



An amazing inheritance - Ephesians 1:15-23

It's time to count your blessings. That's what I said last week!

If you have food in the fridge, clothes on your back, a roof over your head and place to sleep ... you are richer than 75% of the world.

If you have money in the bank, cash in your wallet or even spare change in a dish somewhere ... you are among the top 8% of the Earth's wealthiest people.

If you woke up this morning with more health than illness ... you are more fortunate than the million people who will not survive the week.

If you have never experienced the danger of war, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture or the suffering of starvation ... you are ahead of 500 million people in the world.

If you can attend here today, or any other religion-related meeting, without fear of harassment, arrest, torture or death ... you are fortunate. Billions of people in the world cannot.

So it's not hard for us to count our blessings.

Most of us could quickly and easily jot down a lengthy list, including thanks for family and friends, food, clothing, cars, homes, pets, jobs, toys, gadgets, health, freedom, ... and so on

But THINK about this. If we follow that logic, then it means that if we LACK these things, we can't give thanks. We can count our blessings only if we have something to count. So what if we have no family ... no car ... no home ... no job? Does that mean we cannot give thanks? It doesn't. No!

In today's reading from Ephesians, Paul encourages us to say thanks for the very best of things; things that are not material things; things that are not seen; things that to some seem like nothing at all.

In the classic children's book *The Little Prince*, the fox character is saying goodbye to the little prince, and as he leaves he says, "And now here's my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."

"What is essential is invisible to the eye," the little prince repeats it, so that he will be sure to remember it.

This fox's insight is like Paul as he wrote in 2 Corinthians:

18 So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

It is the unseen that is eternal. What is essential is invisible to the eye. So Paul wouldn't give thanks for gold jewelry, flat screen TVs, the new three piece suite, and computer games. He refuses to focus his gaze on the things that can be seen, because he knows that these things are temporary.

Instead, he looks only at the essential and eternal things that are invisible to the eye.

When he counts his blessings, he lists absolutely nothing that you and I can buy, and nothing you can capture in your hands and own - he looks only to faith, love, a spirit of wisdom, a spirit of revelation, God's inheritance, and God's power.

Faith and love are the first two invisible, essential, eternal items that Paul mentions.

"Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, I have not stopped thanking God for you."

Paul knows that the sign of true success is not measured in monetary value. Instead, success is being a person who trusts Christ completely, and who loves their neighbour consistently.

Paul then speaks of "spiritual wisdom and insight". This spirit of wisdom opens our eyes to what God is planning for us, and it helps us to see that there is nothing richer or more valuable than a life in communion with God, both today and in the life to come.

And Paul wants us to appreciate the immeasurable greatness of God's power, a power that has raised Jesus from the dead and seated him in the heavenly places. At God's right hand.

This power has put Jesus in a place of ultimate authority, far above every earthly ruler, not only in this age but also in the age to come.

And he has offered us a priceless inheritance in Christ. It's a rich inheritance, but he doesn't say the walk with Christ is always easy, he says it is eternally rewarding.

There's a story about a man who was riding into town on a horse and cart. He was on his way to receive a rich inheritance that he had just been granted. It turned out that, as he was about a mile away from town, a wheel on the cart broke; and this forced him to walk the last mile into town. He was pretty angry about having to walk a whole mile; but then he stopped to realize what he was on his way to do - and he laughed at how silly it was to complain!

A mile's walk is an inconvenience; but it was certainly no real issue when he was on his way to receive an inheritance so rich that he could buy as many carts as he wished.

And it's the same with us. We may have hardships in life. There may be many times of ill health, or loss, or trouble, or need along the way. But if we truly know what God wants us to know then the trials and troubles are certainly no big deal when we're on our way to receive a share in such a rich inheritance forever!

God calls us to fully accept our inheritance through Christ Jesus, and embrace His spirit of revelation. But again, notice, none of these things are actually "things," in a material sense. And whether we are rich or poor, homeowners or homeless, working or unemployed, we all have access to amazing essential, eternal, and unseen treasures through Christ.

These are resources that God has provided through Christ to all who believe, and we should stop searching for other resources to meet the truly important needs of this life and the next. Lay down your desire for things!

God wants those who know what it is- that he has given them, who believe in and trust in those things with all their heart, and who then live faithfully in the truth of what they know.

If you have Christ in your life, you already have all the spiritual blessings **of the Father** that you will ever need. You are already complete in him.

God has designed us with those needs. And he has designed us in such a way that these basic needs are met fully only in him through a relationship with Jesus.

A number of years ago, off the coast America, a ship hit a submarine. The submarine sank before anyone could escape. The entire crew was trapped. Ships rushed to the scene of the disaster, but there was nothing any of them could do.

Divers were sent down to evaluate the situation. One man put his helmeted ear against the vessel and listened for any sounds. What he heard was someone tapping in Morse code. Because he knew Morse code he could decipher the message. It was this: "Is - there - any - hope?"

In Christ, the answer is always yes. In Christ, we always have hope. And in Christ we have a sense of worth.

We have great value in Him! If we only understood how precious we are to Christ, how loved we are by Him, we would never think of ourselves in the same way again!

The story goes -There was once a handsome bachelor in a village where the custom was that a man would pay a dowry to the father in order to be granted permission to marry the daughter. The average dowry price for a maiden was three cows, although an exceptionally beautiful girl might go for as high as five cows.

One day, he went to the father of Sarita to negotiate a dowry. Tongues immediately began to wag, for it was well-known that Sarita was not very pretty. In fact, she was considered to be rather plain.

On the other hand, the man was known for being such a sharp negotiator that some speculated that he might be able to obtain Sarita for as low as one cow. However, he did nothing of the sort. He marched up to Sarita's father and offered eight cows for her hand in marriage. Eight cows! It was unheard of! No one had ever paid such a high price for a bride. And for such a plain woman as Sarita!

But after the wedding, a strange thing happened. Sarita began to take on a more dignified manner. Her head was held high. Her eyes sparkled. She beamed with an inner glow. And in the years that followed, she became renown as the most beautiful woman in all the village. People

would come from afar to see her as her radiant grace became almost legendary.

One day, her husband was asked why he had paid such an exorbitant price for his wife. He replied, "I loved Sarita and wanted to express the high value of our marriage. Her self esteem has been greatly elevated as she realizes that her dowry price was higher than any other woman in the village."

Paul prays that we would have our eyes opened to understand this - to *"understand the confident hope Christ has given to those he called-his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance"*

We have not earned it; we do not deserve it. We are not pretty enough to be bought for "eight cows" by any stretch of the imagination. But Christ paid a price on the cross much greater than "eight cows" **for us**. He paid his very life **for us**. In Christ we have value and worth. And in Christ, we have confidence.

We may need to break free from past behaviour; or work our way through a trying time, or step up to a new task or purpose that God has set before us- but we cry out "I just can't do it!"

And in a very real sense, we're right. We just can't do it - on our own!

But in Christ, there is nothing that God calls us to do that **he** cannot enable us to do. There is literally nothing that God will ever call us to do, that he doesn't also supply all the power we need in Christ to do it!

So think of it. Those who are in Christ have it all. In Christ, we have hope, we have worth, and we have confidence, and so much more in God's rich inheritance.

There was a man named Victor, but he felt like a loser. He didn't do very well in school and when he was 16 years old, a teacher advised him to leave school and get a job. He didn't do much better in the working world so that, by the time he was 32, he had failed at 76 different jobs.

But applying for job number 77 was to change Victor's life. As a part of the interview process, he was required to take an I.Q. test - a test designed to measure his intelligence. A score of 100 was considered to be normal. Victor scored 161. He had never before realized it, but Victor discovers he is a genius. The knowledge of that fact was transforming in

his life. Victor Serienko went on to become famous for his research in laser surgery and to become president of MENSA, an organization for geniuses - all because a test said that he was special.

In the eyes of our God, we are **that** special and so much more. We all have this rich inheritance, but many of us just don't know it yet. We have failed at 76 different jobs, but Paul urged the readers of his letter and all of us to hear the Good News. Good News so wonderful that **he** just hasn't stopped giving thanks!

That God loves you, yes he loves each of us personally, so much that he gave us the most precious thing he could. He gave you his Son, Jesus!!!!

If that's not jumping up and down exciting, I don't know what is! If that doesn't make you give thanks without ceasing, I don't know what will! If that doesn't make you fall to your knees in heartfelt humility and praise, I don't know why!

Our Father has plans for us. He has hopes and dreams for all who he chooses to call sons and daughters by adoption.

There's a poem that says, "If God had a fridge your picture would be on it. If God had a wallet your picture would be in it."

We receive this great inheritance by faith. You can accept his inheritance for you right now. Right here. Just as you are. God loves us and wants us. His inheritance to us through Christ is available to all who believe on Him.

May we turn our whole lives over to him and never cease to give Him thanks.

When Paul prayed for the Ephesians, his primary desire was that they understand, know, and experience Jesus more and more. He wanted them to enter into the fullness of their inheritance as redeemed children of God. Above all, he wanted them to grow spiritually and deepen their relationship with God.