North Kildonan United Church

1st January 2023 ~Betty Clark

Psalm 148 *Matthew 2: 13-23*

"INHERITANCE: AM I IN THE WILL?"

When my son Bruce opened his act at the Winnipeg Comedy Festival this spring, he announced that he was here for his mothers 90th birthday. The audience burst into arousing chorus of Happy Birthday followed by a round of applause. I was a bit overcome but pleased at the same time that I was recognized.

In a typical Bruce fashion Bruce rubbed his hands in glee leaned into the mic and declared "A year closer to my inheritance." Of course, there was more laughter but unknown to him I stood up called his name and said "Sorry son but you are not in the will." It was strictly ad lib but it brought more laughter – pathetic isn't it that the only heckler a comic gets is his old mother.

This led me to start thinking of inheritances and went to the dictionary to find its definition. Not much info there so went to the true source of all things true, the internet. After all, if it's there it must be true. Just as I suspected they defined an inheritance as that what is left to family or friends after death. Not much laughter there as in order to receive this you are losing someone near and dear to you. And that is no laughing matter. And then there is always the problem that dad left his vintage car to Jimmy when he had always promised it to me and what was Mom thinking leaving her diamond necklace to a niece and not her daughter-in-law. Questions we will never have answered.

I went on to investigate and found another inheritance that I certainly hadn't thought of and that is one we have no control of. Our genes and DNA. Handed down to us at conception something that is passed on without our knowledge but has a great impact on our lives. We have all heard the great debate - nature vs nurture. Do your genes control the way you behave or is your nurturing more influential? I suppose if great grandma was a lady of the evening and great grandpa a horse thief and those bad genes kick in at some point in your life, they could cause some stress. However maybe your nurturing is more powerful and you will have a good and productive life and be an upstanding citizen. Another mystery to be solved.

But then I came across the inheritance that I was most interested in. Inheritance in the Biblical sense. Now to make things clear up front, I am no theologian. So none of the Bible passages were very clear to me and the fact that the "meek shall inherit the earth" really confounds me, tells you that there will be no profound message from me. Perhaps that could be our next Bible study, Don?

And so, I got to thinking about our faith and how we pass it on. Our churches are experiencing low attendance, churches are closing and or considering

amalgamation. This is not a local problem, but statistics show it is happening all over. So what happened? My children were brought up in the church and were very involved but it seems at a certain point in their lives they became cynical. Other parents have shared the same story with me – so what has happened. Don't get me wrong, I am not insinuating that these young people are not fine, honest people but church isn't part of their lives. So who do we blame? The genes or the DNA or the nurturing – not sure what the explanation is.

The old adage *"Our Youth is Our Future"* doesn't hold much hope theses days, but our family of faith is blessed with young people and children who take an active part in our church activities. My heart swelled with pride when 2 weeks ago after church when our narthex was filled with these dedicated young people preparing Christmas hampers, an activity they take on every year to give a helping hand to someone less fortunate. You are a blessing to our family of faith. We appreciate all of your gifts and your presence amongst us. You are all a blessing.

I do not know how many of you remember the Sunday School rally that was held on January 1st. many, many, years ago. At 2 o'clock the local Sunday Schools would gather at what was then called King Memorial United Church on Coburg Ave. The church would be filled to the rafters with children and youth from all the area churches and a rally like no other would take place. My memory doesn't allow me to remember when this event was ended but it was years ago so this falling attendance is not that new. So what has happened. Why is attendance failing? Did we as the former generation fail in some way or is this just a sign of the times?

We have all done the best we can, we have led by example, we have tried to be good upstanding citizens – so why have we not been able to give the gift of faith to those who have followed us. I would like to think that we could inherit faith but perhaps that is not possible. But what a wonderful world that would be. So what is the solution? I told you I would not have any profound solutions and I don't have any answers. However, we can lead by example, live our faith, believe in the Lord, and try to act out our faith in our daily life. And perhaps be an influence to those whose paths we cross.

Maybe we can try to bequeath our faith. We could try at the beginning of our last will and testament to declare the following:

I bequeath to you,
My deep faith in Jesus Christ. The belief of power of prayer. The belief that Christ died on the cross, rose on the third day and promised ever lasting life. And the belief that he is with us always and our sins are forgiven.

Wishful thinking? Perhaps. But isn't it worth a try?
I don't know about you, but I am putting the power of prayer to work.
Thanks be to God for all his wonderous works. Amen.