

## Rejoice in the God of Abraham

✦ **Justified by faith (vv.23-25)**

✦ **Heirs of the promise (vv.26-29)**

In the name of Jesus, the promised Seed of Abraham, dear fellow heirs:

It is most unfortunate in our culture. You children feel it in school. Not as important as other kids – prettier, faster, stronger, smarter. But the unhappy kids are often the pretty, fast, strong, smart ones. My wife and I found this while watching two boys during my Seminary years. I had never seen a four-car garage with a drainage system or a crystal chandelier in a spiral staircase leading to a sunken living room. But after the boys complained about their food, they griped about the rich kids down the street.

Everyone agrees: “Money can’t buy happiness.” But who doesn’t think a little more can’t hurt? The Bible displays massive wealth like Solomon or the rich young man who still felt something missing. In the end Solomon called his wealth, “*vanity of vanities.*” (Ecclesiastes 1:2 KJV) Love of wealth makes happiness run away. But in every age here’s how to get rich and ready for Christmas and the Judgment Day Advent of our King: **Rejoice in the God of Abraham**, a wealthy man, most of all because he was...

✦ **Justified by faith (vv.23-25)**

Movies like *The First Kid* give you a feel for the Israelites from Sinai to Christ. Imagine your dad is the most powerful man in America, but you can’t go to the mall with your friends. Hanging out is impossible. You can’t even walk down the hall at school without everyone staring because those guys with machine guns under their suits follow you everywhere. If you’re the President’s daughter, your Dad likes the fact that you can never go on a date alone. There’s always a chaperon. You feel trapped.

For their own good God gave His ancient people of Israel a chaperon. They were already promised to inherit more than any President’s kids ever will. The Promised Land on earth was a walking tour of heaven. It helps us imagine God’s eternal home where all His promises will come true forever. But to get an inheritance in any culture, including ours, someone always has to die. Until that dreadful day we call, “Good Friday,” God prepared His people with a chaperon. Two stone tablets, five scrolls of Law from Moses served as a security fence all around. God’s Law was a temporary chaperon, but a necessary add-on to their life. No one like it, especially not those innocent animals that had to be sacrificed. Everyone had to see how deadly sin really is, how someone else has to die for you.

People feel trapped by God’s Law without seeing it. It’s like invisible fence zapping your neighbor’s dog if he comes too close to the curb. Your conscience screams at you about everything. The more you hear about God, the worse you feel: “What’s the use of trying? I can’t get anything right!”

One woman wrote a letter for our WELS Kingdom Worker Christmas appeal describing her prison before she found out what it means to be **Justified by faith**. Talk about zero joy and total hopelessness:

*Hi, my name is Leila Watson. I am a member of Northside Lutheran Ministries and Family of Hope. Let me tell you a little about my background. My mother and father had five kids. We did not go to church. I do not even recall us talking about God. When I was 39 years old, I was going through a lot where I wanted to end my life. I felt hopeless and worthless. I was at the end of my rope. I felt if I took my life, who would care? I am just taking up space here.*

Sadly, that’s what evolution has been teaching our kids for decades. It makes you feel guilty as if you have to die and get out of the way for higher life forms. Can you hear Leila Watson trapped in despair? It’s like what Paul describes here in his letter to the Galatians: “**Before this faith came, we were kept under guard by the Law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the Law was put in charge**

*like our chaperon until Christ came, so that we might be justified [declared righteous] by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of this chaperon.”* (TPA)

A President’s kid might hope his dad would lose the next election just to have a normal life. But God’s election chose His people out of a world of sinners for a lifetime of care and an eternity of bliss with Him. You can tell you belong to God’s chosen ones if you want to listen to God’s Word. God has mysterious, awesome ways to shine His light through the fog of heartache and despair around and in us. God’s love has nothing to do with your bank account or position in life. Leila Watson tells us more.

*One day I decided this is it. I went to a lady’s house and talked to her about what I was feeling. I just could not deal with anything or anyone. Her pastor came to the house to check on her. I sat there listening to them. I was thinking, “Did God send him here knowing I was here?” This pastor made me think and when he spoke, I felt like I could trust him. We prayed for the lady. That was the first time I ever prayed, especially with a pastor.*

*Afterwards I asked him, “Pastor Bill, what do you think about someone taking their life? What do you think God would do? Will he forgive me?”*

*Pastor Bill looked at me, came and sat next to me and said, “Leila, God loves you. He will not put any burden on you that you cannot handle.” Pastor Bill talked to me for an hour. He asked if he could come to my home and talk more with me.”*

#### ✦ **Heirs of the promise (vv.26-29)**

God wanted Leila and us to know what it means to be **Justified by faith** and **Heirs of the promise**. Think about that. An **Heir** inherits an inheritance for which you cannot pay a dime or work a single day. Your feelings have nothing to do with what you inherit. And this inheritance rests on God’s **promise** which is much better than bankrupt Social Security or mortgages sliding into foreclosure.

In a world where women inherited nothing, God put it like this: ***You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.***

Over 4,000 years ago this man Abraham was promised a son. Abraham was 75 and his wife Sarah 65. So God waited another 25 years until Abraham was 100 and Sarah 90. Then God gave them Isaac. After Abraham proved that he loved God more than he loved his son Isaac, God promised him a Descendant in whom ***“all the nations of earth would be blessed.”*** (Genesis 22:18) People promise, then forget. But God kept reminding everyone of His promise, knowing Abraham’s Descendant is God’s own Son Jesus who would volunteer to live and die and live again for your sins and mine to be forgiven.

Want to be **Heirs of the promise**? Not race, class, gender, but ***“through faith in Christ Jesus”*** God makes heirs of His family by Baptism and the Word. Leila Watson came, but not alone.

*Pastor Bill called the next day and came over to talk to me, shared God’s Word with me, and invited me to come to church. I went...that Sunday and I felt like I really belonged. I started Bible study...and did homework. I started to feel like I am somebody and the Lord was showing me this through Pastor Bill.*

*I am proud to say I was baptized. My daughter, six grandchildren, two sisters, two nieces, and two nephews were also baptized. I received my first communion soon after. God has blessed me! We were all baptized at Family of Hope. I thank Pastor Bill from the bottom of my heart. You saved me through God’s Word. I love you.*

You know who is truly wealthy? That friend of Leila, the shut-in Pastor Bill visited, then instructed and baptized fourteen souls of Leila Watson and family. Don’t ever think your life has no meaning. You are **Justified by faith, Heirs of the promise. Rejoice in the God of Abraham.** Amen.