



# “Living in Glory”

Second Sunday of Christmas

8:15 and 11:00 a.m.,

Sunday, January 3, 2016

The Reverend John H. Brock

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

## [Ephesians 1:3-14](#)

Grace to you and peace, from God who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen.

I spent this past Christmas day, as I have spent the last three Christmas days, ever since my father passed away, traveling to Florida, in order to spend as much of Christmas day with my mother as I can. This year when I

arrived at her apartment, I knew she was already at dinner with her friends, so I was there with plenty of time to unpack, make up the bed, change my clothes, and settle in before she returned.

I kept up with what was happening back in the *Pennsylvania* Brock household using that great social media service, Facebook. I looked at photos of my sons, my spouse, and my in-laws as they grilled outside in weather that wasn't all that much cooler than Florida. I spied on them as they opened presents, and did other Christmas Day activities. As I watched, and read, I kind of rather missed them.

I did have a nice Christmas afternoon and evening with my mom, though. Actually, we had a rather nice *three plus* days together. We shopped, and did some

errands. I drove mom to a medical appointment. **And**, we spent some time doing the thing we've done practically every time I've been down to see her since my dad died - we talked about what she wants done when she passes: what will go to my sister; what is for me; what should be sent to various charities and organizations, and what should be tossed. Inheritance stuff, basically.

On Tuesday morning, I got back on a plane at 6:44AM to return to Harrisburg. But I didn't go home. I waited there at HIA for my spouse and elder son to show up, so I could switch out suitcases. Then Marianne & I caught a flight to Chicago. We were celebrating our twenty-fifth anniversary (yeah, I don't know how she's managed it, either), and she had chosen Chicago, one of her favorite cities (actually, we had been talking

about either Asheville, North Carolina or Ann Arbor, Michigan, so when she told me she had booked us a flight and a room in Chicago, at this point in life I really wasn't surprised). While in Chicago, we were able to see an old high school friend of mine and his spouse whom we haven't seen in years. We were able to visit with some of my relatives: my mom's last surviving sibling, and her two children, and a spouse. My cousin Laura, who now lives in Oklahoma, had spent a couple of her days working with my aunt, going through things, so my aunt can downsize and move from her four bedroom, two story house with a yard & garage, to an apartment. They were doing much the same thing that my mother and I had done in Florida: this is for you, this is for Glen, this is for Good Will, this is to be tossed. They were discussing *inheritance* stuff, too.

I realized, though, how much I missed **not** having these people - my friends, and my relatives - in my every day, or at least, my every *month*, life.

Still, Marianne and I visited people, and walked around Chicago doing sightseeing, and did a little bit of shopping, all before returning to PA on Thursday in order to spend the *New Year* celebrations with our sons, and good friends, many of whom **are** in my every day, or every *month*, life.

Friends, and family: they **are** important.

Did you catch that in our epistle lesson today? Did you get the reference to family?

*<sup>5</sup> (God) destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good*

*pleasure of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.*

Or as it reads in *The Message* translation:

*Long, long ago (God) decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure he took in planning this!) He wanted us to enter into the celebration of his lavish gift-giving by the hand of his beloved Son.*

We, all of us, all who are baptized, all who believe, all of us, are adopted children of God. All of us have family. We have that family Because of Christ Jesus. We have that family, because God planned on it happening before the creation of everything:

*(God) chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world (verse 4).*

God made us, and knows us, and most importantly,

forgives us.

That's what this entire letter is about: Reminding us on how to get along. How to get along with one another; how to get along with God. Paul is writing to this multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-language, congregation there at one of the busy ports along the Aegean Sea. Ephesus is this meeting place, stomping ground, *port* for merchants, soldiers, travelers, and trades people. If you're headed anywhere in Asia, in all probability you're getting there via Ephesus.

So Paul is writing to this congregation (which he did not begin) to remind them, to teach them, that race, language, heritage, culture, works, family, are *not* what brought them to salvation. The *Pax Romana* may be in full force throughout the empire, but there is nothing

that any emperor, that any Caesar, any “Augustus,” has, can, or will, be able to DO, to bring any single one of the citizens or residents of the Empire salvation. They themselves, that Ephesus congregation, have done nothing - not One Single Thing - to *earn* the salvation through Christ that has been given to them. But that’s the truly cool thing: **They** don’t have to earn it. **We** don’t have to earn it. We have it already. It’s part of our *inheritance*. The inheritance that we are *going* to get, because we are family; BECAUSE IN CHRIST WE HAVE ALSO OBTAINED AN INHERITANCE.

*It’s in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. (1:11, Message)*

We Are Part Of **The** Family. The Family of God.

Now, hopefully, when we come to worship, we’re not

sitting around, doing the equivalent of *“Okay, this is for you, I want that, give this to Good Will, and that over there? Toss it.”* No. I hope when we gather for worship, we’re excited to be here. I hope when we gather for worship, we’re here to praise God. I hope when we gather for worship, we’re here to glorify our Lord; we’re here to learn how to live the gospel; we’re here to be reminded of our forgiveness.

So as we leave here, let’s hold that in our hearts: let’s hold onto that inheritance. Let’s hold onto that joy of worship. Let’s hold onto that gospel life, and that overwhelming forgiveness. Let’s walk together, living in the glory of Christ.

Amen.

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