

An Inheritance for our Children

Psalm 78:1-8

Halifax: 24 October 2010

Introduction:

Today, I have a very happy reason to break from my regular sermon series.

- We have a sweet little girl here whose name is Evangeline Mosher and her parents have brought her to be baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- They have brought her because they love the LORD and they want their little girl to have an inheritance in His kingdom.

I suppose almost every parent would like to have an inheritance for his or her children.

- Most parents love their children, and it would please them very much to have something good and lasting to give to them.
 - We bring them into the world and they are so little and the world seems like such a cruel and hard place for them.
 - We have brought them into the world, but what do we have to offer them?
 - And I say, what do you yourself have?
 - Even for purely selfish reasons,
 - don't you wish that you had a precious inheritance, even if you don't have any children—an inheritance that was good and lasting...
 - Of course you want that!
 - We all do!

Today I want to talk to you about the best inheritance in all the world!

- It is an inheritance from Jesus Christ!
 - It is His very own inheritance as God's Son that He shares it with all who come to Him—it is for them and their children.
 - God promises this inheritance to us if we will turn to Him for salvation in Christ.
- I want to show you about this marvellous inheritance as it is revealed to us in Psalm 78.
 - This is God's Word as is all the Bible.
 - It is given to us by God, carefully prepared so that everything in it is pure and trustworthy and helpful for us if we will only receive it and believe it.
 - There are some things I want you to see from this Psalm—things that it says about the inheritance that God gives to those who come to Christ.

I. First, I want you to see the great contrast that is shown to us between those who have this inheritance and those who don't.

- This contrast is revealed to us in verses 7 and 8—
 - And I want every one of you to think about it.
 - I want you to consider if you have God's inheritance or if you don't...
 - And if you have it, I want you to realise how wonderful it is...
 - And if you don't have it, I want to show you what you are missing because I want you to have this inheritance too.

A. First, I want you to see that the one who has this inheritance has set his or her hope in God!

1. It's right there at the beginning of verse 7.
 - The Psalm has just been talking about how we need to tell our children what God has done for us as His people and here, in verse 7, it is telling us why...
 - v. 7 "that they may set their hope in God."
2. Just what does that mean? to set their hope in God?
 - a. Well you all know what it means to set your hope in something...
 - 1) You know what it is like when someone special is coming to visit—
 - I remember how I used to look forward to my uncle coming.
 - My father had died when I was nine and my uncle would come and he would spend a lot of time with me
 - My hope was set on his visit—I would look forward to it and prepare for it.
 - 2) And then there are those things that are before you as a child that you are pursuing...
 - Some kids set their hope on a career or on being great at music or art or sports...
 - And because their hope is set on it, they pursue it—they live for it!
 - It's not drudgery at all,
 - but they will work like a dog to get it—it's a joyful work!
 - People will even set their hope on something sinful and they will make all kinds of sacrifices to get it!
 - Look at all the people that have STDs because they set their hope on some illicit relationship.
 - You follow after that which you have set your hope upon.

- b. And in Psalm 78, you see that hope is set on God!
 - 1) That means that God becomes the one that you follow after.
 - Your whole life is lived around knowing Him, finding Him, living for Him, loving Him...
 - 2) You set your hope in Him because you expect to find good here!
 - You joyfully follow after Him with firm confidence that this is where your treasure will be found!
- 3. And I want to tell you that hope in God is a firm and certain hope!
 - a. It is sure because He is God and He has made promises to bless those who diligently seek Him.
 - He says that if you will truly seek Him, you will find Him...
 - And He will give you an inheritance in His very own house forever!
 - He says that you will never be disappointed!
 - He knows how to bless, how to make things super great for us, and He will do it.
 - b. What a contrast there is for those who have no hope in God.
 - They don't have an inheritance in this kingdom.
 - As it says in verse 8, they are a generation that has not set their heart aright.
 - They did not set their hope on God, but on empty things—on vanity.
 - They go chasing empty dreams that disappoint in the end...
 - They set their heart on a relationship or on some possession and they get it, but then it starts to get old and they want something else.
 - Some of the most unhappy people in the world—the people that get all messed up on drugs and want to kill themselves...
 - are the people that have the most—looks, fame, riches—
 - and they are miserable because they got what they set their hope on and it has not been what it was cracked up to be.
 - But I tell you that I know a lot of people that have set their hope on God.
 - And I have never heard of anyone who regretted it on their deathbed...
 - who said, “Why did I waste my life setting my hope in God?”

- Oh, there are people that dabble around with religion—but anyone who really set their hope on God and lived for Him...
 - They have no regrets.
- My father in law died just last week—and it is so comforting to know that he had hope in God.
 - If he had not had hope in God, it would have been so dreadful to see Him die!
 - How horrible to die without any hope in the one who alone is able to bless and curse!
 - Even if he had gained all the world, but did not have God when he died, he would have had nothing but terror and misery!
 - I am so glad that he had hope.

B. Secondly, I want you to see that the one who has an inheritance with God has remembrance of God's works.

1. They constantly remember what God has done for them...

- You can see that in verse 7 as well—
 - It says:
 - v. 7 “And not forget the works of God.

a. Look, we live in a fallen world—a world that has sinned against God.

- 1) That's why there is death—and why there is hatred and why things don't go right.
 - God has cursed this world because we are wicked and His justice demanded it—because He is such a good God.
 - He doesn't allow such wickedness as ours to go unpunished.
 - If we could see how wicked we really are, we would understand.

2) But God gives people an inheritance in His kingdom if we will repent and turn to Him in Christ...

- That is why we set our hope in Him—because He promises to be our God and to give us an everlasting inheritance in His kingdom of righteousness.
 - It is a kingdom that will be without any sin at all and the curse of God will be completely taken away.
 - There will be nothing but peace and happiness and fullness of life where we will truly live for one another in love!

b. But God had to do a lot of works in order to give us that inheritance!

- And these are the works that we remember when we have this inheritance!
 - He had to call us and give us life so that we would come to Him...
 - And He had to send Jesus to die on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.
 - I will say more about this later.
- But the point is, those who have this inheritance can't forget what God has done for them!
 - They keep being more and more amazed as they go along...
 - That He could have loved them with such a great love and exerted such a great power for their sake...
 - They are more and more taken up with Him as the years go on!
 - "Wow. He did all that for me!"
 - What a mighty God He is!

2. But how sad it is for you if you don't have this inheritance.

- You have never really come to understand what God has done to redeem His people.
 - You don't have the joy of knowing the true God—of basking in the delight of who He is and glorying in all that He has done!
 - You don't know how beautiful He is, how wise and how gracious.
 - You are not, as it says in verse 8, *faithful to God*.
 - You are simply not attached to Him so as to stick by Him in faithfulness,
 - to love Him and cherish Him forever...
 - You are easily drawn away because there is no true association or union with Him... there is no committed love.
 - You can take Him or leave Him as it were because you don't know Him.
 - Even though I attended church, I did not know God or understand His works until I was 20...
 - I could tell you that Jesus died on the cross—but I did not really grasp it because I did not have an inheritance in Jesus.
- But yes, I will not deny that there is some glory in this world...
 - It is seen most of all in people—there is beauty, there is kindness, there is wisdom, there is power...
 - and we often admire these things when we see them...
 - But these are only pale reflections of God's glory in people.

- We are made in His image, so His glory is seen in others...
- But how sad it is if you spend your life chasing reflections and never get to the source of all the glory!
- If only you knew what you are missing!

C. And thirdly, I want you to see that the one who has an inheritance in God has a transformed life!

1. You can see this at the end of verse 7—he is a commandment keeper...

a. It says that instead of forgetting God's works, he keeps God's commandments.

- That is an interesting contrast...
 - instead of forgetting God's works, we obey...
- We have just seen that when we remember God's works, we delight in Him.
 - In His works for us,
 - we see His amazing love and power and we become strongly attached to Him—we come to love Him and to be committed to Him.
 - And that changes everything about the way we live.
 - When we love Him, we will keep His commandments!
 - Of course we will!
 - Jesus told us this.
 - And John told us that if we do not keep God's commandments, it means that we don't really love Him.
- We will want to please Him and to imitate Him and to honour Him in every way we can...
 - so we will more and more obey Him as we grow.
 - Our obedience will become stronger and stronger as our grasp of what He has done grows stronger and stronger.

b. I should also point out that obedience is itself part of the inheritance we have in the LORD.

- When He takes a person to be His own and to give them an inheritance,
 - He plants new life in them by the Holy Spirit.
 - John the Baptist said that while he baptised people with water, Jesus would baptise with the Holy Spirit.
 - And so He did...
 - He poured out the Spirit of life on the entire church and the Spirit is with us to this day and He gives us life with God.

- The Spirit takes away our defiant rebellious, stubborn heart and gives us a heart that wants to serve God.
 - Everyone who has an inheritance with God has had the beginning work of the Spirit—
 - the work that turns us from our own way to serve God...
 - the work that causes us to see our need for Christ and to come to Him.
 - That is the beginning of our inheritance and it grows into greater, deeper, more complete and consistent obedience from year to year!
 - It is a seed of new life that is planted in us—
 - a seed of eternal life that grows and bears fruit so that we become more and more like God...
 - After all, we were created in His image!
 - Sin that has mangled us, but the Lord restores us.
 - That is His inheritance for us!
2. But you see once again how the contrast is made in verse 8...
- The fathers who did not have this inheritance are said to be stubborn and rebellious.
 - To them, God's commands are just a pain.
 - So what about you?
 - Do you care what God says?
 - Do you yearn to understand His commandments so that you may do them?
 - Do you study and apply His word, and change your life according to what He says?
 - When the new life comes,
 - the one who used curse turns from cursing to blessing...
 - the one who used to be filled with bitterness starts to love—even enemies.
 - the one who used to drink to escape is filled with God's Spirit.
 - the one who used to steal and covet now serves and gives to others.
 - the one who used to do his own thing on Sunday now worships God.
 - the one who used to be promiscuous now lives in chastity, in celibacy or marital fidelity.
 - All the nonsense stops.
 - I have known people who said they loved God, but who kept on living in defiance to His commandments...

- John tells us in his first epistle that such persons are liars!
- It is not that your obedience is perfect in this life...
 - but it is that you do not continue to live in sin and defiance...
 - You may fall in sin, but you do not live in sin.
 - You keep God's commandments instead of being stubborn and rebellious.

TRANS> So you see what a great contrast there is between the one who has God's inheritance and the one who doesn't!

- It is a glorious inheritance that we begin to enjoy even now...
 - Our hope is set in God, we remember all His wonderful works for us, and we obey Him with our whole heart.
 - Don't you want this inheritance for you and for your children?
- The great burden of this Psalm has to do with our children and with our duty to pass God's inheritance along to them.
 - And so having seen the contrast that this Psalm sets up between those who have it and those who don't,
 - I want you to see secondly how this Psalm teaches us that:

II. God has given each generation the responsibility to tell the next generation what He has done!

- It is not that you can impart new life to them—that is what God promises to do...
 - But it is your responsibility to tell them what God has done to give His people life so that they will believe!

A. The pattern is explained in verse 5 & 6.

- Ps 78:5-6: For He established a testimony in Jacob, And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers, That they should make them known to their children; That the generation to come might know them, The children who would be born, That they may arise and declare them to their children,
1. You see that God Himself has given us a testimony and a law which He imparted to our fathers who went before us.
 - God loves us so much that He has given us a careful record of all that He has done to redeem us.
 - He established a testimony about it all—a record of His great work for us and of His commandments so that we would have it from generation to generation.

- In the Old Testament, there were all sorts of feasts that were designed to remind Israel how the Lord had taken them out of Egypt and made them His people.
 - And there were ceremonies that pointed them to Christ and what He would do.
 - And now we have the preaching of the word and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper to remind us what Christ has done.
 - God has given us a lasting testimony of His work to pass on from generation to generation.

- 2. You see that the Psalmist is urging us to give careful attention to this testimony that God has given us from of old...
 - In verse 1, he says, "Give ear O my people!"
 - This is something you don't want to miss!
 - You see, the way God imparts this precious inheritance is through faith.
 - He testifies to what He has done for our salvation, and then we are saved by hearing this testimony that God has given and believing it!
 - That is why God's word is so important!
 - It is the record that God has given to us about His salvation in Jesus Christ!
 - Every Sunday we come together as His people to remember the testimony that God has given...
 - and then we talk about it in our houses all through the week and remember it and live according to it.

 - So you are urged to pay attention to the history that is being recounted about God's redemptive work.
 - It says, "incline your ear!"
 - You need to spend time at it—searching the scriptures, listening to God's word, hungering for His truth!
 - These are words of life!
 - They are words that impart life to those who believe them and embrace them!
 - It requires effort—
 - That is why he says they are dark sayings—they have a depth to them that we need to search out...
 - It is not that they are enigmatic, but there is depth.

- And besides that, sin has blinded us so that we do not understand the things of God
 - The Bible says that the natural man does not understand them.
 - The Lord has to open our hearts to understand them and we have to give diligence to understand them—
 - to seek earnestly for them as treasure.
3. And you see in verse 5-6 that the LORD gave us this testimony and law so that each generation might make it known to the next!
- We are responsible!
 - This generation that we are in right now is responsible to transmit the testimony that God has given to us about His work to the next generation!
 - And the next generation will be responsible to transmit all this to the generation after that,
 - and they to the generation after that...
 - so that each generation might set their hope in God and not forget His works, but keep His commandments.
 - This is supposed to go on and on from one generation to another!
 - So that they may embrace God's inheritance and live in it.
- B. If you do not diligently tell your children what God has done to save His people, how would they ever know it?
- You are actually hiding their inheritance from them if you do not tell them!
1. Can you imagine a parent who would do such a thing?
- A parent who would take his child's inheritance and try to hide it so that his child would have no way of getting it?
 - A parent who hid his wealth away in foreign accounts so that his children would never be able to find it?
 - It would be bad enough to do that with an inheritance of houses and lands...
 - but how much worse to hide from our children what God has done to save them...
 - so that as far as we are concerned,
 - we keep them from ever find out how they can live in God's house forever!
 - Verse 4 is a pledge the you make when you sing this Psalm that you will not hide these things from your children!
 - "We will not hide them from their children, telling the generation to come the praise of the LORD and His strength and His wonderful works that He had done."

- To not tell is to hide!
 - Parent, you are the one who is responsible to tell them—
 - You need to know it yourself and then you need to tell these things to your children.
 - All through the day, you need to tell them about the Lord and what He has done...
 - You need to talk to them about it as you go about your daily tasks,
 - you need to sit down with them and open God's word and explain it to them,
 - you need to bring them to a church where God's word is preached and let them hear sermons and then you need to explain it to them and help them understand what it all means.
 - If you don't do this, then you are hiding from them the only thing that can give them life in God's kingdom!
 - You are depriving them of the most precious inheritance they could have!
 - Of an inheritance without which they will perish in Hell forever!
2. It is so sad to see where most parents' priorities are for their children!
- a. They want their children to have an education...
 - They want them to excel on the ball field or in music...
 - They will make all sorts of sacrifices for their children.
 - And parents are concerned that their children have food and shelter...
 - Most parents would not think of hiding bread from their children to make them starve—especially if there is plenty of bread around!
 - Most parents would sooner starve than see their children starve!
 - And that is good and right.
 - b. But how perverse it is that these same parents are not concerned about giving their children an inheritance in God's kingdom!
 - Of course I am talking about those who are outside the church...
 - who don't even bother to seek after God for themselves and for their children...
 - Of course I am talking about them.
 - But I am talking about you parents who are in the church as well!
 - Some of you are more concerned about little Junior acing the math test than you are about him loving his sister and protecting her...

- Some of you are more concerned that he scored the winning goal at the soccer game than you are that he had learned how to wrestle in prayer—
 - not just to say little diddly prayers—but to really cry out to God for grace and mercy!
 - Some of you would sooner miss family worship than hockey practice or music lessons.
- c. How wrong our priorities are!
- Is it any wonder that our children grow up not knowing the Lord?
 - Is it any wonder that they grow up ignorant of the wonderful things that God has done for their salvation that are revealed to us in His word?
 - Is it any wonder that they do not love God or keep His commandments when they do not even know what He has done?

TRANS> Maybe there are parents here who do not know the Lord either...

- Maybe you yourselves do not know what He has done for His people.
 - Well it's high time you found out!
 - Seek and you will find—no one is stopping you from searching it out!
- And that is what I want to turn to now for your consideration...
 - I want to show you a summary of the great things that God has done for His people to give them an inheritance.

III. If God has established a testimony declaring to us His praises and His wonderful works, what is that testimony!

- What is it that we need to know so that we and our children can set our hope in Him and not forget His works but keep His commandments?

A. It is the testimony that God has given to us concerning His Son!

1. When Psalm 78 was written, Jesus Christ had not yet come into the world.
 - But even then, the testimony they had at that time was all about Jesus Christ.
 - He was presented them in the redemptive acts of God and in the ceremonies and promises that God had given to them.
 - But He was yet to be revealed in all His glory!
2. But now He has come and the Bible tells us of the wonderful work that God has done through Him for our redemption!

- a. The Bible tells us that Jesus is the very Son of God who lived with God for all eternity...
 - yet, for us and for our salvation, He left the glory of heaven to come to this sinful polluted world
 - (we can't even imagine how disgusting it was to Him)
 - He came into this sinful world in the womb of a virgin, taking to himself human flesh.
 - He did this because it was the Father's purpose to represent God's people—He had to become one of us that He might represent us...
 - you know, stand in our place and at for us the way someone does if they co-sign for you when you buy a car...

- b. Jesus did this because we were desperately lost in our sin and estrangement from God...
 - Our sin was such that God cursed the earth because of us and sentenced us to everlasting death—separation from His comfortable presence in torment.
 - It was a very very serious problem for which there was no solution— but Jesus!
 - Jesus came to stand in our place...
 - He came and He lived a life that pleased God—something none of us have done since the fall...
 - Surely you know enough about the hateful thoughts that rise up within you to know that you are not fit to live before God!
 - But whether you do or not, it is so—no one is fit to live before Him except Jesus.
 - So Jesus lived as our representative so that what He did could be credited to us!

TRANS> But there was much more that He had to do.

- c. The sins of all His people had to be dealt with—somebody had to pay the penalty that God's justice demands.
 - Everyone deserves to go to the Lake of Fire for sin forever!
 - That's you and me—and everybody...even the Apostle Peter and Moses...
 - But Jesus also went before God to represent us in taking our punishment!
 - That's right!
 - Jesus Himself was cursed in our place!
 - He actually went to stand in our place and take all that God's amazing, perfect, justice had to bring upon us.

- All of our punishment fell directly on Him so that we could be forgiven!
 - That is what He did on the cross!
- d. And then to show that His sacrifice for our sins was accepted,
- God raised Him from the dead and declared Him to be LORD and Christ!
 - And He went up into heaven to reign until all His enemies are brought under His feet and all those whom the father had given Him come to Him for salvation!
 - He has sent out His church to declare this message to the nations!
 - And those who receive the message and believe what God has done for them through Jesus receive complete forgiveness!
 - If you believe the testimony that God has given concerning His Son, you will be forgiven and made righteous.
 - Jesus will be your representative before the Father so that the Father will receive you as one who has already paid the penalty of sin and lived a life of obedience.

TRANS> And that is still not all that God has done...

- e. We have this problem of rebellion that would keep us from ever turning to God for this salvation if we were left to ourselves...
- Even though God commands everyone everywhere to repent and believe,
 - many who hear this message make silly excuses and refuse to come.
 - The real problem is that they don't want to be restored to God in this way because of pride and malice, and because they are entrapped in a life of sin.
 - And the truth is that not one of us would ever come if we were left to ourselves...
 - But Jesus is the one, as I mentioned before in this message, who baptises with the Holy Spirit!
 - And the Holy Spirit changes our hearts—He washes us so that we will respond to God and His call to come to Jesus.
 - That is what happens whenever a person believes the gospel...
 - The Holy Spirit breaks through all the pride and rebellion and stubbornness and brings them to Christ.
 - They come to Him to be forgiven and changed!
 - He gives them life from the dead!
 - He gives them eternal life—an inheritance in God's glorious kingdom!

TRANS> That is just a summary of the wonderful works that God has done!

- That is what you are to receive so that you can have an inheritance with God!
 - That is what you are to declare to your children so that they can have an inheritance in God's house.

B. What could ever keep you from this inheritance?

1. How awful to live in isolation from all this!

- How can any of you go on without Him?
 - What possible reason do you have to resist?
 - Why would you go on in your unbelief and indifference when there is a crucified Saviour who says
 - "Come to me and I will give you eternal life... I will give you the living water and you will never thirst again!"
 - Will you go on in your own way when there is a Saviour who can give you sweet life with God?
 - life in communion with Him?
 - life instead of death, selfishness, misery and eternal ruin?

2. And how awful to deprive your children of this inheritance by your own slackness and indifference!

- Parents, how you ought to get on your knees and cry out to God that He will help you to constantly declare to your children what Jesus has done!
 - That you would not hide all these wonderful things about the Lord from your dear children!
 - And that your children would have hearts to receive them when they are declared to them.
- God calls you to declare His praises and His wonderful works to your children that they might tell their children.
 - Dare you be the one who refuses to impart the blessing on to the next generation so that your posterity will be cut off?
 - May it never be!
 - Declare it all—that your children may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.
 - What an excellent inheritance for you and for them and for your children's children!
 - Oh to live forever with a God who loves us so much!
 - What a glorious hope!
 - What an inheritance!