

Sermon 2023 11 19 Text

The name of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Companion on the Journey. Amen.

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1 Thessalonians 5. Verses 5 and 6

5 for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. 6 So then, ... let us keep awake.

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Matthew 25.21 and 29

21 His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things;..." ... 29 For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.

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These statements are both about custodianship.

At this stage of our lives we live in earthen vessels. We occupy bodies which wear out and cease to function.

If we are wise, we recognise that fact, and we prepare for those eventualities of frailty and death.

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So we prepare Wills and EPOA for that eventual time when these mortal shells break down and return to the earth.

As part of that preparation, we choose people of competence to ensure that the accumulation of our life is not wasted but is passed to people who will use the treasure that was entrusted to us for the benefit of others.

So the statement of our will includes the naming of executors who will carry out our final wishes.

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Who amongst you are executors of a will of which I am a beneficiary?

The poverty of your response is a sad thing. And I think that your response is either accidentally or deliberately designed to deprive me of my inheritance. And perhaps your response is also accidentally or deliberately designed to deprive others of their inheritance. For each of you is the custodian of an inheritance, part of which (at least) is to be given to me and to many others.

And in failing to recognise that I and they are beneficiaries of a will of which you are a custodian is, at best, immoral and, at worst, criminal.

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So I will give you a second chance. Who amongst you are executors of a will of which I am a beneficiary?

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At our baptism we are washed and nurtured. And from there we are expected to make a journey within the faith of the Church which will only end when this mortality ceases to be.

But at our baptism and until the moment of our death, we are custodians of an enormous inheritance and the distribution of this inheritance over our lifetimes will be a matter of judgement at our deaths.

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At our baptism we are made part of an eternal church – a gathering of the people of faith – who are to be beneficiaries of the great wealth left behind by our redeemer.

But the acts of the cross and beyond restore us to a great inheritance of eternal life and a life that is made rich by light and love.

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We become the custodians, those who hold for a time, of the richness of the inheritance left for us in the death and resurrection of Christ.

And we have a responsibility to bring into that inheritance as many beneficiaries as possible. It is our legal and moral responsibility to share the inheritance with those for whom it was intended.

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There is a great sadness that we are not committed and motivated executors. If an extra beneficiary happens to wander in, then we will gladly share with them a portion of the inheritance. But we will not go out of our way to bring others into their inheritance.

Perhaps we think that we have a nice, comfortable little church in which we are happy and warm and live in a cocoon of light and embracing love.

But unless we seek out others and draw them into their inheritance, we have breached our duty of care, and we have acted criminally in not exercising our responsibility as the custodians of this rich estate.

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When we prepare our wills, we choose people who we believe will be diligent in carrying out our wishes for the distribution of our wealth.

How would you feel if the people to whom you entrusted the distribution of your estate did nothing or next to nothing to ensure that the richness you had accumulated in life was not given over to those for whom it was intended? How would you feel if they let what you had accumulated sit and rot away because you could not be bothered to seek out the beneficiaries and entrust to them the richness that was their right?

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Christ dies once for all. In this act of restoration he makes all of us heirs of eternal life and light. Somewhere in the past, a diligent executor acted selflessly, sought us out, and brought us into the rich inheritance which is our right.

When we fail to seek out others; when we fail to even make them aware of the great wealth that is theirs and sits piled up waiting for them – are we incompetent executors or are our acts criminal.

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Christ leaves to each of us a portion of eternal light and love. But he also asks us to be wise and prudent stewards for he entrusts to us portions of that light and love for others.

Are we good stewards, who go out searching for the other beneficiaries who are entitled to their share of this richness.

Or, once we have our part, will we lose our spirit of diligence, sit comfortably in our new wealth, and allow those portions which are the due right of others to sit awaiting claimants who have no capacity to know what is held in trust for them?

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