

The Provision of Love

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Bible Text: John 14:16-31

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Would we all agree this morning that you can learn a lot about people by what they leave in their wills? Is that true? For example, did you know that Jack Benny, after he died, had worked it out that a florist would deliver a rose to his wife, Mary, to whom he had been married for 47 years, after his death? Every day. It's reported that she received nearly 3,000 roses after he died. There is a romantic man right there, huh? A great thing to leave in your will. Then, kind of on the goofy side: Robert Lewis Stevenson. You've heard of him, right? The poet. He had a friend who was born on Christmas day and constantly fussed about the fact that, "You know, when your birthday is on Christmas Day, it's not really special because everybody just lumps your birthday present in with the other Christmas presents," and forever she was fussing about that. So, Robert Lewis Stevenson, in his will, left this woman his birthday. Here's what it said as only a writer could say: Formerly, the 13th day of November, my birthday, henceforth shall become the birthday of Ann H. Ide, to have, hold, exercise and enjoy the same in customary manner by the sporting of fine raiment, eating of fine meats, receipt of gifts, compliments and copies of verse according to the manner of our ancestors. He will a friend his birthday.

All sorts of examples of people leaving large sums of money to their pets in their wills. Remember Leona Helmsley? The Queen of Mean she was called. She left her Maltese dog a trust of 12 million dollars. It's a happy day for a dog, huh? A lot of dog biscuits right there. It was, sadly, later reduced to 2 million but that's still a fair amount of probably the lesser brand dog biscuits, I assume. Or Eleanor Richie. Do you know who she is? She's the heiress of the Quaker State Motor Oil fortune. Have you ever bough Quaker State Motor Oil? Every wondered where that money went? Well, here's where: her fortune eventually reached 14 million dollars that she left to her 150 stray dogs. That's right, her 150 stray dogs.

One of the stranger will requests I came across as I was researching this was one from a man named Frederick Bower. Have you ever heard of Frederick Bower? My guess is Frederick Bower invented something that you have either seen or maybe even used. Frederick Bower. He invented the Pringle's can. That's right. Did you know he died a couple of years ago? You didn't know that? Guess what his final request for his family was in his will? That he be cremated and buried in a Pringle's can. Seriously. I got this off the internet, it has to be right.

No question, you can learn a lot about people by what they leave in their wills. Do you know the Bible says a lot about this matter of inheritance? About the matter of a person's will? For example, Proverbs 13:22, "A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children and the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous." Or this one, Proverbs 19:14, "House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers but a prudent is from the Lord." So, there is a lot in the Bible about this matter of inheritance.

Scripture also teaches us this: receiving an inheritance is part of what happens when you place your faith and trust in Christ. Do you know that? If you are a Christian or are willing to choose to become one today, there would be an automatic inheritance for you. That's right. Here's what Paul said in Ephesians 1:10, "In him," in Christ, "also we have obtained an inheritance." It couldn't be any clearer than that. Or the Apostle Peter, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to his great mercy, has caused us to be born again to a living hope." That's good news. "Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." That's better news. And then, "To obtain an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."

I realize you might say, "You know, I'm not sure I know much about my spiritual inheritance." Well, if that's true, do you realize that Paul prayed that you would. That's true. Paul actually prayed that people like you and me would come to understand over time more of what it means to possess this inheritance. He said this later in Ephesians 1, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, that you will know what is the hope of his calling." There is hope a couple of times now, "what are the riches of the glory," here it is, "of his inheritance in the saints and what is the surpassing greatness of his power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of his might."

Well, since that's true, it probably would not surprise us to learn that just before Jesus went to the cross to die for our sin, he spoke to the disciples about our inheritance and that's what we're going to study this morning. Open your Bible, please, to John 14:16. That's on page 85 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you. The provision of love this morning.

Now, our theme all year long has been "Loving Our Neighbors" and so these last several weeks, we've just been working our way verse-by-verse through this great portion of Scripture known as the Upper Room discourse, John 13-17, organized around the idea of loving the way Jesus taught it. If we're really serious and I hope you are about taking steps at loving our neighbors this year, if Jesus is going to talk about it, we're going to listen up, huh? John actually began this section by saying, "Now before the feast of the Passover," note that by the way, that's going to become important for another reason in a minute, "Jesus knowing that his hour had come that he would depart out of this world to the Father, having," here it is, "loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end." Well, surely, listening to someone who loves like that will teach us all sorts of principles that help us get to a better place as we try to grow in that area. That's why I've encouraged you to read the Upper Room discourse in one sitting, once a week, during the

time that we're doing this study. We're trying to get this truth down deeply in our souls and that's why we're working our way systematically through this text verse-by-verse, section-by-section in order to help us become more of the way we think, more the way we live.

So far we've studied the position of love because Jesus' first act in this section was to get down on his knees and wash the disciples' feet. That's the position of love. Then the loyalty of love where we saw that amazing contrast between the betrayal of Judas on the one hand and a Savior who loved his own and who loved us to the end. Then the new standard of love where Christ explained to his disciples after Judas left, "A new commandment I'm giving you that you love one another just as I have loved you." God's people are always commanded to love one another but it's new because now we have a different standard, love as Jesus loved. Then last week, the preparation of love where we learned that great truth: what is Jesus doing right now? Well, he's on a construction project. He's preparing a place for his children, the preparation of love.

Now, he turns his attention to an essential aspect of our spiritual inheritance and I want to ask you to follow along carefully as we read John 14, beginning in verse 16 and look for the logic or the argument of the text. Jesus said,

“16 'I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. 20 In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. 21 He who has My commandments.”

Notice this because this is really an important part of the argument and you probably figured out that I'm struggling a little bit with my voice and I'm going to try to be as non-irritating about it as possible.

“21 'He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.' 22 Judas (not Iscariot),” obviously Judas Iscariot already left, “said to Him, 'Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?' 23 Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me,’ notice how he answers this because he goes back to this theme, “he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. 24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me. 25 These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”

Now, a third piece of this discussion, verse 27,

“27 'Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. 28 You heard that I said to you, “I go away, and I will come to you.” If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. 29 Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe. 30 I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me; 31 but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here.”

We're talking this morning about the provision of love and from these verses we can find three blessings of the gift of the Holy Spirit that's an essential aspect of the inheritance that we now enjoy in Christ. The first is the blessing of divine presence. Jesus explains that while he is away preparing a place for us in heaven, he'll ask the Father and the Father will give you another helper that he may be with you forever. And the passage goes on to affirm that who Jesus is speaking about is the Holy Spirit of God, a provision who is so important to our spiritual health and vitality that the Lord is actually going to return to this subject a number of times yet in the remaining part of this discourse. This was really important to him and it needs to be important to us.

Well, what can we learn from what we just read? What does it mean that the Holy Spirit is our helper? One of the challenges of this passage is that there's really not a word in English that does justice to the original word that Jesus used. In fact, as I was researching this text, I found that it's not just true in English, there's a lot of other languages in which the Bible is translated that really struggle with this particular passage because this word is so powerful, this word is so multifaceted. That's why depending on the version of the Bible that you have before you, it might have the word “helper,” it might have “advocate,” or “encourager,” or “comforter,” or “counselor.” It's a very powerful word, very multifaceted. It's the original word *parakletos* which is a compound: *para* is the prefix “alongside,” *keleo* is the Greek verb “to call.” So it literally means “I'm going to send you a helper. I'm literally going to send you,” Jesus said, “one who called alongside to help.”

Now, if you have your head in the game and by the way, I hope you came to study the Bible. I realize there are a lot of basketball going on and all that kind of stuff. I know Dayton is in the Sweet 16, blah, blah, blah. Get that out of your brain right now and let's be focusing on the truth of the word, right? Because if you were listening carefully, when Jesus started talking about keeping his word, I hope you said, “I'm going to need some help with that. Wouldn't it be great if we had a helper?” Or when you heard him talk about the potential of living in a way that's characterized by peace, I hope you said, “I'm going to need some help with that. Maybe we need a helper.” So, this gift, this inheritance that we're receiving is a *parakletos*, one who is called alongside to help. No

question, that's exactly what the disciples needed at that moment, huh? A loving provision that Jesus would leave to help them, to encourage them, to comfort them, to counsel them, to advocate for them.

Something else I'd like you to notice about this text is the importance of the word "another." I will send you another helper. What does that mean? Another? Well, that means they already had one, right? You can't have another unless you already had one? Well, who was that? Yeah, that was Jesus himself and the importance of that cannot be overstated. Jesus is giving them someone to take his place because eventually – is this group going to be together long term? No, they're going to be scattered because of persecution and then because they're going to do what the song that we were just singing about instructs God's children to do, to tell the message to the masses, to spread the message from the mountains, there's going to be a whole lot of other men and women who are going to place their faith and trust in Christ and no way could Jesus physically be present with each one of them. So, he promised to lovingly provide another person of the Godhead to help them.

What else about this news would they have found incredibly encouraging? It's also the issue of the duration. Jesus said, "That he may be with you forever." You realize, that increases the value of the inheritance exponentially. It's one thing to get an inheritance and if you're really careful with it, it might last you ten years or if you invest it really wisely and don't spend much, it'll last you for 20. Hopefully, your life won't outlive your inheritance. That's never going to happen here. "That he may be with you forever." It will never expire. It'll never be exhausted.

Then this: the extent. You know him because he, here it is, "abides with you and will be in you," this inheritance. Here's another example of what we saw at the very beginning of this text: Jesus having loved his own, he loved them to the very end. How? Because what's the focus of this particular discussion? Not in their failure to wash his feet. Not on the treachery of Judas' betrayal. Not of Peter's denials. Not even of his pending suffering. You see, love focuses on the needs of the other person and seeks a way to provide for them. I'm going to send you another counselor who will abide with you, who will be in you and he will be with you forever, Jesus says.

Well, you might wonder when was that promise fulfilled? You know, a lot of people make promises. Promises are cheap, right? A lot of people make promises with no intent to keep them. Is that true of your God? Does he just throw out a bunch of lame, pious platitudes in situations like this in the Upper Room with no intent to keep them? Is that the kind of God you serve? No, no, no, no, no. And here's a great example of how that is true. When was this promise fulfilled? If you know your Bible, you know the math: about 50 days from when it was made.

Let's do the math: And Jesus was crucified on the feast of the Passover. We saw that at the beginning of John 13, didn't we? Why was that so important historically? Because he was the fulfillment of the sign of the flawless Passover lamb. And then he was resurrected from the dead. Scripture tells us that Jesus immediately ascended to heaven?

No, if you know your Bible, you know that after Jesus was resurrected from the dead he was on earth an additional how many days? 40 days ministering to his disciples and preparing them for his ascension. That's why he told them in this text, "You're going to see me. You're going to see me," and they did. Then the book of Acts picks up this story and I want you to see how your Bible all fits together. If you want to look at it in your Bible you can, I've got it on the Power Point screen just for convenience but here's what happens: Acts 1, written by Luke, "The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began." He's referring back to the gospel of Luke. "The first account," the book of Luke, "I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. To these He also presented Himself," do the math, "alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of," how many days? "Forty days and speaking." So, we've got the feast of the Passover when he died, now we have a 40 day ministry prior to the ascension. "Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, 'Which,' He said, 'you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the,'" bang. We're still talking about that, "Holy Spirit not many days from now. So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, 'Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will,'" future, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Don't you love the way your Bible fits together? Jesus promises in the Upper Room this provision of love and then 40 days after his resurrection, he says, "You're going to receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you." We're still on the same topic, the focus is the same.

Well, when was it fulfilled? We've got the feast of the Passover when he died, we have 40 days later and he's still saying, "It's about to happen." When was it fulfilled? Here's the answer: ten days later at the feast of Pentecost. Pentecost means what? Fifty days after the Passover and here is exactly what happened: "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place and suddenly, picture this in your mind, there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire." What? Well, when you're reading your Bible, a great way to understand what's being said is just keep reading. It's going to become very clear. "There appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves and they rested on each one of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit." Bang, the promise was just fulfilled. "And began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven," because God loves the nations, do you know that? And God can speak a whole lot of languages, did you know that? "And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered." Why? Not because they were hearing gibberish, it was because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language simultaneously. "They were amazed and astonished,

saying, 'Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?' Simultaneously. The point is Galileans, the apostles are a bunch of uneducated men. How in the world are they speaking languages that they've never studied and we're hearing the word of God in our own language simultaneously. Then he gives a whole list of all the different people who were there. "We hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God. And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?'"

Well, what does it mean? It means God keeps his promises. If God says you're going to have an inheritance, you're going to have an inheritance. Now, was everybody moved by that? You have to love the way this part of the text ends. "Others were mocking and saying, 'They are full of sweet wine.'" Apparently believing that if you get really drunk then you can speak in languages you've never studied before but you couldn't do that sober. Don't be trying that one. I'm glad I'm preaching on Sunday when the bars are closed. But anyway...

Now, as the church develops and matures throughout the book of Acts and the rest of the New Testament, we learn a couple of additionally important truths. The sign gifts that we just read about, that's really a small part of the answer to Jesus' prayer that the provision, the gift of the Holy Spirit we learn, has more to do with the character and the fruit that the Holy Spirit stands ready to develop in you and me. We also learn this: the sign gifts, not the entire ministry of the Holy Spirit but the sign gifts will die out when they're no longer needed. Paul says it pretty clearly in 1 Corinthians 13:8, "Love never fails but if there are gifts of prophecy, they'll be done away when they're no longer needed. If there are tongues, they will cease," they'll die out. "If there is knowledge, it will be done away." So, we believe that happened. We believe that happened when the office of apostle died out. You say, "Why did that die out?" Because there was no one left who met the requirements because in order to be an apostle, you had to see the risen Christ. You say, "I know somebody who calls himself an apostle today." That's not a biblical apostle. That would be impossible.

Also, we believe that the sign gifts are no longer necessary because we have something better than incomplete sign gifts, namely the completed canon, the sufficient word of God. That's why those sign gifts eventually died out. Now, don't spend the rest of your time worrying about, "Am I a cessationist or am I a continuationist," etc. etc. You will be off point for sure. The big issue that is undeniable wherever you land on that particular point is this: Jesus promised a loving provision and he clearly delivered on that promise. "I will ask the Father and he will give you another helper, that he will be with you forever." What an incredible inheritance, huh? Divine presence. And many of us can certainly point to plenty of times where we would say, "On the one hand, yes, it's a mystery. It can't be fully explained but there is no question of the assurance of the Lord's presence was so obvious and so real right when we needed it." Like David had previously said in Psalm 23, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil." Why? "For you are with me." And as a follower of Jesus Christ who now has

the Holy Spirit of God abiding in you, you and I know that in ways that he couldn't have even known.

I'm going to share several letters with you that I received this week. I don't always do this and I had somebody fuss at me recently and say, "You know, it's almost like you have another life. You have all these other things going on and you don't always let the congregation know about some of these things and we need to hear about them because they're great blessings." Here's one letter that I received this week that goes right along with what I'm talking about. If you can't see the Holy Spirit and his presence in this letter, I just don't know what it would take. This letter says this: "On July 25, 2011 my husband, Larry, died suddenly of a heart attack at 54 years of age. I found him when I came home from work. I had talked to him one hour earlier." Think about that. "We believed in God, we were saved but we didn't go to church on a regular basis. A couple of weeks after everything calmed down, I got a postcard from Faith Church with your church hours." Strange coincidence, huh? Or the work of the Holy Spirit of God.

This woman said, "I just knew God had sent it to me. I went to the next service. I cried the whole time and left early but I was back the next week. Then I read in the bulletin about the counseling services that Faith had to offer free of charge. I made the appointment for me for grief counseling. My counselor was Shelly O." one of our members here. "When we got to talking," she said, "are you Larry's wife? She explained to me that my husband had painted her house a few months before, that's what he did for a living. I knew for sure then that God was overseeing everything." Do you think she's right about that? That God was overseeing everything.

Then she said, "What Shelly didn't know was that the first few months going to see her kept me from taking my own life. I really didn't want to live without my husband but through Faith church's counseling services, they gave me hope." What did we sing about and what have we already seen several times in these texts? Gave me hope. "They made me see that God was the way and there was a life without Larry. I went through the sessions every week, did my homework, my Bible study. After the first couple of months, I noticed a difference in myself. I was becoming closer to God. I wasn't having a pity party for myself every day." And she goes on to talk about the marvelous presence of God that continues to sustain her. And she closes by saying, "I'm a member of Faith church now and I can't thank you enough for giving me my life back. Life's not easy without Larry but I know with God and my Faith family, I will be okay."

Now friend, was that just dumb luck? Was it just dumb luck that that card happened to come to her at that moment? Was it just dumb luck that she was assigned one of our great counselors on our staff who actually had a natural point of contact with her deceased husband? And I hope you would say this morning, "It's amazing how God keeps his promise." This inheritance that we enjoy of the person of the Holy Spirit of God and his indwelling presence, is an inheritance much better than money could ever buy.

Second is the blessing of faithful perseverance. Jesus said in verse 18, "I'm not going to leave you as orphans." Isn't that a beautiful picture? He goes on to say, "The world won't

see me. You will,” and we can't be dogmatic about that but I think he was saying, “After I resurrect, I will see you before I leave.” But then, and here's what we really need to note. If you're saying, “Why is this inheritance so important to me?” here's why especially: it's because of this repeated relationship between the love for Christ and your obedience to his word. Did you see that? In verses like this if we're going to take them seriously, ought to make us shake in our boots. “He who has my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me and he who loves me will be loved by my Father and I will love him and disclose myself to him. Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, 'Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?’” It's fascinating how Jesus answers that question. “Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word,’ just like I said a moment ago, “and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.”

That goes right along with what Christ said at the end of the text we saw last week, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” That's one of the primary reasons we need the helper. I hope when you hear the importance of being the kind of people who follow the word of Christ. Think about last week, think about all the choices that you made, think about all the challenges that you had, all the words that you said. Does it come automatic for you to follow the words of Christ? I hope you say, “I need some help. I need some divine help.” Well friend, you've got it and you've got it in the person and work of the Holy Spirit of God.

You say, “Well, how does the Holy Spirit help me persevere?” Great question. Here's one of the answers: by his sealing. In him you also after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, here it is, “you were sealed in him with the Holy Spirit of promise.” That's a beautiful picture and the people who received that message would have understood it. In that day and age, an important message would be written many times on a scroll and then when the scroll was rolled up at the seam, hot wax would be poured on that seam and then the person in authority would take his signet ring, press it in the hot wax and the metaphor was, “If you break that seal without authority, the person in charge will break you.” Well, that's the same metaphor that was used to describe our relationship with the Holy Spirit of God, “You are sealed in him with the Holy Spirit of promise.”

That's why, by the way, if you've never trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, I would encourage you to run not walk to the cross of Jesus Christ today. There are so many blessings and benefits of repenting of your sin and placing your faith and trust in Christ including the fact that you were instantaneously and eternally sealed by the Holy Spirit of God. Paul said it this way, “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him.”

He also helps you persevere, keep his word by his filling. Ephesians 5:18, “Don't get drunk with wine, that's dissipation, but be filled by the Spirit.” The issue is control. When you choose to submit yourself to his word, you're allowing not wine, that's the argument,

but instead you're allowing the Holy Spirit to control you, to fill you. Or by his empowerment. Galatians 5 talks about, "But I say walk by the Spirit," that's empowerment, "and you'll not carry out the desire of the flesh. The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, the Spirit against the flesh, these are in opposition to one another so that you may not do the things you please but if you're led by the Spirit, you're not under the law." And there are people who are attending these services today and the fact of the matter is, you made some good choices this week where confronted with the choice, you decided to obey the word of Christ and I know if you stood to tell that story this morning, you would say, "And the Holy Spirit of God was enabling me to live that way even when it was hard." That's what it means to be filled by the Spirit. That's what it means to walk in the Spirit. That's what it means to be led by the Spirit.

Think about that story I told you a moment ago about Shelly O. Well, how did that happen? It happened because she allowed herself to be used by the Holy Spirit of God and not just her, by the way, because when she's over here on Mondays serving in our counseling center, that means that her husband is sacrificing, that means that her children are sacrificing as well. And they are all, as a family, allowing themselves to be led by the Spirit of God, used by the Spirit of God. Do you think the Holy Spirit cared about this widow who found her husband at home after talking to him an hour before, having died at his home? Can you imagine how heart-wrenching that would be? Do you think the Holy Spirit cares about a person like that? And do you think a Holy Spirit wants loving people to come around a widow like that and to love and minister to her? Surely, we would believe that God is love as we sang about earlier, would be especially concerned about that.

Well, what it takes then, is for a follower of Christ to be willing to be a channel of that blessing, to be led by the Spirit, to be filled with the Spirit, to walk in the Spirit and to be a channel of the blessing of the Holy Spirit in that hurting person's life. That's why we're encouraging people to consider the Serve 14, these opportunities to minister to children in this church. I want to encourage you to do that. Tell me, what else have you got going on more exciting than the possibility of being a channel of God's blessing in a widow who had just found her husband deceased? What have you got going on more exciting than possibly being a channel of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a child who is making up his or her mind about the things of God? Another goofy basketaball game, for crying out loud? I mean, what are we giving our lives to anyway? Listen, it's not that I think basketball is wrong but I do think it's possible to become so distracted by things that don't really matter in eternity that we fail to take full benefit and blessing of the inheritance that we have in the Holy Spirit of God.

He stands ready to give you his filling, his empowerment, his fruit. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, self-control and if you would say, "I'm not sure that I want to be involved in this because I'm not sure that I'm going to have the answers," or "I'm not sure I'm going to have the strength." Hello? That's the point of your inheritance. Stop acting as if you've got to figure it out on your own. Stop acting as if you have not received an inheritance from the Holy Spirit of God. And I'll tell you this: the longer I'm involved in ministry, the longer and I want to be careful about this, this could

cross the line of wrongnesstism but the more I'm convinced that it has less to do with me and it has more to do with him anyway. We're just there to be the channel of the work of the Holy Spirit of God as he seeks to work in and through us.

But as relationship to the word, it comes back to the Scripture. This woman who I just read from earlier, she would tell you quickly, "Listen, what changed me, what gave me hope was the word." Well, that is the sword of the Spirit of God. "Know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." And do you think the Holy Spirit wants the children of our community to hear this word? Do you think that the Holy Spirit wants the people of our community to hear this word? Is that a yes? I mean, please tell me that's a yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Well, then I would ask you: do you want to be a channel of that? Do you want to be a channel of the work that the Holy Spirit of God wants to do eternally in the hearts and lives of people around us?

Well, what's the point? God has lovingly given us a provision to persevere, to obey and follow his word even when it's hard, the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit of God. What are some of the take-aways? Think about this past week. Think about a typical week for you. Are you cooperating with the work that the Holy Spirit is seeking to do in you? Is there evidence that you are filled with the Spirit? Is there evidence that you are walking in the Spirit? Is there evidence that you're being led by the Spirit? Are you developing the fruit of the Spirit? Are you motivated to follow the word of the Spirit? Is there evidence that you understand and you're benefiting from the inheritance that the Son of God has given you? How is this belief affecting your service?

There are all kinds of people running around here. It's just amazing how many people faithfully serve here. That's why I'm encouraging you if you've not done that, take care of that today and join the throng of people who absolutely love to serve God because they want to be a channel of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in this community. That's amazing, you never know how God would use that. I'm going to share with you a couple of brief notes that I received this week and I don't generally do this because I don't want you to think I think I'm all that and a bag of chips. But sometimes you just sit back and you say, "I can't believe that God used that."

Here's one I received. This is just an email. "My name is Jane and I live in Illinois. I just finished reading your mini-book on raising a special needs child." My wife, Chris, and I wrote this booklet together several years ago. She said, "I cried almost the whole way through. I was so encouraged and touched by the book I can barely express it with words. It's almost as though love, understanding and compassion for my situation just came off every page to my heart." She said, "I'm a mother of a special needs child. He's nine years old, the youngest of five. He was born deaf and is severely ADHD with sensory issues as well. I understand to the full degree the meaning of weary and worn out," because that's what we wrote about in the book quoting Jesus' words on that topic. At the end she said, "I could write much more but the point of this email was to say thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for your words of encouragement and instruction," she said. "For me they were priceless. Jesus has used you greatly in my life and I am grateful."

Now, I don't read that to you to say, "And aren't I something?" Because I've been here long enough for you to know that I'm not something which is the whole point. The Son of God is something. God the Father is something. The Holy Spirit of God is something and he wants to use each one of us. That's why it's so important for us to understand and act on the implications of our inheritance.

I received another note this week. This guy said, "My name is Jeremiah Shank, I'm a pastor of First Baptist Church in Monroe, Iowa." He said, "I am emailing you to let you know that as I was traveling for a preaching assignment, I happened to stop at a Flying J gas station. While this is not in and of itself a big deal, what made me laugh is that I was looking at the books they have for sale and I saw this book entitled, 'Putting Your Past in its Place' by a certain Pastor Viars." He said, "You know you've made it big when your book is for sale in a gas station." Now, I'm not sure that's what it means but it means God is really marvelous, huh? And I want to be in the very center of all that he wants to do in and through me, don't you? Don't you?

Well, here's the third blessing of this loving provision: its miraculous peace. The Lord says, "Peace I leave with you." That's a gift now. "My peace I give to you." What does that mean? Many times when the world talks about peace it's saying it's the absence of something. When you have peace, if you have the absence of war or the absence of trouble or the absence of worry. I would suggest Shalom or peace in the Bible is much more complete. There is the objective peace of justification and we're born in sin in rebellion to him, we're separated from God, we're his enemies, we're at war which is why it's so amazing that Paul would say, "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in him and through him to reconcile all things to himself," hear this, "having made peace through the blood of his cross."

It's possible to be at peace with God. C S. Lewis said, "Fallen men are not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement. He's a rebel who must lay down his arms." But when that decision is made, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God." Objective peace. Which leads to experiential peace. The peace of God, Paul says, "which surpasses all comprehension will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." And you might say, "Well, I can't conjure that up on my own." That's the point. The source of our peace is our Savior. "Peace I leave with you," what's the next two words? "My peace I give you," because now you have the Holy Spirit. You know, I'll be willing to be the first one to stand in line and say, "I've got a whole lot more to learn about what it means to benefit from that part of my inheritance, this peace business."

I mentioned to you a couple of weeks ago that one of our initiatives this year is to launch a Senior Living Community. We've been talking about that for a long time. This was going to be the year and I told you a couple of weeks ago that project had hit a couple of really bad bumps. In fact, I told some people privately, "I don't think it's going to happen this year." We had some zoning issues, some finance issues. It was looking bad. Well, Friday we had a meeting with the area plan commission staff and I met in advance with

Paul R. and Joe B. who were going to be part of that meeting with me and have been working with me on this project. We were meeting in a coffee shop and I was pontificating how I was going to give the APC staff a piece of my mind. You know, when you've got a pretty small mind to begin with, you have to be careful about who is throwing pieces out indiscriminately but I was fired up. I know it's hard for you to imagine that I was fired up. We went into that meeting and I wish I had more time to describe it but here's the short version: it was as if God parted the Red Sea. It's amazing how he worked out all of those details and that project is right back on track. And I'm ashamed. I'm ashamed because where was the peace? There is an example of your pastor not benefiting from a provision of our inheritance.

Here's what I'm going to try to do: I'm going to try to learn more, to be more of an answer to the Apostle Paul's prayer of understanding what it means to have this great inheritance in the person of the Holy Spirit resident inside of me. I hope that results in greater obedience to the word and more surpassing peace. And if you would say this morning, "You know what? I think I need to stand in that line too." Well, I hope you will in your mind.

Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, thank you, Lord, for this great provision that our loving Savior made for us and, Lord, I pray that in the coming days we would learn more what it means to walk out the joy of this inheritance. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.