

“Inheriting the World?”—Romans 4:13

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Inheriting the World?”, is Romans 4:13 → *The promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord (cf. 1Timothy 1:2). Amen.

While serving in rural ministry I learned a very important lesson about business from the perspective of the farmers and ranchers I encountered. It was the principle that land is better than gold. It makes sense. The gold, along with all the other resources which the land generates are essential for sustaining life and generating revenue. Thus, I learned the importance of retaining mineral rights if you sell a portion of land so that the land you now do not own will still reap financial benefits for you. I’ve been told that real estate property is considered a very good investment because of it’s ability to appreciate in value or continue providing on-going income when developed properly for rental to others. When reading history in connection with the rising and falling of empires and nations one thread that seems to have wound its way

through every conquest was the acquiring of more land.

When reading the salvation history the God in the Scriptures the land was also very important. This makes sense because the LORD *created the heavens and the earth* (cf. Genesis 1:1) and created man and woman *to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over . . . every living thing that moves on the earth* (cf. Genesis 1:28). God put everything and everyone in place just the way He wanted, to live in a righteous relationship with Himself. Everything was right with the world!

What happened? Where did things go wrong? It certainly is not that way today. Daily we see the evidences of violence, corruption, abuse, hating and cheating amongst people, and even an imbalance within nature itself. People searching to find the perfect place to live, the perfect job, the perfect marriage, the perfect friendships, the perfect church, and so forth, only to come up wanting in the end. Having this deep embedded desire for perfection becomes even more frustrating when one cannot be perfect himself. The search to understand why things are so wrong leaves many to come up with their own reasons for such imperfection as well as their own ways to try and restore perfection.

Our text speaks about *the promise* which God gave *to Abraham and his offspring*. The promise had to do with making Abraham's descendants into a great nation (cf. Genesis 12:2). Genesis 15:5 says that

Yahweh brought Abraham outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them . . . So shall your offspring be.” That’s a lot of people! The promise also included land. In Genesis 15:7 God continued His promise to Abraham: *I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans **to give you this land to possess.** This land upon which Abraham was standing was the parcel of the earth which we know today as the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Thus, we still hear about much fighting amongst the “descendants of Abraham” having to do with who really has the proper rights to ownership of *this land*.*

However, *the promise given to Abraham and his offspring* is much more than a parcel of earth somewhere on this planet. The text says that *he would be heir **of the world***. Sounds like the desire of many a leader throughout history to conquer and rule the world. It can’t be done because, as Psalm 24:1 says: *The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.* Thus, the world can only be obtained as the LORD gives it to people on His terms. As it was in the beginning, so it is with the world which He wants to bestow on His people now. It must be a perfect world where all is right with Him again.

To inherit something involves both relationship and death. God still desires to live in a right relationship with you in the perfect world. However, you cannot make that happen because of the depth of the

sinfulness in your life. People strive to obtain this right relationship with God *through the law*. While the reference in our text is to Abraham's physical descendants who thought they could obtain the promised land by keeping God's laws and statutes, the people of the other nations around them were developing their own laws and gods to do the same. A constant system of self-generated righteousness will drive you into hopelessness and despair because you will never know if you've been righteous enough. As 1 Corinthians 15:56 says, *the power of sin is the law* because it continues to reveal how you don't meet it's demands **perfectly**.

Thus, God met those demands perfectly for you by taking on human flesh in the Person & Work of Jesus. Jesus lived in obedience to God's law perfectly to fulfill all that was necessary for you to be declared righteous in God's sight through faith in Him. He offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice so that you can stand righteous in the presence of God now and on the Last Day in "the life of the world to come." As you trust in Him you receive forgiveness of your sins and are justified in His presence. Paul referred to this earlier, in Romans 4:7-8 → *Blessed are those whose **lawless deeds are forgiven**, and whose **sins are covered**; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will **not count his sin***. (cf. Psalm 32:1-2) You sins are a reality which are with you. The issue is not having the LORD count them against you.

Trusting in Jesus Christ **alone** is *the righteousness of faith* to which our text refers. Galatians 3:26-29 describes those who are the recipients of eternal life in this world to come. It says: *In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.***

What you will inherit according to *the righteousness of faith* in Christ is not some parcel of land somewhere on this planet. You will inherit the world (the Greek word in our text literally reads “cosmos”), and it will be a perfect world according to 2 Peter 3:12-13. There it talks about us *waiting for . . . the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! **But according to His promise** we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth **in which righteousness dwells.***

Through *the righteousness of faith* in Jesus Christ you will get a whole new world made right again in the bodily resurrection on the Last Day. A little later, in Romans 4:16, Paul says: *That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—that is, those who share the faith of Abraham.* Abraham's faith was also directed to Jesus, the Offspring in his lineage

through Whom all the families on earth would be blessed (cf. Genesis 12:3; Matthew 1:1-17).

Jesus once said, *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth*. The concept of *the meek* inheriting *the earth* initially looks impossible because it is usually *the meek* who are taken advantage of in a “dog eat dog” world, thus “losing ground” rather than gaining it. However, in some respects it does make sense, even from a human perspective. The meek will not seek to obtain *the land* by their own efforts. However, humbly trusting in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins and His righteousness, they will inherit the *new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells* at the restoration of all things on the Last Day as a gift through faith in Christ. Thus we continue to humbly confess that we “look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.” We look forward to inheriting *the world made right* again by Jesus! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus
into the world to come. Amen.

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