not an exclusive message like "Hey, I've got it and you don't," no, He's gathered up all of creation, this grace, this love, this mercy is for the whole world. We've obtained our inheritance to live our lives in God's purposes. Chosen people, given purpose. (Verse 9)

Because we have set our hope on him **living** in his glory. And so overwhelmed by this fact that God has blessed us and called us and chosen us and given us a holy purpose. Now we begin to live out our lives in response to what he has already done. And what is there to do except just set your hope on him. To live, to live your life in his glory, which has been given and offered up for us. (Verse 12)

And we have been marked, marked with the cross. We use those same words when we're talking about baptism, don't we? **Marked**, sealed by the **Spirit** and marked with the cross of Christ forever. (Verses 13 and 14) And so every day of our life is to be lived, IN HIM.

Howard Thurman has a wonderful poem called "*The Work of Christmas*" and I think it speaks really well especially to the Second Sunday of Christmas.

It kind of talks about the gospel that we read, John's gospel, the Prologue in John's gospel that first chapter. But also helps us understand our life connected to Jesus' life. He writes:

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
So the work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among the people,
To make music in the heart.

Brothers and sisters be strengthened and encouraged for the tasks this new year brings. You have been chosen by grace. You are a gift rescued from sin and death. Be a part of something larger because God's plan of salvation is not just personal but it is for the whole world. And John probably would say, not even the world, it's for the whole cosmos. And you have been given an inheritance. You're innate, you're family worthy because God chose you! And gave you his grace.

Amen.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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