

This past Wednesday you received an ash tag, the sign of the cross on your head. You heard God’s curse on Adam’s sin. “You are dust, to dust you will return”. Death is universal because all sin. In fact, you were born already as an heir of sin. Mourning his sins King David wrote, *“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.* David was dust, to dust he returned, as will we all.

No, it isn’t fair that we should become heirs of sin and die because of one man’s sin. Yet can we be sure we would have made a different choice? And do we really want God to be fair today? If He were fair, would we sinners also be heirs of salvation, through the death of one man, Jesus Christ? How that affects the church’s view of those outside of the church I want to talk about, using the topic of immigration as a framework.

I do not distinguish between legal and illegal, nor between the motives of immigrants. I am fully aware of all that, but that’s not relevant today. The point is to illustrate God’s mercy.

Children do nothing to become born sinners, but they are because their parents have a sinful nature. Nor do they decide or deserve to be born into poverty, famine, warfare, violence, dictatorship and oppression. They didn’t choose their birthparents or birthplace. Most would-be immigrants from poor and war torn nations want only security, freedom, and opportunity.

Such immigrants illustrate the spiritual conditional of all of us. Through no fault of ours, we inherit, sin, oppression, death. As spiritual immigrants we long to escape the misery of sin and seek the freedom of a new life. By no merit of ours, we heirs of sin are also now heirs of salvation through Christ.

In contrast to the unfairness of being born an oppressed citizen is the unfairness of being born a free citizen in a free land. Those born free had no more choice of their birthparents or birthplace than did those born in oppression. It is not fair that some are born free and others are not.

Likewise, it is not fair that you are spiritually free, while others live in bondage to sin. You did nothing to earn or deserve it. Paul says as much in verses before our text: *⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly; ⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us; ¹⁰ while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.*

Just as you did not deserve your political freedom, you did not earn your spiritual freedom. No one does. For as sin came to all through one man, and death with it, so does life come from one man and through him all live.

That means that we are not to boast of our freedom, but recognize it is a gift. We don’t obey God to become free, but in gratitude for being free.

What responsibility then do we have to those outside the church, since we have not received fairness from God, but mercy? As there are those outside our borders wanting to enter, so there are millions more on the outside of the kingdom of God.

They need freedom from the fear of death and release from oppressive guilt of sins. They did nothing to deserve their sin nature. Like we, they are heirs of sin. We, as heirs of salvation through Christ, can give freely what is freely given to us—the Good News of salvation by faith in Christ.

Yes, the laws of our land will dictate who may enter. Some may never be permitted to enter. But the gospel of the church says all may enter Gods' kingdom of grace. They don't have to wait in line, fill out papers, earn the right, take a test, or learn the language. They don't need a passport to enter paradise as heirs of salvation. Jesus has paid the way with his death and resurrection.

So let us look with compassion upon the spiritual immigrants and refugees all around us. As natural born sinners, heirs, of sin, they also need to be heirs of salvation. Let this church be a true sanctuary to which they may flee for refuge—not to break the laws of man, but because they have broken the laws of God and need His forgiving grace in Christ. Such is our calling as heirs of sin and salvation. By the grace of God, may we answer his call! Amen.