

**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Watertown, WI**

“The LORD is my Portion”

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“The LORD is my portion . . .” (Ps. 119:57).

Do you plan on leaving an inheritance to someone, maybe your children or grandchildren? Most people use their will as one last opportunity to bless the people they love. Some use their will as one last opportunity to seek revenge.

Already before she died, American businesswoman Leona Helmsley had earned the nickname, “the Queen of Mean.” When she died in 2007, her children and grandchildren learned she had bequeathed her twelve-million-dollar estate to her little, white, Maltese dog. She had cut her family off from the inheritance, but that was one well-pampered pooch.

I wonder if the tribe of Levi initially felt cut off. The land promised to God’s people had finally been conquered and the twelve tribes of Judah were moving in. But it wasn’t going to be a mad, chaotic dash, every man for himself sort of thing. No, each of the tribes of Judah was assigned a portion of the land. A larger tribe received a larger inheritance, smaller tribes were given a smaller portion. To the tribe of Reuben was given the valley of Arnon. To the tribe of Gad was given the territory and cities of Gilead, and so on. But for the tribe of Levi? To them the LORD said, “You shall have *no inheritance* in the land, neither shall you have any portion among them. I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel” (Num. 18:20). The Levites were going to be the priestly class tending to the religious duties of the Israelites. Therefore, they were not given God land but God Himself as their portion.

Similarly, our text says the Lord is your portion, your inheritance.

Today, the odds of receiving a large monetary inheritance are becoming less likely. People are living longer. Costs of assisted living facilities have skyrocketed. Parents have been spending more on themselves or helping their children with student debt and long-term rent issues. The middle class especially is no longer able to transfer wealth as it once did. As a result, after the funerals, many children are surprised to learn they will not receive a nice big check from the family estate. Some had even been out kicking tires and racking up debt assuming they would.

In a world of unknowns, and a world well familiar with disappointment, our psalm teaches us to say, “The LORD is my portion.” The Lord is my inheritance. That inheritance is infinitely better than anything our parents can bequeath us. We don’t need the curio cabinet stuffed with Hummel figurines, and no amount of money can save us from sin, death or the devil. Don’t set your heart on anything your parents can bequeath you. Ecclesiastes 5 says if you love money, you’ll never have enough of it. It also says great wealth brings greater anxiety. True security and wealth and peace are found only in the Lord, not in abundance.

What a gift then that God allows us, even invites us to claim Him as our portion, our inheritance, our life’s lot. Psalm 73, “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (v.26). Notice, this is no temporary, earthly inheritance. He

says, "God is my portion *forever*." Similarly, Psalm 142 says, "'You [LORD] are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.'" Not some piece of desert wasteland that hardly supports life. No! Our inheritance is with the Lord in "the land of the living."

Our text says, "The Lord is our portion." Deuteronomy 32 flips that and says, "But the LORD's portion is his people." He gets us as an inheritance, and the Lord is actually happy with that! He wants us. He covets us. Nothing but grace can explain it.

Remember how Moses felt about the people? Remember how he complained to God? Numbers 11: "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant? . . . If this is how you are going to treat me, just put me to death right now."

Moses was done; he had had enough of God's people. But not the Lord. By grace, the Lord's portion is his people. Exodus 19 "You shall be my treasured possession among all peoples . . . you shall be to me a holy nation."

As Gentiles, we were on the outside. We were not his people. We could make no claim on Him or His inheritance. But through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has now included us by faith. In Holy Baptism God has laid claim on us as his own children and adopted us. Paul writes, "Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8). We are God's children now, and not just in name only. Our full status as God's children makes us beneficiaries of everything Christ possesses. We are co-heirs with Christ. 1 Peter 2, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession. . ." He wants us! He covets us! "Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (v. 9).

God's ancient people could not claim the Promised Land by their own conquest. No, it was given them by the Lord. The Lord did the fighting for them. The Lord did the fighting for you too in Christ and him crucified. Luther writes, "Is not this a beautiful, glorious exchange, by which Christ, who is entirely innocent and holy, not only takes upon himself. . . my sin and guilt, but also clothes and adorns me, who am nothing but sin, with his own innocence and purity? And then dies the shameful death of the Cross for the sake of my sins, through which I have deserved death and condemnation, and grants to me his righteousness, in order that I may live with him eternally in glorious and unspeakable joy. Through this blessed exchange, in which Christ changes places with us . . . we are freed from sin and death and given his righteousness and life as our own" (AE 51:316).

It is all gift. Colossians 1 says the **Lord** "has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light" (v. 12).

One last thing: If your parents don't want to tell you what's in their will, they don't have to, and children really have no legal recourse to force them to reveal the contents of their will. However, the Lord wants us to know. He wants us to have that comfort and assurance throughout life that he is our inheritance, our portion, and we are his, his inheritance, his portion. He promises never to cut us off from the inheritance, and he urges us not to cut ourselves off from him. Throughout life, with all its ups and downs and struggles and suffering . . . throughout life the Lord wants you to be able say with the psalmist, "The Lord is my portion." Thanks be to God. Amen.