

On the 6th of December 2016, an article appeared in the New Zealand Herald. The headline read “Meet the World’s Richest Man Under 30.” The story was about Hugh Richard Louis Grosvenor, who has become the 7th Duke of Westminster. Unless you are a royal watcher it is unlikely that you will have heard of young Hugh, but at the tender age of 25 he inherited a \$15- and 1/2-billion-dollar fortune.

I must say that it was the money angle that attracted me to this news clip in the first place. I couldn’t help but think about all that loot and the bright shiny things I might get with it. I like bright shiny things; I am a bit of a magpie in that regard.

But then in preparation for the new year I was reading the scriptures for today and this slice of royal life depicts today’s passages.

Our reading from Isaiah is the 6th Duke of Westminster. Major General Gerald Cavendish Grosvenor, the pre-cursor to the new heir. He stands in the place of Israel. Those who received the promise to begin with. Major General Grosvenor amasses the wealth of the nations and passes these on to his son Hughie. Israel is granted the blessings of God and relationship with God in the first testament, they “are to arise, for the glory of the Lord has risen upon them.”

Then the 6th Duke dies and the riches are passed on to his son Hughie. This is like the gospel reading from Matthew where the wise come seeking Jesus and bring him presents of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The promise has moved from the Father, and Israel, to the son. The emphasis of the presence of God has shifted from Israel to the child Jesus. This is the 15 and ½ billion-dollar inheritance.

Our reading from Ephesians is where it all gets exciting, as this is the part where we are told that we have a share in this fortune. That in the child Jesus, his birth and death and resurrection, not only Jewish people have been offered a share in the fortune of God, but we too have become fellow heirs, from the Father and Israel to the son and then to the gentiles. I don’t think we often appreciate just what this means.

This is Hughie Richard Louis Grosvenor giving us a ring on the phone and saying, “hi guys, just realised you and I are well related and I want to share the family fortune with you.” This is what this is. A 15 and ½ billion- dollar inheritance.

God coming to us Gentiles and including us in all the promises made to Israel since Abraham and Sarah. All the promises of shalom; peace, wholeness, and blessing. All the promises of the Messiah; justice, righteousness, and relationship with God. All the promises made in Jesus; hospitality, mercy, and acceptance with God. The promise of the Holy Spirit; love, joy, and peace. Patience, kindness, and generosity. Gentleness and self-control. All the promises of God. All the spiritual blessings in Christ. These are ours.

As I said at the beginning of this sermon that it was the money angle of this story, that caught my attention.

The idea of getting a share in 15 and ½ billion dollars did catch my eye, but as I thought about it, as much as it would be nice to buy a new house every month and a new car every week. As much as I would enjoy eating at The French Café and staying at the Huka Lodge every night ... being free of the dark is not to be sneezed at ... neither is being free of our addictions. Being free of anger, jealousy and greed are not to be trifled with either.

Being able to look towards God and know that we are acceptable in God's sight, just as we are, this is not a bad thing.

To have the absolute confidence that we can come in to God's presence and pray and be heard, is not something to be taken lightly.

To be Liberated from oppression and fear, worry and anxiety, emptiness, and loneliness. These things are not to be glossed over either.

This is our inheritance.

Hughie Grosvenor has a 15 and ½ billion fortune ... we have the boundless riches of Christ.

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This is Epiphany; that we, foreigners, and strangers have come in to this inheritance.

This is Epiphany, that having come in to this inheritance, we have the joy of telling others, that they too are heirs with us, in this great and good thing that God has done.

That we are to arise and shine as the glory of the Lord has risen upon us.

That another King has been born, and that on us are bestowed the boundless riches of Christ!

And that all this, is for everyone.

This is Epiphany. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ, God's Son, born on Christmas Day.

Amen.

