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Pentecost 8

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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“Our Full, Eternal Baptismal Inheritance”

Text: Luke 12:13-21; Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14; 2:18-26; Colossians 3:1-11

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

How much is enough?

How much stuff in your house is enough?
Or these days, how much *house* is enough?
How much money in the bank is enough?
How much retirement savings is enough?
How many closets and clothes, TVs and computers, is enough?
How much food is enough?
If some is good, is more always better?

The answer is definitely NO. NO when money and possessions and the things of this world are such easy false gods to have - the things that we live *for* rather than live *from*. Like with the man in the parable Jesus told today. The parable He told in response to another man who was obsessed with money. Apparently, this man and his brother were fighting over the inheritance. That's always an ugly scene. And a sad one. When someone in your family dies and instead of remembering your loved one, you focus on the stuff he left behind. Instead of memories, there's coveting. Instead of mourning, there's fighting. Instead of love, there's greed.

Jesus wasn't too keen on that. **Man**, He says . . . and you can almost imagine Him shaking His head . . . don't get me involved in your fight! **Who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?** And your family. Fight if you want, but don't expect me to help with that. Don't you have anything better to do right now? Like mourn? There's *so much* more important than money and possessions. But that's a lesson many don't learn until it is too late. Which is what the parable Jesus told was about.

This man in the parable didn't learn until it was too late. He was so happy, got such a great harvest, built bigger and more barns, he had it all! And not just for this year, but for many, many years to come. He had to protect it, make sure it didn't slip away, make sure something didn't happen to it. And he was successful at that - nothing happened to his stuff. But something did happen *to him*. He died, and as Solomon lamented in

Ecclesiastes, he had to leave it all to someone else. He spent too much time taking care of his stuff and not enough time taking care of his soul.

Now, it's not that physical blessings are bad. They're not. All that we have - however much or however little - is all gift from God. So it is good. The danger is that these physical blessings not only capture our eyes but capture our hearts. That's what happened to Solomon. And when they do, that's when they all become meaningless, vanity, for they have become false gods who take from you and, in the end, give you nothing.

If only this man who asked Jesus for help knew who he was talking to! He was right in addressing Jesus as *teacher*. He is certainly that. But so much *more* than that! For Jesus did not come to be a teacher, a judge, or an arbitrator of the things we have in this world and life - He came to give up everything for you. To give His life for you. To **TEACH** us about that. He came to **TAKE** your judgment and **GIVE** His full inheritance to each and everyone of us. So He came not to arbitrate between us, to decide that you are a better Christian than them and so give more to you and less to them, or to split his inheritance between us all and then have us fight over it - because you know we would! No, He came to give it all to you and you and you. For Jesus' inheritance is all or nothing. You never just get some. You get it all.

And to do that, to provide that for you, Jesus came to die for you. He would **take** your inheritance, what you have coming because of your sins, and **give** you His inheritance, what He has coming as the perfect and holy Son of God.

For the Father said to the Son: *Go, give them Your inheritance. They have nothing. They gave it all up. They are poor miserable sinners. Give them yours. Save them.* And the Son did not say: *NO! It's mine! Mine, mine, mine! You gave it to ME!* Like, honestly, the two-year old we so often act like. He said YES. And then He came and was born for you, lived for you, and died for you. And just before He died, He gave us His Last Will and Testament - signed, sealed, and delivered not in pen or with wax, but with His own blood. And that Testament, that gift, that inheritance, is here for you: His Body and Blood, that gives you all of Jesus and all His gifts - the forgiveness, life, and salvation you need.

All that Jesus is and has He gives to you, and He takes all that you are and have. **And there was nothing He wanted to do more. And His love would allow Him to do no less.**

That's why the church always wants to grow and share our inheritance with others. Because this inheritance, Jesus' inheritance, our forgiveness, life, and salvation, isn't divided into smaller and smaller parts when more people come - it never runs out, never grows smaller. There's always more.

Which brings us back to the question I started this sermon with: *How much is enough?*

Let's ask that question again, but now, with the things of God. How much is enough?

How much of God's Word is enough?

How much church is enough?

How much prayer is enough?

How much absolution is enough?

How much Bible Study and catechesis is enough?

If some is good, is more always better?

There are two ways to answer those questions, isn't there? There's the right way, and then the way it is in our lives. Based on the evidence, how much church is enough? An hour a week seems the status quo. God's Word? A few minutes a day (if that!). Prayer? A quickie before meals seems to be enough for many. Bible Study? Uh, it's been a while. Catechesis? Isn't that just for kids?

But think: what if we went after spiritual things like we go after earthly things? Would that make a difference in your life? Not that you have to spend all your time in church and neglect your other vocations - that's not right either. Your job, providing others with things they need, and your family, caring for those God gave you, that's important. *Do those things!* But you get the point. How often are we like the man in the parable, addressing our soul on the basis of what we have in this world, rather than on what we have in Jesus? **As if everything going well with us in the world means that everything is going well in the soul.** That's often not the case. In fact, to use the word Jesus used in the parable, that is to be *a fool*.

But if that sounds familiar for you, hits a little too close to home, **repent**. Repent and change, not because you have to to earn something, but to live more in the gifts and riches of God that He has for you! To live in your inheritance more and more each day. All of it. The fullness of it. The forgiveness Jesus won for you and the life He has for you.

You know, kids often think they know better than Mom and Dad, but rarely do. Your Mom and Dad have lived through what you're going through, they've already made all the mistakes you're going to make, already done all the stupid things you're going to do, and can pass on some of that wisdom. In the same way, we often think we know better than God - how to run this world and live and save our lives - but we never do. God knows a thing or two about life in this world - He not only created it, after all, but came and lived among us and went through everything we go through! So maybe it would be wise to listen. And follow. And receive from Him. That if, or maybe when, all you have in this world is taken away, be it by disease, disaster, or death, you will have lost nothing. For your riches, your *true* riches, are safe and secure with your Saviour in heaven.

That's what the closing hymn we sing today is about (LW #594); what your baptism is

about. The baptism little Luke will receive today in just, probably, a couple of hours now. The baptism our friend Elizabeth is clinging to as she lies in pain on her hospital bed. Money, riches, inheritance, stuff - none of that matters to them. Jesus matters. But *how easily* satan lures our eyes off Jesus and onto our stuff. *How easily* satan causes us to forget the one who matters and obsess on what doesn't. Laughing all the way. Which is why Paul tells the Colossian Christians today: ***Set your minds***, set your hearts, focus your eyes, ***on things that are above, not on earthly things***. On things that matter, not the things that don't. On the life that will last forever, not the life that will end. In your baptism you were raised with Christ. In your baptism you died to sin - died to it's control, died to it's influence - **don't rise to new sin! Rise to new life!**

So we'll sing of that today, and I hope those words stay with you past the final word of the hymn, but out the door and all week long.

God's own child I gladly say it: I am baptized into Christ!

Sin - covetousness, false gods - disturb my soul no longer! I have forgiveness for all the times I've played the fool. Jesus doesn't condemn me for that, but still His inheritance is for me.

And *satan*? I don't belong to you and your lies - I am baptized into Christ! I belong to Him. He has an inheritance for me that is greater than anything you can serve up, no matter how great you make it look here and now.

Death - not even you can take away from me what Jesus gives. You can take away everything in this world and leave me in dust and ashes, but you cannot take away from me the one who conquered you and who left you in dust and ashes.

For I am baptized into Christ; I'm a child of paradise.

That little bit of water is all it takes. That little bit of water - with God's Word - gives a whole lot - all of Christ and all His inheritance. All His forgiveness, all His life. The world calls that foolish and goes after the things of the world. But if baby Luke could talk, and as Elizabeth lies in pain, they'd tell you some wisdom - **that none of that matters**. That there is nothing worth comparing to the comfort we have in baptism, in the words and promises of God, in Jesus.

Remember that, next time you want to run toward the things of this world. Remember that, next time you're tempted to trash the **sixth** commandment or your chastity or your marriage. The next time you're tempted to dump the **fifth** commandment by dumping your wrath and anger on someone. The next time you're tempted to toss the **eighth** commandment by tossing someone under the bus. The next time you're tempted to trample the **fourth** commandment by stomping on your parents or other authorities. The

next time you covet and argue about and grab for the things of this world, like the man in the Gospel today. Remember how sad it is when instead of mourning the death of a loved one families fight over the inheritance they want? Well how much more sad when instead of mourning our sins and celebrating the resurrection of Jesus, we go after our sins and . . . *what?* Disregard, ignore, forget the resurrection of Jesus and that resurrected life He gave us in our baptism? *Really? Is that who we are?*

That's not you. So our request today - and everyday - is this: Not just *teacher*, but **Saviour**, forgive me and help me forgive my brother. Saviour, feed me and help me feed my brothers and sisters. Saviour, raise my heart and mind to things above, and help me do the same for others. To remember the riches I have in baptism; riches that will not be taken away.

For I am baptized into Christ! I'm a child of paradise!

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.