**Advent Vespers II,**

 **The Second Week Sunday in Advent,**

6 December 2020.

 *Concordia Lutheran Mission,*

Terrebonne, Oregon.

**“Christ’s Inheritance for Men is**

**Absolution of Sin and Life Everlasting.”**

 **He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved.**

**Psalm 47:4.**

**Introduction**.

This passage makes plain again that **Psalm 47** is a Messianic Psalm because it speaks of the Lord’s Inheritance. Inheritance means the **Psalm** is speaking of the Messiah and His Testament.[[1]](#footnote-1)1 Inheritance comes through the death of the testator. *The Messiah died on the Cross in order to bequeath to men the forgiveness of sin in His Last Will and Testament, and through It life everlasting*. That is the inheritance for all mankind.

 Testaments only exist because of sin. Men write last will and testament because they die. Men die because the wages of sin is death. The Death of the Messiah however comes about because of God’s Mercy toward sinful men. *God’s Testament overcomes sin and its consequence, death, and bequeaths to men the Inheritance of the Absolution of all sin and life everlasting*.

 Finally, we know also this **Psalm** is about the Messiah because the Inheritance is the excellency of Jacob. *Christ is the Excellency of Jacob*. He is Jacob’s Greatest and Most Excellent Child because He is the Savior of all men, including Jacob, by His Passion.

 The Lord’s Inheritance for all men is Absolution of sin and through it life everlasting by the Excellency of Jacob, Jesus of Nazareth, the Savior.

**I. Death is Overcome by the Excellency of Jacob, Jesus of Nazareth, the Savior.**

**A. Sin gives rise to last wills and testaments.**

 In this **Psalm** the Lord speaks of His Inheritance for men. Inheritance brings to mind death because inheritance only arises because men die. Inheritance is effected upon the death of the testator. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. Whereupon neither the first *testament*[[2]](#footnote-2)2 was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This *is* the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined you.[[3]](#footnote-3)3

 Of course, there would be no need for a testament were there no death. Men would live and labor and accrue the fruits of their labors forever in unimaginable amounts and proportions forever never once suffering a reversal. But death intervened and brought all that to an end. Death is the wages of sin, of the transgression of the law. The Apostle St. John writes:

Whoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.[[4]](#footnote-4)4

 All men are born sinners so all men die. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned ... .[[5]](#footnote-5)5

 Last wills and testaments arise because of sin and death. Men must compose last wills and testaments because death forces them to relinquish the fruits of the sweat of their brow.

**B. Death is overcome by the Excellency of Jacob, Jesus of Nazareth, through His Passion.**

Reason can understand inheritance and testaments among men because men are mortal. Reason, however, stumbles when, in **Psalm 47**, the Lord speaks of the Lord’s “Inheritance”. **Psalm 47** reads:

He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved.[[6]](#footnote-6)6

What does this mean? It means there must be the Death of the Testator. But how can this be? God is the Testator. How can God die? God cannot die in and of Himself. So what does this mean? *God’s Inheritance means God has become man* *and, therefore, can and did die*. The Lutheran Church confesses that God in and of Himself cannot die, but now that God has become man in Jesus of Nazareth He can and did die for the sins of all men:

*We Christians must know that if God is not also in the balance, and gives the weight, we sink to the bottom with our scale. By this I mean: If it were not to be said [if these things were not true], God has died for us, but only a man, we would be lost. But if “God’s death” and “God died” lie in the scale of the balance, then He sinks down, and we rise up as a light, empty scale. But indeed He can also rise again or leap out of the scale; yet He could not sit in the scale unless He became a man like us, so that it could be said: “God died,” “God’s passion,” “God’s blood,” “God’s death.” For in His nature God cannot die; but now that God and man are united in one person, it is correctly called God’s death, when the man dies who is one thing or one person with God.*[[7]](#footnote-7)7

Luther writes:

You see, therefore, that what we call the mass[[8]](#footnote-8)8 is a promise of the forgiveness of sins made to us by God, and such a promise as has been confirmed by the death of the Son of God. For the only differences between a promise and a testament is that the testament involves the death of the one who makes it. A testator is a promiser who is about to die, while a promiser (if I may put it thus) is a testator who is not about to die. This testament of Christ is foreshadowed in all the promises of God from the beginning of the world; indeed, whatever value those ancient promises possessed was altogether derived from this new promise that was to come in Christ. Hence the words “compact,” “covenant,” and “testament of the Lord” occur so frequently in the Scriptures.[[9]](#footnote-9)9 These words signified that God would one day die. “For where there is a testament, the death of the testator must of necessity occur” (Heb. 9[:16]). Now God made a testament, therefore, it was necessary that he should die. But God could not die unless he became man.1[[10]](#footnote-10)0 Thus the incarnation and the death of Christ are both comprehended most concisely in this one word, “testament.”1[[11]](#footnote-11)1

 By death Christ overcame death. *While death is indeed powerful, holding all men into its grip, death is not powerful enough to vanquish the Almighty God*. Consequently, by death Christ overcame death for all men because Christ bore the consequence of sin, namely, condemnation and eternal death. The prophet Isaiah writes of Christ’s Saving Work to swallow up death for all men by His Passion:

And in this mountain [Mt. Zion where Christ was Crucified] shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken *it*.1[[12]](#footnote-12)2

Jesus of Nazareth is the Savior of the world. He is also the Son of the Patriarch Jacob (Isaac’s son, and Abraham’s grandson). Moses writes that Jesus would descend from Jacob:

... in thee [Jacob] and in thy seed [the Messiah] shall all the families of the earth be blessed.1[[13]](#footnote-13)3

Most certainly Jesus of Nazareth is the Excellency of Jacob because the Excellency of Jacob is the Savior of all men because He blesses all men with Absolution of sin and life everlasting by His Passion.

 The Lord Himself chooses men’s inheritance. Their inheritance is the Excellency of Jacob, Jesus of Nazareth, Jacob’s Son, the Son of God, and the Savior of all men.

**II. The Gospel is the Lord’s Inheritance of the Forgiveness of Sin and Life Everlasting.**

**A. The Gospel is the Lord’s Inheritance.**

 In Moses, Jacob say this about his Son, the Excellency of Jacob:

But his [Joseph] bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty *God* of Jacob; (from thence *is* the shepherd, the stone of Israel:).1[[14]](#footnote-14)4

 From Jacob descends the Messiah, the Excellency of Jacob, and the Good Shepherd. David writes:

The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.1[[15]](#footnote-15)5

 Christ is also the Rock. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner *stone*.1[[16]](#footnote-16)6

 Christ also refers to the Gospel as the Rock because through the Gospel, i.e., God’s Word and Sacraments, Christ Himself comes to forgive sins, save, and give life everlasting, and, thereby, places men on the Rock of life everlasting. Jesus says:

And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.1[[17]](#footnote-17)7

The Lutheran Church confesses that this Rock is the Gospel, i.e., God’s Word and Sacraments:

... as to the declaration: *Upon this rock I will build My Church*, certainly the Church has not been built upon the authority of man, but upon the ministry of the confession which Peter made, in which he proclaims that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. He accordingly addresses him as a minister: *Upon this rock*, i.e. upon this ministry [Therefore he addresses him as a minister of this office in which this concession and doctrine is to be in operation, and says: *Upon this rock, i.e.,* his preaching ministry.]”1[[18]](#footnote-18)8

 This Gospel is our Inheritance. The Apostle St. Matthew writes:

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.1[[19]](#footnote-19)9

 God’s Chosen Inheritance for men is the Absolution of all sins for the Sake of the Excellency of Jacob, Jesus of Nazareth, the Savior.

**B. Gospel gives to men life everlasting.**

Because the Lord’s Inheritance is the Absolution of sin through the Excellency of Jacob, Jesus of Nazareth, men also inherit life everlasting because the Absolution of sin is nothing less than life everlasting. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.2[[20]](#footnote-20)0

**Conclusion**.

 God Himself has chosen the Inheritance for sinful men. God’s Inheritance, which was effected by God’s own death in the Passion of Christ, is the Free Forgiveness of all sins.

 God bequeaths this Forgiveness to men through the Gospel. Through the Gospel men gain God’s Inheritance, namely, the Free Forgiveness of all sins, from which flows salvation, life everlasting, and the resurrection of the body when Christ returns again in glory on the Last Day.

 ***Amen.***

1. 1“**The words of the Lord’s Supper are not to be treated in a light or frivolous way, but with great reverence and respect and in the fear of the Lord, because they are the words of the last will and testament of the Son of God.** ... In the second place, when the last will and testament of a man has been executed, we are required under the law to observe the words with special care so that nothing be done which is either beside or contrary to the final will of the testator. Even the civil laws regard such a will as so sacred that they have determined that those who have made any profit at all from the will for themselves shall be deprived of it, and their inheritance through the provision of the laws themselves shall be taken away from them as being unworthy, on the grounds that they have departed from the will of the testator as it is stipulated in the words of the testament. Now, because the Son of God in His last will and testament has not permitted His heirs the liberty of believing or doing whatever seems good to them, but has willed that we believe what he has spoken in His words of institution and do what He has commanded, therefore we should give very careful thought that we do not thrust anything upon these words of the last will and testament of the Son of God, lest we deprive ourselves of the benefit of eternal happiness conveyed to us by His will or our inheritance itself be taken from us as being unworthy because we have departed from the will of the Testator as it has been given to us in the words of His last testament. There is no doubt that all too many will come under this judgment, sad to say, because of their shameful contentiousness.” Martin Chemnitz, ain *The Lord’s Supper*, tr. J. A. O. Preus, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, pp. 27, 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2St. Paul uses the word “testament”. St. Paul uses the word “testament” when Moses writes, “blood of the covenant”. Why does St. Paul write “testament” when Moses writes “blood of the covenant”? St. Paul writes “testament” because “blood of the covenant” means testament. For what does a covenant, i.e., an agreement, sprinkled with blood mean? The shedding of blood over an agreement is remarkable. That ought to grab anyone’s attention; this agreement or relationship or covenant is serious because the shedding of blood is involved. Blood is involved in this agreement or relationship God makes with the people of Israel. What does that mean? It’s obvious. It means this agreement or covenant is held together by the shedding of someone’s blood. That’s serious business. The shedding of blood means someone must die. Hence, someone must die for the agreement to be in force. Christ’s Testament, the Shedding of His Blood for the sins of Israel, then, underpinned and empowered the relationship between God and the people of Israel.

 For this reason, one of the expressions for making a covenant in the Old Testament is “carath [to cut] berith [a covenant]”because in the cutting of flesh blood was shed. For example, when God promised Abraham the land for his people to him, Moses writes, “In the same day the LORD [cut] Abraham [a covenant]”. Once again, this covenant or relationship, was enforced, underpinned, and empowered, by the Blood of Jesus Christ, by His Testament. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 3**Hebrews 9:16-20**. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 4**I John 3:4**. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 5**Romans 5:12**. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 6**Psalm 47:4**. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 7The Formula of Concord, **Thorough Declaration**, **Article VIII. Of the Person of Christ.**44, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 8The Mass is the Gospel, i.e. God’s Word and Sacraments. “But let us speak of the word *liturgy*. This word does not properly signify a sacrifice, but rather the public ministry, and agrees aptly with our belief, namely, that one minister who consecrates tenders the body and blood of the Lord to the rest of the people, just as one minister who preaches tenders the Gospel to the people, as Paul says, I Cor. 4, 1: *Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, i.e.* of the Gospel and the Sacraments. And 2 Cor. 5, 20: *We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in God’s stead, be ye reconciled to God*. Thus the term *leitourgia* agrees aptly with the ministry.” *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession,* **Article XXIV. (XII.): Of the Mass**, *Of the Term Mass*.80, 81, *Triglotta*, p. 411. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 9These covenants (arrangements, relationships) between God and men were called testaments because all relationships throughout history are underpinned by the Last Will and Testament of the Son of God. Hence, Moses forged the covenant with Israel with Blood. “And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.” **Exodus 24:8**. “With one half of the blood he sprinkled the altar, and with the other half he sprinkled the people, signifying the blood of sacrifice would unite God with Israel, calling it the blood of the covenant. ... As the Old Covenant was sanctified through blood, so especially was the New Testament. The blood of sacrifice of the Old Covenant prophesied of the covenant blood of the New Testament, and it had the power to atone for sin. Through the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, there was established a complete atonement and redemption, and an eternal covenant of peace between God and the sinners.” The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt, *Wisdom for Today*, Vol. I, tr. the Rev. Arthur E. Beck, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, p. 96, underscore added.

 Without the Last Will and Testament of the Son of God, not even the covenant of allowing the sun to rise and set and the world to turn would remain. “The world owes its continued existence to the unfinished task of the church in spreading that Word (Matt. 24:14).” The Rev. Dr. Eugene F. A. Klug, *Church and Ministry*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999, p. 135. That “Word”, of course, is the Last Will and Testament of the Son of God, the Gospel. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. 10“*We Christians must know that if God is not also in the balance, and gives the weight, we sink to the bottom with our scale. By this I mean: If it were not to be said [if these things were not true], God has died for us, but only a man, we would be lost. But if ‘God’s death’ and ‘God died’ lie in the scale of the balance, then He sinks down, and we rise up as a light, empty scale. But indeed He can also rise again or leap out of the scale; yet He could not sit in the scale unless He became a man like us, so that it could be said: ‘God died,’ ‘God’s passion,’ ‘God’s blood,’ ‘God’s death.’ For in His nature God cannot die; but now that God and man are united in one person, it is correctly called God’s death, when the man dies who is one thing or one person with God.*” The Formula of Concord, **Thorough Declaration**, **Article VIII. Of the Person of Christ.**44, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. 11*Luther’s Works,* Vol. 36: 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 12**Isaiah 25:6-8**, amplification in brackets added. “But if I can believe in and accept this remedy, that God gives us His Son—not an ordinary son like Abraham, Isaac, and David, of whom God has many, but His only-begotten Son—it is certain that this Son can effect a new birth in us and can, therefore, be a victor and conqueror of the devil. This is because God’s Son is vastly greater than death, far stronger than sin and the devil. Through Him we have the grace of God rather than wrath, and whatever else we may need besides. If it puzzles you how a man is to be transferred from the devil’s realm to the kingdom of God, God’s gift of His Son must surprise you still more. And if you accept this in faith, you will no longer be puzzled about the other. If we have the Son of God, who faces death and opposes the devil on our behalf, on our side, let the devil rage as he will. If the Son of God died for me, let death consume and devour me; for he will surely have to return and restore me, and I will stand my ground against him. Christ died; death devoured the Son of God. But in doing so death swallowed a thorn and had to get rid of it. It was impossible for death to hold Him. For this Person is God; and since both God and man in one indivisible Person entered into the belly of death and the devil, death ate a morsel that ripped his stomach open.” Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 22:354, 355.

 “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.” **Hosea 13:14**. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. 13**Genesis 28:14**, amplification in brackets added. “‘All the families of the shall be blessed in you.’ He means to say: ‘Not only will you possess the land in which you are sleeping, but you will break out in such a way that the Blessed Seed will proceed without any resistance and will be spread out with might into the whole world.” Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 225, 226. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. 14**Genesis 49:24**, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. 15**Psalm 23:1**, text is from *The Lutheran Hymnal*, p. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. 16**Ephesians 2:20**. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. 17**St. Matthew 16:18**. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. 18*The Smalcald Articles:* **Of the Power and Primacy of the Pope**. 25, *Triglotta*, p. 511. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. 19**St. Matthew 26:27-28**. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. 20**Romans 6:23**. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)