

All Saints, Year C

6 November 2022

Ephesians 1:11-23

Rosie Grant is a digital librarian and TikToker (meaning that she regularly posts on the social media platform TikTok, making short videos for the online community to view). She has an unusual hobby. Rosie looks for graves that have recipes etched on the headstones and celebrates the memory of these strangers by cooking or baking their recipes. Over the past year she has recorded herself making cookies, pies and meatloaf, among other things, and these videos have attracted millions of views.

This hobby began for Rosie as a project while studying library science at the University of Maryland. She has since continued, noting, “Food has this incredible connection to these memories, these good times.” Janice Andrews’ mother Kay is one of those who has been remembered in this very unique way. Janice noticed Rosie’s online presence when her mother’s fudge recipe went viral. Janice told a news outlet covering Rosie’s story that her mother often made her fudge for the whole community prior to her death three year ago at the age of 97. The recipe being included on her headstone is a permanent reminder of her generosity and sense of humor.¹

This story got me thinking about what it is that we pass on to one another. Here recipes are more than recipes: they are a handing down of memories and values. Kay Andrews made great fudge, but more significantly, she showed what it was to be generous; to give to her community. Her values were inherited by her family, her community, and now an online community as well.

Often when we hear the word ‘inheritance’ we think of tangible things: money, securities, property, etcetera. The challenge with thinking of ‘inheritance’ a primarily referring to these things is our knowing that many of so-called assets are what moth and rust destroy. So this morning, when we read Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, mentioning *their* inheritance several times, he is speaking about an eternal legacy that has been passed down to them.

Who were the Ephesians? Paul is writing to churches in the province of Asia, including the thriving urban centre of Ephesus, the ruins of which are in modern-day Turkey. Writing from his place of imprisonment in Rome, Paul has not met all the Christian whom he writes to, but news of their faith has reached him. When he writes, “**In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance...so that we who were the first to set our hope in Christ, might live for the praise of his glory,**” (Eph 1:11a, 12 NRSV) he is speaking of himself, the other Apostles, and early receivers of the faith. He continues, writing:

In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God’s own people, to the praise of his glory. (Eph 1:13-14 NRSV)

¹ All references to this story are taken from:

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/lifestyle/how-a-tiktok-archivist-is-celebrating-the-memories-of-strangers-one-recipe-at-a-time-1.6131146#:~:text=CTV%20National%20News%3A%20Baking%20that%20honours%20the%20dead&text=Digital%20librarian%20Rosie%20Grant%20is,National%20News%20Washington%20Bureau%20Correspondent>

What Paul is communicating to the church is that Christ unites us in himself by our faith in his gospel, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. That's a lot in one sentence, so I'll repeat: Christ unites us in himself by our faith in his gospel, which we receive through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Let's unpack what it means to be united by faith received through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Consider this: how did you inherit the faith? The very first class that I took in seminary was called *Teaching the Faith*. I had a great professor, who most of you know: The Rev. Canon Dr. Timothy Connor. Father Tim began our class with an assignment that I will never forget: each student was asked to write a brief reflection on how they came to faith. As we took turns presenting to one another, a common theme emerged: regardless of how long someone had been a Christian, whether or not they had been raised in a Christian home, whether they were baptized as an infant or adult, how long they had gone to church for, or what their denomination was, in every case the Holy Spirit had worked through an individual or group of individuals to pass on the faith to each of us. Returning to the question, "how did you inherit the faith?", if we had the chance this morning to share our answers with one another, I am confident that it would be a stunning testimony to how the Holy Spirit has given us the good news of Christ through someone else: a saint.

Like so much else about the gospel that we share, the way that God invites his saints to participate in arguably the most critical aspect of the faith, that is its defence and transmission, is frankly stunning. Jesus left the faith in the hands of twelve guys who were of little consequence. Think of what the Holy Spirit has done through them. We are their legacy. We are the legacy of the church that Paul wrote to in Ephesus. After all, as the church Father Tertullian wrote in the second century, Christians are not born; they are made.

Today on All Saints, we remember and give thanks for those who have given us such a rich inheritance. Their resounding, "yes" to God's invitation to participate in the ministry of the Holy Spirit is the reason that each of us is sitting here this morning. Last week, one of our youngest members pointed to one of the windows that we are surround by, most of which hold the names of those who have gone before us. They are a constant reminder that we believe in the communion of saints. This is a gift.

Their legacy to us, by living out their vocations as baptized members of Christ's body is indeed a gift, but not one that we should hoard. This faith that we have inherited is to be given. God invites you to participate in this ministry of the Holy Spirit. If the communion of the saints tells us anything, it is that God can and has and does use the most unlikely of faithful people to do amazing things. I pray that each of us will be open to the ways that the Spirit is moving us to give the faith, as the saints have done.

In the church of Saint Anne in Jerusalem, there is a stone monument that memorializes the legacy of one who has gone before us. It is not a recipe, but an image of Saint Anne and her daughter Mary. Anne embraces Mary in one arm, and with her other hand she presents the Scriptures to her daughter. It is a simple image of faithfulness, Anne sharing that which she has received, that which she has been entrusted with, and we know that the affect is profound. These Scriptures shape the woman who becomes the mother of our Lord. May we look to her, and to all the saints, with thanksgiving for their lives of faithfulness, and as examples of how we may do likewise. Amen.