

Ephesians 2:4-10; Revelation 7:9-17
Invest Your Spiritual Capital
Sunday November 1, 2015

Today is many things. Today is All Saints Sunday. Today is the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. Today is the 4th message in the “5 Capitals” series. Today we address the most important capital of all: Spiritual Capital. These 5 capitals or assets are GIFTS God has given us to live well in this world and witness to his love. They are once again in descending order of importance:

- 1st: Spiritual
- 2nd: Relational
- 3rd: Physical, in two weeks
- 4th: Intellectual
- 5th: Financial, in one week

Here’s a story of Spiritual Capital in action. I picked this, because one of the youth I went to Youth Group with at Catalina Methodist, he was a political refugee from Communist Cuba and now runs a very successful Auto Repair shop and Shell Gas Station. It comes from the book Jesus Freaks.

“A Christian prisoner in Cuba was asked to sign a statement containing charges against fellow Christians that would lead to their arrest.

He said: “The chain keeps me from signing this.”

The Communist officer protested, “But you are not in chains!”

“I am,” said the Christian. “I am bound by the chain of witnesses who throughout the centuries gave their lives for Jesus Christ. I am a link in this chain. I will not break it.”

The Christian faith of that and so many other believers who refused to break the chain will long outlive Communist Cuba. We honor their suffering on this “International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church.”



Our Revelation Passage gives them hope, “For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

In these 2 scriptures read today we see Spiritual Capital at work here and in the hereafter. In the Revelation Scripture we step into the hereafter, the Throne Room of God where the martyrs are gathered in triumph with angels, the 4 living creatures and the 24 elders.

The whole scene is rich with symbolism. There is **“a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.**

They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.”

The palm branches and white robes were symbols of triumph and victory. The victory which they shouted out was the salvation giving by God. They shouted, **“Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!”**

A chorus, like our choir responds. It is made up of angels, 4 living creatures and the 24 elders. They shouted out in triumph that God had given them the salvation of their souls. They had

overcome the trials, tests and The Tribulation of earth.

The White Robes have a double meaning. They are not only symbols of triumph; they are symbols of the good works they did here on earth. As the scripture says, "Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on."

"Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, and **their works will follow them.**" Rev. 14:13

There is an amazing consistency to the Bible. It speaks plainly of our good works, as in our Ephesian's passage, but it also speaks symbolically of good works in our Revelation passage. And we can hear and understand if we know how to translate the symbols and the words. Because each of us perceive and understand differently; things need to be told to us in different ways in order for us all to hear and understand.

Very evident in these verses is that God through Jesus Christ gives us life here on earth. God gives us good, purposeful life with meaning. God gives us Good Works to do. It says this plainly in one of the most powerful scriptures pertaining to our life here on earth as Christians in Eph. 2:4-5a, "**...because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us ALIVE with Christ..**"

This is God investing our lives with Spiritual Capital. This is God giving us the means for living lives of meaning and purpose.

In the Revelation passage it shifts to the symbolic. It says, "**These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**"

How can blood make robes white? In Jesus' day and

culture blood was seen as a sign of death, but also life. The Hebrews taught there was life in the blood. To be washed in the blood of Jesus was to say that **“You had received life in Jesus”**.

And not just any life, but true life; we didn't just receive life to plod along until we die, but we have received life with meaning and purpose. **“We have been created in Christ Jesus to do good works”** to wear the white robes, to do the acts and love and service God has called and created us to do!!

You and I in Christ were born again, born from above, created in Christ Jesus to serve others through the grace and mercy of God in the power of the Holy Spirit!!!

The mission day trip that we took to Agua Prieta yesterday was not by chance or accident. The good works we did there, the good works you have done there in the past **“God prepared them in advance for us to do!!!” Eph. 2:10**

You have made a difference! You have fulfilled part of your purpose here on earth. If you have even given a dime to the budget of this church you participated in the mission. Our budget pays the overhead. The mission budget touches lives directly.

The United Methodist Mission Statement is to **“Make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”** You have made disciples of Jesus Christ in Agua Prieta. You have transformed lives and the community in which these people live.

When you first started working in Agua Prieta there were almost no high school students in the Colonia. On Saturday we recognized 10 for outstanding educational achievement.

When you began your work there, there certainly were no university students or graduates. 2 have graduated and we have

8 in class right now. (I had pictures, but a failure of computer devices eliminated them.)

When you began your work there only one person was seminary trained. Now you have trained 10 who are all in Christian service.

You have made a difference. You have changed lives. You have saved and transformed an entire community that has gone from shacks (Casas de Carton) to homes of brick and mortar. And the true mortar that holds it all together, that inspires it, is the Spiritual Capital of belief in Jesus Christ! We saw that in action and if you want to see and hear more come to the Mission Meeting at 1pm on Wednesday.

Vista Church so far this year has given over 73k to the mission field. By the end of this year it will be well over 80k. This giving, this money, as it is put to work in the mission field, clothes us with our white robes. I want you all to know, and claim, your participation here has made a difference in this world!!

And Spiritual Capital is the most important of all. It is closely linked with Relational Capital for God is love and we love because God first loved us. The relationships bind us; chain us to loved ones and saints from the past to the present; and to God who is our present and future.

Spiritual Capital ushers us into the throne room of God. It grants us the power to do good. Jesus said, **“Without me you can do nothing.”** It is the **“true riches”** spoken of in the parable of “Dishonest Steward” that we began this series with and it is the richest, most long lasting gift we can receive for its effects are eternal. **“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the GIFT of God...”**

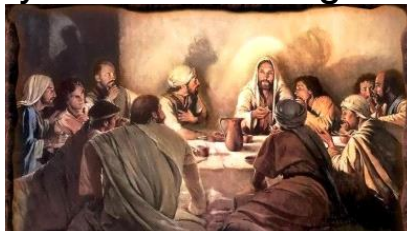
As we grow older we desperately try to hold onto: Relational, Health, Intellectual and Financial Capital that all come to us as gifts from God; but time take its toll. My mom at 91 ½ has outlived all but one of her friends and 3 of her 8 brothers and sisters. Two of her siblings died this year. My dad at 95 ½ has outlived all of his friends, and all of his close relatives. This year they downsized, left their home of 47 years, sold and gave away most of their possessions and turned their financial affairs over to my brother and me.

Their lives are vastly diminished in many people's eyes, but they are rich. They are rich in Spiritual Capital. Rich in God's mercy and grace and one day they will join those we read about today in the Throne Room of God.

So in the meantime my friends sacrifice day by day for God by living your lives in service to others, in good works. Become "Living Martyrs".

I listen whenever I can to a Jewish commentator named Dennis Prager. He has a staff member on his show who he calls "The Living Martyr." And I love that title, because when we give our lives and resources in the service of others, we all are "living martyrs."

By doing this of course we will be putting on our white robes in heaven, getting ready for the wedding feast of the Lamb.



Next Sunday the Worship Center here will be set with tables like the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. We will make our commitments to God, the work of God, the good works God has

created us to do and then we will celebrate like good Methodists; we will eat together a great celebratory meal.

Let us now join in the sacred meal of Holy Communion, a symbolic meal that reminds us of the Heavenly meal to come.