



Wednesday

December 30, 2020

Prepared for you by

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Ephesians 1:3-14

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹In 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, ¹²so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³In 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; ¹⁴this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Many years ago I had the privilege to be with two Lutheran colleagues and a catholic archbishop for Bible study and a cup of coffee, and we cracked open the Bible texts for this week. The archbishop reflected on the Ephesians and the John passages in particular. He recommended that we meditate on just a portion of the text. Following his words I took a pencil and underlined verses four and five and then dropped down just a bit further and circled the word "lavished." Don't go further, let that sink in. From before the foundation of the world this has been God's will for you, to be God's child. Is there any clearer way of saying that God's grace is amazing? Or might the phrase be "lavish," a rather abundant sounding word.

The archbishop commented on the importance of focusing our attention on our everlasting divine election as loved children of God. This is not just a title, or a certificate to hang on a wall, this is granted to you from the Maker of all things, this is your very definition, a loved child of God. The archbishop mused, "How much more heroic response might be made in all of life, if we are more aware of the everlasting divine election."

Then he told us a story... just before the fall of Saigon; a Vietnamese priest was elected archbishop of Saigon. He was arrested and put in prison as soon as the communists took over. For ten years he was in prison, and for the first few years he was despondent, thinking that he was helpless and worthless to his calling. There he was responsible to his flock and unable to do anything. And then God spoke with him and said, "Fill every moment with love - to the brim." And so he resolved to do this; it wasn't easy. He described that he needed to discipline himself, to "lean into" the condition he was in with God's empowering love. And slowly, things changed in the prison. The guards softened in their treatment of him and the others around him. The key phrase is he leaned into the situation and filled each moment with love. This is your identity too, a beloved Child of God, allowing us all to lean into our futures with love.