

Theme: We are drawn to God

Let us pray.

Most holy, Lord God, today we remember the life of Art Lemieux, who is no longer with us, but enjoys life with you; may we follow his example of steadfast faithfulness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Ten years ago, I met Art Lemieux. He was 80 years old going on 81. He never stood out in the crowd. He was a quiet man. He was regular in attendance, but didn't go to coffee hour. He didn't attend other events at the church. He was just faithful in worshipping God.

It was not long after I met Art that he began to show signs of dementia. He ended up being diagnosed with an insidious disease, Alzheimer's. Later, it wasn't safe for Art to drive. So, Jean would drive him to church. In spite of this disease, Art was still drawn to worship God. The Spirit overwhelmed his deteriorating mental capacities.

Eventually, it was too much for Jean to take care of Art at home. This disease is horrible as it slowly takes a person away from who that person was. Art went to Eskaton here in Placerville. They could give him the 24/7 care that he needed. Last week, Art took a turn for the worse. He died Sunday, the day of the Lord, the day of resurrection, the feast day of Pentecost when we observed the event of the disciples receiving the Holy Spirit.

What does receiving the Holy Spirit mean to us? St. Paul tells us, in the reading we just heard from Romans, that only those who are guided by the Holy Spirit are children of God. That implies that these people are willing to follow the Holy Spirit.

This type of metaphor emphasizes God as parent. Children receive life from their parents and all of us receive God's life force from the Holy Spirit. Children naturally follow their parents. Parents provide the nurture, shelter, food, clothing, and most importantly the love a child needs.

We, too, depend on God for these things. This does not relieve us of the responsibility in securing these things for ourselves any more than a child is

totally irresponsible and needs to be taught responsibility. Though, we do know of families who fail to function in the way I just described. It is God's relationship to us that gives us a model for how our families are to look like.

Just like our children are not our slaves, neither are we slaves of fear. When we live in fear we become slaves. We need not fear death. We are adopted by God and so we receive a spirit that never dies. It is this spirit that lives for ever after our physical bodies decay. When ever we cry out to God the Father or pray to God the Father, it is that spirit in us acknowledging the Holy Spirit and confirming that we are indeed children of God.

We are going to get what's coming to us. And what that is, is an unbelievable inheritance. We are joint heirs with Christ for all Christ has. But we also will suffer. We will go through the bad times with Christ so that we may enjoy the good times with Christ. And those good times will happen to us when we share in Christ's glory with our glory, entering eternity.

What ever it is we are suffering now, whatever we are grieving now, will not compare to the good times and the joy that awaits us. As low as we can feel in this life is nothing compared to the joy on the other end of the curve that we will have in the next life.

Not only that, but all of creation is waiting eagerly to know who are God's children. Who can blame them? Who can condemn us? No being can. For Christ is on our side. Christ is our advocate – the same Christ who died and was raised to life.

Can anything separate us from the love of Christ? Paul says that there is nothing that we can ever think of that can do this – no trouble, no suffering, no hard times, no hatred, no hunger, no homelessness, no bullying, no threats, no backstabbing, no danger, no sin that is listed in the Bible, and not even death. None of that matters, because Jesus' love is more powerful than all of that.

Paul is absolutely certain that nothing can separate us from God's love – nothing living or dead, no angels or spirits, nothing today or anything that can come in the future, nothing in creation below us or above us. Absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Holy Spirit was with Art. And Art recognized and responded to the Holy Spirit acting in him. The Spirit drove him to faithfulness. Art now enjoys eternal life with God and God's overpowering love.

We now pray: Gracious God and giver of all good gifts, we give you thanks for the gift of your Spirit; may we always recognize your presence in us through your Holy Spirit, drawing us closer to you in love and for the love of others, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Text: **Romans 8:14–19, 8:34–35, 8:37–39** (NRSV)

¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba!^m Father!” ¹⁶ it is that very Spirit bearing witnessⁿ with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

¹⁸ I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God;

³⁴ Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.^w ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹

^m Aramaic for *Father*

ⁿ Or ¹⁵ *a spirit of adoption, by which we cry, “Abba! Father!”* ¹⁶ *The Spirit itself bears witness*

^w Or *Is it Christ Jesus ... for us?*

¹ *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Ro 8:14–19, Ro 8:34–35, Ro 8:37–39). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.