



PRACTICING THE RESURRECTION | OUR INHERITANCE

May 4, 2025

During this Easter season, we are considering how we might “practice the resurrection,” to borrow a phrase from the poet Wendell Berry. In other words, our aim is to better understand the resurrection of Jesus and how we might apply its implications to our everyday lives. And if that is our goal, then there’s no better place for us to turn than Romans 8, which forms the heart and the center of Paul’s greatest letter.

So over the next few weeks, we’re gonna take a deep dive into Romans 8, drawing some inspiration from N.T. Wright’s relatively recent book “Into the Heart of Romans.” So I began this series last week, and N.T. Wright will be back on June 1 to bring this series to a conclusion. So I’d encourage you to mark your calendar for that.

Last week we began by discussing how there is not now, nor will there ever be, any condemnation for those who belong to Jesus because of the death of Jesus on the cross for us and because of the life-giving power of the Spirit. But now what I’d like us to do today is to consider our promised future inheritance. As we’ll see at the end of the passage that is before us today, God not only promises to adopt us as his very own beloved children, but to make us heirs — heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ. But heirs of what? What is it that we’re inheriting? And that’s where the confusion sets in.

It seems to me that whenever we start talking about our promised future inheritance, many people, at least within Western culture, start thinking about the future not in terms of the way in which the Bible describes it, but in terms of how the ancient Greek philosopher Plato describes it. So we imagine, like Plato, that as long as we live a virtuous life, when we die, our immortal souls will be set free from the limitations of our physical bodies, and our immortal souls will return to the perfect world of what Plato called “forms,” or what we might call the perfect world of heaven.

Now, if you don’t see a problem with that, if that sounds about right to you, well then it just shows how much we’ve been influenced by Plato rather than the Bible. We assume that the Christian hope is about souls going to some ethereal existence beyond the clouds, and even in some of our great Easter hymns — which we sang here at Central a couple weeks ago — we might sing that God is taking us up to our eternal home. Or that he is going to bring us safely through Jordan to our home above. But where did we get this idea? If you fast forward to the end of the Bible and read Revelation 21, you don’t read about souls floating up to an immaterial heaven at the end of time, but rather what you read is that God is going to bring heaven down to earth to renew the whole cosmos and to usher in a new creation, because God’s goal from the very beginning has been to make his home with us. God’s goal is to dwell in the midst of his people in a renewed cosmos.

So it seems to me that we have a lot that we need to unlearn. Let's see what we can find as we turn to Romans 8:12-17. And as we do, I'd like us to consider three things. Let's see what this passage has to tell us about: 1) *Our future inheritance*, 2) *Our past salvation*, and 3) *Our present responsibility*.

¹²So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Romans 8:12-17

Our Future Inheritance

The first thing that we need to consider is our future inheritance. What is our future inheritance? And to answer that question, you need to realize that, first of all, Paul is contrasting our true inheritance with a false, counterfeit inheritance. And then at the same time, he's also showing how our true inheritance fulfills a former symbolic inheritance. So first, let me show you how he is contrasting our future inheritance with a false, counterfeit inheritance.

People in the first century were well familiar with the idea of a God adopting a son and then giving an inheritance to that son of a kingdom. So a hundred years before the apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Romans, Julius Caesar, right there in Rome, adopted his nephew Octavian as his son and as his heir. After Julius Caesar died, he was deified; his people began to worship him as a god. And so when Octavian Augustus became Caesar, he styled himself the son of a god who had inherited an empire. So it's clear that in this letter to the Romans, Paul is saying, no, no, no, no. *Jesus* is the one and only Son of God — the Son of the living and true God who has inherited not an earthly empire but rather an everlasting Kingdom. But what is most astonishing about all this is that Jesus shares his inheritance with us.

Now, let me just mention one thing as a side note. Some people think that Paul is being sexist here because he only refers to sons. For example, in verse 14 he says, "All who are led by the spirit of God are *sons* of God." But what I want you to see is that Paul is not being sexist. In fact, Paul is being deeply counter-cultural, and he's making a striking inclusive point. The point is that in the first century, only sons were allowed legally to be heirs. So when Paul says that all Christians are sons of God, he's not saying that all Christians are going to become men, but rather he's saying all Christians — men and women, regardless of gender — are heirs, heirs of the inheritance, heirs of the promises of God through our union with Jesus.

So first, Paul is showing us how this true inheritance contrasts with that false counterfeit inheritance of Rome. But then at the same time, he's also showing how our true inheritance fulfills a former symbolic inheritance. We need to realize that

Paul here is recapitulating the story of ancient Israel. So what's the story of ancient Israel? Well if you go back to Genesis 11, you realize that God enters into a covenant. He enters into a special relationship with Abraham. He says by sheer grace that he's gonna make Abraham a great family, and he's going to bless Abraham and his family so that eventually God will bless all the families of the earth through him.

So God makes two specific promises to Abraham. He promises: 1) descendants, and then 2) land — the land of Canaan. So what ends up happening? Well, centuries go by, and the family of Abraham finds themselves now in slavery in Egypt. And God refers to his people, the people of Israel, as “my son” in Exodus 4 when he demands that Pharaoh let his people go so that his people can serve him and serve him only. But Pharaoh refuses, and so God comes to the rescue of his people by sheer grace through the Exodus. He leads them through the Red Sea. He brings them to Mount Sinai. He declares that their vocation now is to join him in his rule over the world as a kingdom of priests. And then he leads his people through the wilderness in the form of a pillar of smoke and fire. So he leads his people through the wilderness right up to the very edge of the promised land, which is their inheritance.

So do you get it? God promised the descendants of Abraham that they would receive the holy land as their inheritance, but the point is that the story of Israel is meant to point forward to the true story of the gospel. The relationship between the Old Testament and the New is the difference between shadow and reality, promise and fulfillment. So the story of Israel was always pointing beyond itself to something greater, to an even greater fulfillment of the promise. So what is our true future inheritance then, in light of all this? Well, beginning in Romans 4, Paul explains that the true descendants of Abraham are not necessarily those who share Abraham's blood but rather those who share Abraham's faith. Abraham is the father of faith because when God made his promises to Abraham, Abraham believed, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6).

But here's a striking little verse. If you look at Romans 4:13, Paul goes on to say that the original promise to Abraham was not merely that he would be the heir of the holy land but that he would be the heir of the world. You see, the promise was always wider in its scope. God wasn't merely promising this little strip of land in the Middle East. No, he was promising the earth to his followers. “The meek shall inherit the earth.” Now, you might rightly ask, well, how can that possibly be? And the answer is, through the Messiah. Only in and through Jesus. Think back to Psalm 2, which we read as our Call to Worship today. Though the nation's rage against the Lord and his anointed, God promises that he will give his Son, the Messiah, the nations as his inheritance and the whole earth as his possession, but not through military conquest as we might expect; rather through the suffering, the death, and the resurrection of the Messiah. The meek shall inherit the earth, not by force but by faith.

So the promise, therefore, is that Jesus has done for us what Israel could never do for itself. Jesus is the true Son. He's the true Israelite. He's the true human being. He's the true covenant partner. Jesus is the only one who kept the covenant perfectly and fully, and the covenant promises life. So even though Jesus suffers and dies, God vindicates his Son by raising him up to new physical life and makes him the heir of all things. And therefore the inheritance that Jesus receives is not some spiritual,

ethereal existence beyond the clouds, but the new creation: a new heavens, a new earth, a whole renewed cosmos.

Jesus' resurrection, therefore, is just the beginning. It's the first day of the new creation. And God has promised to do for us at the end of history what he did for Jesus in the middle of history: to raise us up with new physical bodies to join him in a new physical world, and there God promises that he will make his home with us and he will restore our original vocation: to be his image-bearing representatives who exercise wise, responsible rule over the new creation which he loves so much.

So what are some of the implications of this? Before we turn from our future inheritance to our past salvation, let me make just one little practical point. There are some Christians — not all, but there are some Christians — who think that the promises made to Abraham actually haven't yet been fulfilled. They haven't been completely fulfilled in Jesus, and they think that they won't be fully fulfilled unless God reclaims Jerusalem and the people rebuild the temple and they resume the practice of sacrifice. But I would suggest that this is a category mistake, and this is important because this is one of those places where people sometimes get their politics and their theology all mixed up.

Now, there may be good reasons to support the nation of Israel — the modern state of Israel — but we need to see that even if there are political reasons, or perhaps sentimental reasons, or historical reasons why we might be in support of Israel, there aren't very good theological reasons, because the theological promises have ultimately been fulfilled in the person of Jesus. So we need to keep that clear. The small-scale promises made to Abraham of a family and of land have now become worldwide promises in Jesus. The promise of a family has been fulfilled in the Church. The promise of land has been fulfilled in the new creation. The promise of a temple has been fulfilled in Jesus, who is the true temple, the place where heaven and earth overlap, where God dwells in the midst of his people, where we can enter into his presence. And the practice of sacrifice has been fulfilled once and for all through our great High Priest who offered himself as the ultimate sacrifice for sin on the cross.

So we need to make sure that we keep the political and the theological clear in our mind. God has a special place in his heart for the chosen people of Israel, and so should we. We have an interest in preserving the birthplace of Christianity for historical reasons. But we need to make these things clear in our minds.

If we insist on reclaiming Jerusalem, rebuilding the temple, or resuming the practice of sacrifice, well then we're hitting rewind rather than fast forward. We're actually reverting to an earlier stage in salvation history. That's not progression; that's regression. It suggests that we might be missing something of the point.

Our Past Salvation

Now let's move on from our future inheritance to our past salvation. As we consider this future inheritance, we might ask ourselves, how exactly does this work, and what is the basis for all this? The basis for all of this is our past salvation — the finished work of Jesus through his life, his death, and his resurrection. The message of the

gospel is that Jesus lived the life that we should have lived, and he died the death that we should have died. And when we therefore put our trust in Jesus, when we're united to him by faith, then everything that is true of Jesus becomes true of us.

Perhaps the best analogy to spell this out for us is the analogy of marriage. This is an analogy that Martin Luther liked to use 500 years ago. He said that when a husband and a wife are united in marriage, they hold everything in common, so what belongs to the one now belongs to the other. So let's say that you have no job, no money, massive amounts of student loans and credit card debt. Now I realize this might be hitting a little close to home, but bear with me. This is just an analogy. So let's just say you have no job, no money, massive amounts of student loans and credit card debt, but then you meet someone who is fabulously wealthy — so much so that all your debt is just a drop in the bucket.

Well let's say you fall in love, and you marry this person. What happens? Well, now their riches swallow up your debt. Your debt is canceled, and all their riches are now yours. Now I realize that many, many of you are hoping this is going to happen to you, but this is just an illustration. The point is that when we come together in marriage, everything that belongs to the one belongs to the other (unless there's some kind of prenuptial agreement, which there shouldn't be). Whatever belongs to the one belongs to the other.

And so it is when we're united to Jesus by faith. Everything that is his becomes ours. Everything that is ours becomes his. And this changes everything. Because of the finished work of Jesus on the cross, we now have: 1) *security*, 2) *intimacy*, and 3) *solidarity*. Now, here's what I mean.

Security

First of all, when we're united to Jesus by faith, we receive utter security. See, we're adopted into God's family, and as we've seen, adoption was a well-known practice in the ancient world. So if a Roman father — the *pater familias* — decides to adopt someone as his son, that adopted son's debts are wiped out the moment that the adoption goes through. And now that adopted son receives a new name, a new status, a new position in the family that is on par with everyone else in the family, and nothing can ever change that or take it away.

Now, imagine what that means then for us. When God adopts us — both men and women — as his beloved children, well then now we have all the rights and privileges of Jesus himself. Have you ever thought about that? The Father loves you with the same love and to the same degree as he loves Jesus. He places his name on you. You receive a new status, a new position in his royal family that nothing in this world can touch or ever take away. Now, of course, it's possible we could please our Heavenly Father or displease our Heavenly Father through our words, our thoughts, our actions, our behavior, our motivations. But we never lose our status in the family. Our position as God's beloved daughter or God's beloved son is fixed. It can't fluctuate or change. So we have utter security.

This is why the theologian J.I. Packer said that adoption is the highest privilege of the Christian. And if you want to understand whether or not a Christian really gets the gospel, ask them what they make of being adopted as God's child. Because adoption is so much better than even justification. Justification says you're forgiven; it's a legal matter. But adoption means you're welcomed; it's a matter of love. You're welcomed into the father's heart, and your position is secure. You have all the rights and privileges of Jesus himself. And that's why in verse 12, Paul says that when we're united to Jesus, all of our debts have been canceled, including the debt of sin. And therefore, now, the only debt we owe is a debt of love — a debt of love to God, who has done for us by sheer grace what we didn't deserve and what we could never have done for ourselves. No one adopts anyone because they have to. They only do it because they want to.

Intimacy

So we have utter security, but we also have intimacy. Through our union with Jesus, we receive profound intimacy because the Spirit of Jesus himself comes and dwells within us. And the work of the Spirit is to assure us of the Father's love for us. God pours out his Spirit into our hearts in order to assure us of our position and of his love for us. But that's not all. The Spirit also, Paul tells us, enables us to cry out to the creator of the universe as our *Abba* Father. Now, *Abba* is an Aramaic word which was a more familial way of referring to one's father. So "father" is sort of a formal term, but in every culture, in every language, we have nicknames for our fathers that are more intimate and familial: "Abba," "Papa," "Dada." And this is the intimacy that Jesus had with the Creator of the universe. No one would have dared refer to the Creator of the universe as my *Abba*, my *Papa*. But Jesus did. But not only that, it's the Spirit of Jesus who now dwells within us, who tells us that we can have that kind of access to the Father's heart. We can enjoy that kind of intimacy with the Creator God who knows us, who made us, and who loves us.

So this isn't just an intellectual matter of the head; this is an experiential matter of the heart. And my question for you is, have you experienced that? Do you know your Heavenly Father in this way as your *Abba* Father?

Solidarity

So we not only have security. We have intimacy. But then finally, we also have solidarity — solidarity with Jesus. We not only share Jesus' intimate relationship with the Father, but did you catch this at the end of the passage? We also share in Jesus' sufferings.

You may recall that the one specific instance in the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Mark when Jesus specifically prays to his *Abba* Father is where? It's in the Garden of Gethsemane. It's when he is facing his severest, sharpest, most acute form of suffering. And so as for Jesus, so for us. If we're united to him by faith, God doesn't lead us around suffering. No, he leads us straight through it. And if we're truly united to him, well then everything that is his becomes ours. And that means sharing even in his sufferings. And so as for him, so for us, in our vocation, suffering is going to come before glory, and the cross always comes before the crown. And that's why Paul

concludes this section by saying if we're children, "then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him."

Our Present Responsibility

So if that's our future inheritance based on our past salvation — based on the finished work of Jesus on our behalf, through his life, his death, and his resurrection — what is our present responsibility? What are we supposed to do now? Well, let's go back to the story of Israel.

God led his people through the wilderness to the promised land in the form of that pillar of smoke and fire, which was a physical sign of God's presence and a physical sign of God's glory. Now, imagine that you were among that crowd. Imagine that you were being led through that wilderness up to the very edge of the promised land, and now, that land flowing with milk and honey is within eyesight. You see it with your own eyes. But then, as you're viewing it, you think to yourself, I don't know. This new land, this new world, it's scary, it's unfamiliar, it seems a little overwhelming. Let's turn back. Let's go back.

Believe it or not, that's what the people of Israel did. In Numbers 13, we realize that they send spies out into the land that God had promised, and the spies come back after their reconnaissance trip with a bad report, and they say, we can't go into this land. It's filled with giants. We felt like grasshoppers in comparison. They're filled with fear, and they say, let's go back. Let's go back to Egypt. And they had the audacity to say, we had it better when we were slaves. We were better off as slaves.

But God reminds them, he never said that it was going to be easy, but he has set them free. He's rescued them, and therefore they can't go back to slavery. And in a similar way, Paul is reminding us that as Christians we're in a similar position. God has set us free from the ultimate bondage to sin, evil, and death. And just as God's glory filled the tabernacle, and just as God's pillar of smoke and fire led his people through the wilderness, so we are filled with his very own Spirit, and his Spirit is leading us to our inheritance. Do you realize that that's why Paul uses this language of being led by the Spirit? In the same way that God's people were led by the pillar of smoke and fire, so we are led by the spirit now toward our inheritance. And it might be hard. And the road might be marked by suffering. But we can't give up and turn back. We can't resort to our former way of life. We can't return to our former slavery.

And that's why Paul says in verse 15, "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption...." So remember your inheritance. Remember who you are. Remember how God has rescued you. Remember how his Spirit has come to dwell within you and to lead you. And he has promised you life with him, now and always. So you can't give into fear and death. You have to keep going. You have to pursue life and hope. But how do we do that? What are we supposed to do in the present moment? What is our present responsibility? And Paul's answer here is mortification.

That's not what you were expecting me to say, I know. What is our present responsibility? Mortification. Now that's a big theological word. What does it mean? Well, it simply means to put to death. Think of the French word *morts*, which means dead. So mortification means to put to death. So in verse 13, Paul says, "For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Now, let's be clear here. Unlike the ancient Greeks who were dualists, who prized the soul over the body, Christians believe that the body is good. The body is a good gift from God, but not everything we do in the body is good. But the body is good, and God has promised to raise our physical bodies to new life. But in order for that to happen, we need to put to death the misdeeds of the body. We have to put to death our old self — the sinful flesh that is dominated by those things that are antithetical to the life-giving Spirit.

So mortification simply is the active process of putting sin to death. What does that look like in practice? Well, let me give you a little illustration. One of my favorite stories by Malcolm Gladwell is about a father living in California who volunteers to coach his 12-year-old daughter's basketball team. But when the season starts, he sizes up his players, and he realizes that their prospects for success are not looking good because these 12-year-old girls do not know how to dribble, pass, or shoot. Now, this father was originally from India, and he was more familiar with sports like soccer. And one of the things that he couldn't understand about basketball is that many people would allow their opponents to get all the way to half court before even bothering to defend them. And he figured, since my players can't dribble, pass, or shoot, the only chance of success is if I teach these 12-year-old girls to put on a full-court press for every second of every game. And that's what they did. And they won, and they won, and they won, and they went all the way to the championships.

You see, Paul's telling us something similar here, too: that we can't just sit back and let sin have its way in our lives once we've been set free from its power. No, we have to be aggressive against our sin. We have to go on offense. We have to take the offensive against our sin and the deeds of the body. And so how do we do that in practice?

One of the best books written on this subject was written in 1656 by a man named John Owen, and it's entitled "The Mortification of Sin." John Owen realized wisely that many Christians think, well, you begin the Christian life by relying on Jesus rather than yourself, but then you grow in the Christian life by relying on yourself and your own hard work and effort. He said no, no, no, no. That's not how the gospel works. The way in which you grow as a Christian is the same way as the way in which you begin as a Christian. You grow by relying on Jesus rather than yourselves. The problem is that many Christians think that when we sin, when we mess up, when we fail, it represents a failure of willpower which we have to correct through greater exertion of self-control. So when we do something wrong, we tell ourselves, well, this is wrong. There's gonna be consequences. We're gonna be found out. We have to clean up our act. We have to do more, we have to try harder. But Owen says no. The key to true lasting change in our lives is not through a greater exertion of will but rather through a greater sense of God's love for us in our hearts that leads us to ask, well, why would I even want to do this thing? Why would I want to live this way in light of who Jesus is and what he's done for me?

So the way in which we grow and change and mortify sin is not by wailing on our will but rather by relying on the Spirit, because it's the Spirit's work to assure us of the Father's love for us, and that's what drains sin of its power over us. So Owen suggested that we need to bring our sin to the gospel. I love the way that he put it. You have to bring your sin to the gospel. You have to learn to talk to yourself, to ask yourself questions. And for example, he writes this:

Bring your sin to the gospel. Say to your soul, what have I done? What love, what mercy, what blood, what grace have I despised and trampled on? Is this the return I make to the father for his love? Is this the return I make to the son for his blood? Is this the return I make to the Holy Spirit for his grace? Do I thus requite the Lord? Have I defiled the heart that Christ died to wash, that the blessed spirit has chosen to dwell in? What can I say to the dear Lord Jesus? Do I account communion with him of so little value?

See, we have to learn to talk to ourselves and bring our sin to the gospel so that we might drain it of its power and live differently. But the whole point here is that you can't kill sin yourself; only the Holy Spirit can do that. The Spirit dwelling within you.

So let me illustrate this with one final story written by C.S. Lewis. It was actually an allegory called "The Great Divorce." And in this allegory, he imagines a group of people who leave their home in hell and travel by bus to the outskirts of heaven — the heavenly country. And when they arrived there, they realized that though they thought they were real, solid people, they discover that compared to the solidity, the physicality, the substance of God's world, they're just ethereal spirits. They're only ghosts. But they do encounter some people that they had known in their former life who try to encourage them to stay in the heavenly country. Most of them don't want to, but the narrator, who makes this journey from hell to heaven, observes a particular ghost who has a red lizard sitting on his shoulder, and this red lizard is whipping its tail around and whispering in this man's ear and won't leave him alone. And what we realize is that this red lizard represents our old self indwelling sin — the sinful flesh that's dominated by the former patterns of thought and behavior in our lives.

And this man realizes that he can't get the lizard to be quiet. And this lizard doesn't belong in God's country, so he decides that he's going to leave. He's going to go back to his home. But just then, a flaming spirit, an angel appears and engages with him in conversation. So if you want to follow the allegory, what you need to understand is that the ghost represents you and me, the lizard represents our old self indwelling sin, and the angel represents the Holy Spirit. So he says he's going to leave, and the angel asks, "Well, are you off so soon?"

"Yes. I'm off," said the Ghost. "Thanks for all your hospitality. But it's no good, you see. I told this little chap," (here he indicated the lizard), "that he'd have to be quiet if he came - which he insisted on doing. Of course his stuff won't do here: I realise that. But he won't stop. I shall just have to go home."

"Would you like me to make him quiet?" said the flaming Spirit.

"Of course I would," said the Ghost.

"Then I will kill him," said the Angel, taking a step forward.

But at this point, the ghost starts to make excuses for why he can't simply kill the lizard.

"Well, that's a further question. I'm quite open to consider it, but it's a new point, isn't it? I mean, for the moment I was only thinking about silencing it."

"May I kill it?"

"Well, there's time to discuss that later."

"There is no time. May I kill it?"

"Please, I never meant to be such a nuisance. Please-really-don't bother. Look! It's gone to sleep of its own accord. I'm sure it'll be all right now. Thanks ever so much."

"May I kill it?"

"Honestly, I don't think there's the slightest necessity for that. I'm sure I shall be able to keep it in order now. I think the gradual process would be far better than killing it."

"The gradual process is of no use at all."

And then the angel steps closer, and the ghost becomes somewhat afraid because he can feel the heat of his presence.

"How can I tell you to kill it? You'd kill me if you did."

"It is not so."

"Why, you're hurting me now."

"I never said it wouldn't hurt you. I said it wouldn't kill you."

And finally, the ghost concedes and tells the angel to go on and to get it over with. And so the angel snatches the lizard, twists it, and then throws it aside. He killed it. It's dead. And as soon as the lizard is dead, what happens? This ghost now is transformed into a real man, a real human being. He becomes truly human now. But there's an even greater surprise, which is that this lizard, now that it has been killed, turns into this beautiful stallion. And now this man made new mounts this horse, and then together they ride up into the mountains — further up and further in, into God's country.

Now, I think what Lewis understood so well here — what he's absolutely right about — is that when God tells us to put to death the deeds of the body, it's not because God is a killjoy. It's not because God is trying to keep us under his thumb. But rather the reason why he tells us to kill the old self is because he wants us to become truly human in ways that stretch our very imagination. We have no idea what he has in store for us. And that's why elsewhere he writes, give up yourself and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death — death of your ambitions and favorite

wishes every day, and death of your whole body in the end. Submit with every fiber of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find him — and with him, everything else thrown in.

So we're called to be aggressive against our sin in the present based on the finished work of Jesus through his life, his death, and his resurrection in the past, so that we might claim our eternal inheritance in the future. And as we consider that new creation, yes, it might seem daunting and unfamiliar and overwhelming and scary, but we can't turn back now, because God has set us free. He hasn't given us a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. No, he has given us a spirit of adoption, which means that not only are we heirs, but we are, believe it or not, co-heirs with Christ. He has shared his inheritance with us. And the wonder of wonders, therefore, is that we need to continue on and claim that inheritance as our own by faith.

Let me pray for us.

Father, as we come to this table, we acknowledge that this future promised inheritance is often confusing to us. We get mixed up and muddled in our understanding of what you have in store for us, and therefore we pray that you would clarify our thinking, that you would help us to know deep within our heart of hearts that you are not leading ethereal, immaterial spirits to enjoy some world beyond the clouds, but that you are raising us up with new physical bodies to enjoy life with you in a new heavens and a new earth so that you might restore to us our original vocation: to be your image-bearing representatives who join you in your wise and responsible rule over a new creation. Help us to lay claim to that promise and live in light of it now. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.