

**Sermon Preached  
by Doug King  
All Saints' Sunday  
November 7, 2004  
Ephesians 1:11-23**

"Boy, I wish my life were that easy." It is a sentence I have been known to mumble under my breath after reading about some trust fund baby who upon turning eighteen receives the passbook to a nice hundred million dollar bank account that they can play with as they please. I am never really sure what to make of this whole inheritance thing. When your favorite Aunt Sophie leaves you a brooch of hers that you have always admired it is a cherished memory with which you have been gifted. But when what is inherited is beyond all proportion, such as many millions of dollars, I am not really sure if the person who inherits it is really all that lucky or not, regardless of how happy the Hilton sisters look on the cover of People magazine.

Being handed something that is vastly beyond anything you have earned, solely because of your birthright, is an intriguing sort of notion. On the one hand, these trust-funders can live without financial worries for the rest of their lives. If they choose they never need to dirty themselves with that whole get up in the morning going to work routine. I would imagine that it might be sort of difficult to judge one's mettle, one's moxie if there is no challenge to make it on your own in this world. Sometimes I fear it would cause me to pump myself up with false importance and take for granted my good fortune rather than begin to plumb the depths of the gratitude I would need to summon in order to rightfully acknowledge what they have received.

As much as we fantasize about such a windfall opportunity, there is a certain hollow ring to it all. We have an innate need to feel as if we have earned what surrounds us. Which in a roundabout way brings me to our text this morning. In the letter to the Ephesians we heard that all of us have been promised an inheritance, and we are not talking some piece of costume jewelry here. It is described as "the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints."

Guess what? Look around the room, every one of us is one of those trust fund babies in a multitude of ways. Perhaps the tangible elements of the inheritance are the easiest for us to recognize. We have inherited a magnificent worship space and building from the saints before us. But it is not just mortar and stone, we have also inherited a rich tradition of theology and liturgy and music, of church order and governance, of passion for education and compassion for those in need. All of these gifts and many more have been passed on to us from the saints that came before us. We have done nothing to deserve them. All we did was walk in the front door and all of their hard work and faithfulness was laid before us as a strong foundation upon which we seek to be faithful together today.

In the midst of all that each of us does scurrying around here, it is easy to forget all that has been given to us by those saints who came before us with their steadfast spirits and bold visions. But even this tremendous inheritance is only an ancillary gift compared to the full sense of inheritance among the saints that is spoken of in Ephesians.

The true mother-load of trust funds is found in Jesus the Christ whose life, death, and resurrection transform us from being creatures of God to children of God who will receive, as our birthright, eternal life in the midst of God's loving glory. Even a hundred million dollars cannot buy you that. It's a large gift, frankly it is too large a gift. The inheritance of a broach can be acknowledged with a tender whisper or two of gratitude in remembrance of Aunt Sophie.

This one is too big for that, which is probably why we either doubt its reality or belittle its significance. Like some other trust fund babies we cannot begin to plumb the depths of the gratitude we would need to summon in order to acknowledge a gift of this size and scope.

Well fellow trust funders I say that we seek to bravely break through this challenge of being given so much. The writer of Ephesians writes that in order for us to recognize "the riches of his glorious inheritance," we will need to have the "eyes of our

hearts enlightened." This is the only place in the Bible this phrase is used. Every commentator has their own spin on what it means. I would simply argue that we are being told that we need to open up the deepest parts of ourselves, our very emotional core that we often keep wrapped up to protect ourselves. We need to open that part of ourselves up and reach beyond the many ways we seek to justify our own worth, in order to truly receive and comprehend the depth of God's love we are inheriting through Jesus the Christ.

On this All Saints Sunday when we remember those people in our lives who have touched us so deeply, taught us so wisely, gifted us so extravagantly and now have departed this life, let us be grateful for every gift they have provided us. And let us risk enough of ourselves to recognize the gift that God has promised us, a gift for all the saints, even you and me, can you believe it? Let us be vulnerable enough to accept that we have been given more than we could ever hope to repay and let us be grateful.

We have been given more than we ever deserve. But instead of wasting our energy seeking to justify ourselves or minimize what we have been given, let us just be generous to each other and to those to come. We can give without any hope of repaying, but just for the joy of giving. Let us join the saints that have come before us by building an even stronger foundation of passionate faith and compassionate community for those who will follow us. Trust fund babies of the world unite, with all that we have been given there is nothing we cannot do together. Amen.