

Sermon on Ephesians 2:4-10, The 4th Sunday in Lent, March 14, 2021, B

⁴But God, because he is rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in trespasses. It is by grace you have been saved! ⁶He also raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. ⁷He did this so that, in the coming ages, he might demonstrate the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸Indeed, it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast.

¹⁰For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance so that we would walk in them.

We Have Everything In Christ

Father in heaven, you joined us to your Son, Christ Jesus. We often forget the identity, the riches, the high calling, the divine purposes you have given us through Christ. Forgive us for taking our eyes off the truths of who we truly are and the resulting trouble and pain it brings. Restore to us the joy of salvation, a gift of grace from you. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters who have been given everything good through Jesus,

The Holy Spirit tells us through the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 4:18, ***“For the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are not seen are eternal.”*** Yet we live, more often than we are willing to admit, directly opposite of that truth. We live as if the things seen are permanent and the unseen things are but a dream that in the end doesn’t matter. Yes, we live as if God is a liar and what he tells us is not true. Have you ever thought about that, my dear Christian brothers and sisters, how often we live life directly opposite of what God tells us is true? And then when we live for ourselves with a constant desire to get more and more out of people and this world, how does that turn out? Count the ways! It ends in disappointment, frustration, heartache, tears, and pain of every sort. For our God who is love doesn’t even have the ability to lie, but to share the truth in love so that it may benefit and bless us in this world and forever. Yet we fight it, we mock it and belittle it or count it as worthless still holding to the silliness of thinking only what I want now matters. And yet today our God graciously and patiently shares truths to draw you and me from our worldly views and what we value, and turn us to His Word where he proclaims that we have everything in Christ!

You have everything in Christ! You have it all! Rejoice! This truth alone should fill us with an inexpressible joy each and every day! Should it not?! Should we not be beaming with joy and excitement to come to God’s house, to connect with our fellow Christians, to rejoice in hearing God’s Word and receiving his Sacrament? Should we not be filled with joy and excitement to share the good news about our God and what he has done for all? But I sense there is some hesitation, some disbelief that it isn’t true. For if we were truly convinced that what God said is true, we would have nothing but joy all our days. And so you and I have proved the point that we live disappointed. We live disappointed so often that heaven is not here and life could or should be better here! Let’s look at how silly it is to have those thoughts today.

Listen to what God the Holy Spirit tells us through the Apostle Paul, ***“But God, because he is rich in mercy,*** God knew our ability to turn away from his goodness. God knew our hearts

by nature hate his truth, hate his love, hate his good ways, and hate what is in our best interests. God, knowing all we will do by nature is bring pain and destruction on ourselves, approached us out of the riches of his mercy. His mercy moved him not to treat us as our sins and rebellion deserve. **because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in trespasses.** Our God is filled with a love that is greater than the distance between the stars, focused in on our completely dire and hopeless condition. What was our condition? We were DEAD in our trespasses, our sins. Dead people can't do anything. God saw our dead souls and did the mightiest miracle in our existence; he made us alive with Christ. He connected us through water and the Word to Jesus who the Apostle John writes about saying, **'In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind.** Made alive and filled with life and light! This is an incredible miracle that should fill us with rejoicing for we are not on the path to eternal death in hell, but we truly are with Christ and Christ in us! And why should you or I have such an honor? What makes us so special? Why out of all the billions that are still in the darkness of their sin and unbelief are we made alive in Christ? **It is by grace you have been saved!** Grace; God's love moved him to choose to love us who were lost. It was all God's doing! Again honor upon honor that God chose us!

So how do you have everything in Christ? Life, life to the full! Life forever! Life filled with the light that Christ shares through his Word and Sacrament. Life and light for the soul! All given in love so that God's love camps around us all our days! And look! Look at what else we have in Christ.

'He also raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That wasn't a typo! God says he has also raised us up with Christ. So confident is God in what Christ has accomplished for you, so sure and complete is Christ's victory over death that God already sees you raised up from death and seated with Jesus in heaven! A place where you are seated in the presence and glory of the King of kings, the One whose blood purchased you! God already knows your place in glory and sees your position from how it ends with you having everything in Christ. Listen, **'He did this so that, in the coming ages, he might demonstrate the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.** Another incredible truth that we can't understand. Not only a place with the Christ in glory, but for all eternity, and that's longer than we know, he is going to shower his riches of grace and kindnesses to us in Christ! How incredible that for all eternity God will continually share one rich gift after another with us! And remember if God didn't withhold his most priceless treasure, Jesus, from us, will he not also share everything else with us? He will! Think of the joy, the kindnesses, the honor, the love, the endless things we will enjoy, the music of heaven, the celebration, the endless bliss of every moment!

⁸Indeed, it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast.

We truly have everything in Christ! Nothing is missing! Nothing! And it was all won and earned for you by Jesus. He paid your debt and mine, completely! He left nothing undone. He didn't hold back any bit of his love for you! Our life in Christ here and eternity is all a gift, seen and believed through the gift of faith. It is not something we could earn, or anyone else could earn or give us. For all were dead. God gives life as we heard Jesus say, "For God so loved the world, that he GAVE (yes his gift), his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life! The Gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23) There then is no room for boasting, except in the amazing grace and mercy of our God.

When we have everything in Christ there is no reason for gloom and depression is there? But yes, we still find enough time to brood and complain, and long for more. And how silly is that? Why, when we have it all through Jesus would there ever be a time to complain? Everything we need is ours and then everything that we deserve has been taken away. God's eternal wrath and the fury of hell was poured out on Christ and his cross, so that our cross is only good, our cross turns us from ourselves and our boasting. Our cross turns us from our stuff and our desires and turns us back to Christ again, for our sinful nature still is perverse and still will not want to rejoice even when it has everything in Christ! So we rejoice then in the cross that crucifies the old sinful nature in us and turns us to Christ and his cross for there we find what can't be found anywhere else, pardon and peace. Joy in his love and sacrifice for you and me. Hope knowing that each day isn't designed for us here to punish us and make us suffer, but for good. How do we know that?

¹⁰For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance so that we would walk in them. Yes, we are God's workmanship. God has crafted us together, body and soul. He made us alive in Christ to be his hand in his world, a reflection of Jesus in this world. He has designed all our days on this earth to have us do good works of faith throughout all our days. God has used us already for many good works throughout the days we have walked the path of life He has given us. In fact, before we were born, he not only knew us, but chose us for the tasks he would have us do. He had a list of good works He was going to do through our lives! More than we can count or remember, but works our God designed for us to do, and then He will give us credit for what he in advance prepared for us. So that all our days we would walk in the good works he prepared in advance to do! It's just like a parent who takes their children outside and they all have a job in the garden. One child needs to get the hoe and hoe the weeds. Another needs to pick the beans on the beanstalks. Another needs to get the water buckets and start watering. And all the good things they do work together to bring a beautiful harvest.

The same is true for us brothers and sisters! When you know that you truly have everything in Christ, that He has solved all the problems of your soul, then we can live knowing we are as good as those who are already in heaven. We live then knowing there are all kinds of good that God has waiting on the path of life for us to do. As we live doing the good God created us to do, then we have no reason to complain or doubt. We have no reason to live without peace or purpose, without help or joy. To live that way would be silly or even perverse. In Christ, we truly have it all! We have it all now in Christ, God has declared this to be so. So live by the truth! You have everything in Christ! Amen!