

I don't know about you, but there are times when I reflect on how I've gotten to this iteration of my life, of my self-hood and I can see what I have picked up along the way from various family members. There is a strange sort of comfort in looking at yourself in the mirror and not only knowing the things that are uniquely your individual self, but also those parts that reflect and remind you of your beloveds along the way.

I think most of you would be able to identify that two of the biggest parts of my personality are my love of sports and my love of reading, both of which I come by completely honestly, and are not something that just came from me. When I sit down with a good book, I think about the fact that somewhere in Michigan my Grandma is probably sitting there doing the same thing. It could be midnight and she, at 97, will be sitting there with a cup of coffee, her book, and her dog and she will read into the night. I think about my mom snuggling Kristin and I up at night to read at least one chapter of the Boxcar Children a night, and the love of reading she instilled in us from an early age, her school librarian mentality vivid and alive.

If you ever wonder where my sports crazy comes from, I will tell you that at my Grandpa's funeral my home pastor referenced Dave Dombroski's general manager decisions for the Tigers and how my grandpa was probably complaining about them in heaven. My dad was drafted by the Tigers when

he was 18 and still at 72 plays softball three times a week through the summer and fall, and then starts bowling season. I can always find great comfort in knowing that if I'm crying about sports, Jennifer probably is too, and that she is just as good for a sports rant as I am, our emotional well-being far too determined by Detroit sports year round.

I have my dad's eyes and my mom's hands. When I'm sick I still want nothing more than my Grandma Zorn to make me a cup of strawberry tea and her homemade chicken noodle soup. When we're on Zoom calls together, Jennifer's congregants sometimes have a hard time differentiating between whether it is her, me, or Kristin talking because we all sound the same. And then I look at Felix and Bash and see the next generation growing. Bash is convinced he is going to be a professional baseball player and has an arm that stings my hand when it throws the ball right. Felix latches onto things he loves with a fierceness that few, except us, would understand because we have been there done that. I think about all of these things and I realize that *this* is my inheritance. It has nothing to do with money or who gets which pieces of someone's jewelry. It is the things I love, the person I have grown into, the things that I am helping pass down to the boys that are the inheritance of my family, and in some ways they are a

beautiful way of thinking about eternal life and how God exists in, with, and through our entire lives.

I haven't been able to get this word: inheritance, out of my head this week as I have been thinking about and contemplating our celebration of All Saints. This is simultaneously one of the hardest and easiest weeks to preach throughout the liturgical year. The ease comes from the basic, fundamental foundation of our faith. This entire day is rooted and grounded in our ardent belief that Jesus is who he says he is, our Savior, our Messiah, our King who has come to abolish death, prepare a place for us in heaven, and be our way, truth, and life leading onto to eternity. That is the heart of our faith, right? We want to believe with everything that we have that the great company of saints that surround us figuratively and literally today, will be there to greet us in heaven. We trust that Jesus burst open the tomb on Easter Sunday and the entire world changed. That is comfort and hope and joy and faith and discipleship all rolled up in one. We live and serve with the promise that we hold these things to be true.

And yet...those promises don't diminish the grief, the hurt, the heartbreak that comes from loss, that comes from mourning that continues on even as the days, months, or years go by, which can make today feel like a deep push and pull of emotions. We want to cling to hope and the

promises that we profess to believe in, but the hurt lingers. The promise doesn't diminish the missing that still happens, the desire for the physical presence of our loved ones. So how do we balance these two emotions? How do we hold in tension our faith and our feelings when they sometimes feel like they are out of sync with each other? And that is where I keep going back to that one word: inheritance.

Eternal life is our inheritance both *now* and in the future. The future part is the one that is a little bit easier to wrap our minds around. This is what Jesus lived and died for, to give us the promise that our future is secure, eternity is well taken care of, for us and for our loved ones. When we fully embrace that this is the gift that we have been given, it frees us up for an entire world of hope and grace. It allows us to live into a dichotomy that came up in Bible study this week; it allows us to take our belief *in* Jesus to extend to *believing* Jesus. This faith that we have, this inheritance we've been given, these promises that assure us that we are cared for, allows us to take seriously the things Jesus *said* about *living out* that faith. When we believe in Jesus and everything he has promised us, it means we are called to believe what he said about love of neighbor, care for the poor, and standing with the lost and lonely. Our inheritance of eternal life frees us to live out

the words Jesus has given us, to believe he was serious when he called us to a certain kind of life, centered in love and grace.

And I think we can comprehend this kind of inheritance, one that lies ahead in the future. But what do I mean when I say that eternal life is also our inheritance *now*? I think the best way to answer that is by describing what happened here on Wednesday night in worship. We gathered Wednesday evening to renew our spirituality through song. Everyone gathered had their name put in a basket and then as they were pulled, they got to select a beloved hymn for us to sing. I will admit, I went in with a few thoughts about what songs might come up, only to have those thoughts completely and totally blown out of the water because we went to places in the hymnal I was never anticipating. But the real beauty of the evening came in *stories*. It wasn't just oh I love this hymn so let's sing this one because it's fun! It was...I am choosing this hymn because it strikes a chord deep in my soul and that chord usually was tied to a memory, a family member, a sacred story.

There were stories of hymns learned upon grandma's piano, notes plinked out slowly but surely, the only song ever truly learned, but *remembered*. There was one hymn that was chosen which left someone else in tears because it brought up memories of loved ones and their passing.

There were stories shared of loss and hope and the ways that the Holy Spirit ends up moving through our lives in unexpected ways. I had said the whole day leading up to the service that I hoped we got some Christmas music, thinking that the vibe I was searching for was *Joy to the World*, and what ended up happening was *Of the Father's Love Begotten* to close the service, and the tears finally got me, because those notes took me to so many places along my faith journey that evoked peace and calm and hope. I have never felt so acutely the presence of the communion of the saints in light. As we each chose our hymns, you knew they were being chosen with others in mind, and as we sang you could feel them present with us, and it was palpable and powerful and *that* is how eternal life happens now.

When I watch a Tigers game and think of my grandpa, complain the way he used to at the tv, that is eternal life, because his presence is alive and shining through me. When we sing a hymn that reminds you of your parents, your grandparents, a beloved companion along life's journey and you feel their presence with you, that is eternal life, because you are keeping their faith, their strength alive and vibrant. When you look at your kids or look at your own self in the mirror and see the eyes of another shining out, that is eternal life, because they live on through us. When we live out the faith that has been passed down to each of us by some beloved ancestor that

is eternal life because we are living out and living into the promises that they first taught us.

Eternal life is out there, somewhere, some ways in the future, and it is alive and present for our loved ones who have gone before, but it is also here, *now*, present amongst us as we light candles and share stories and cherish memories. The communion of the saints in light surround us through each other and by being present with us in ways only known to the Holy Spirit. Eternal life is a gift, for them and for us, a gift for today and a gift for the future. May this inheritance stir your heart to belief and trust that they are here and they are also resting in Christ. May this inheritance stir your feet to action to live out your belief. May this inheritance remind you of the eternal life you are able to share today in the here and now. Share the stories, remember the cherished times, sing the hymns, and know that eternal life is for them...for us...for all. **AMEN!!!**