

It's been over ten years since the book *Die Broke* was published. In many ways the book turned conventional wisdom about long term financial planning on its ear. When it was first published, *Die Broke* met with both high praise and intense criticism. And, though I was among those who were scandalized by it, my response wasn't because of the advice on financial planning that it offered. Rather, the source of my dismay was that my brother gave a copy of it to our parents. To me, sending a book called *Die Broke* to one's own parents—a book that touts the value of distributing your wealth to your kids while you're still alive—that's a bit bold. (And besides, isn't it the youngest sibling who is supposed to be the bold one?) As one reviewer summarized the philosophy presented in the book, "It proposes that you shouldn't focus your life on saving for retirement because, if you use all of the rewards that life gives you, you should, as the title says, 'die broke.' In other words, having a large estate at the end of your life merely means you didn't enjoy all of the rewards that life has for you. This doesn't mean that you shouldn't invest, but your investment goals shouldn't be a nebulous retirement – they should be tangible things like an automobile or a house or your oldest granddaughter's down payment. The worst result of all is passing on a big estate [instead of getting to] give away [all that money yourself] to the ones you love and [having the chance to see] their reaction."¹

Now I'm sure my brother wasn't having thoughts like those of the Prodigal Son in the beginning of that parable in Luke's gospel "There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, 'Father, I want right now what's coming to me.' (Luke 15:11) No . . . Kevin was just passing along a resource that he himself had found helpful. And while this sermon is not, let me repeat, this sermon is NOT about financial planning, the philosophy *Die Broke* offers up about financial planning and inheritances resonates strongly with what is written to the Colossians in the passage Sharon read for us this morning—except in this case the inheritance has nothing to do with stock transfers, heirloom jewelry, or tangible goods. ". . . joyfully [give] thanks to the Creator, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. God has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

So, if this inheritance mentioned in Colossians is not money or anything that could be sold or traded for money—what exactly is the *inheritance of the saints of light*? And, who gets it? Whose names are in the will to split this inheritance?

When it comes to who the recipients of the *inheritance of the saints of light* are, I imagine the author of Colossians being a bit like Oprah back during that now infamous episode of her show during which, much to their shock, she gave every member of her studio audience a new car. "And you get the inheritance of the saints of light and YOU get the inheritance of the saints of light and YOU get the inheritance of the saints of light and YOU get the inheritance of the saints of light . . . EVERYBODY gets the inheritance of the saints of light!" We don't need to gather somberly for the reading of God's will, nothing gets contested in probate court—EVERYBODY gets the inheritance of the saints of light!

So if that answers "the who" of who get the saints of light—EVERYBODY—and you're still not all jumping up and down, screaming and crying like the people in Oprah's audience did when they got new cars, it must be because you're wondering WHAT is the inheritance of the saints of light? According to scripture it is that we are rescued from the power of darkness. Back in the time when these scriptures were written, audiences would have understood this as metaphorical language—to be a saint in light was to no longer be one of the people the prophet Isaiah describes as "the people walking in darkness." The darkness was metaphorical for evil. To inherit from the people walking in darkness would have been to continue to live in sinful and destructive ways. But, to

¹ <https://www.thesimpledollar.com/review-die-broke/>

inherit from saints of light would be to start living with kindness, generosity, and gratitude to God for the gift of salvation. And, it's a gift for all of us, anyone who wants it—EVERYBODY who claims it gets this inheritance of the saints of light.

That's the Who and the What of the inheritance of the saints of light leaving us to wonder about the When because the thing about the use of the word "inheritance" here is that it's somewhat misleading. An inheritance is something we usually think of as coming later—as in the followers of Jesus will one day inherit eternal life. But that's not what this means—this inheritance of the saints of light—while it may come to us LATER in the form of eternal life, it is also happening NOW. It is ours to enjoy, ours to celebrate, not just in the sweet by and by or when we all get to heaven or when the roll is called up yonder but also in the here and now. This inheritance—God's grace—this is something for us to have and enjoy right now. And, more than that, it's something to share—to give away in great quantities. It's like the philosophy of *Die Broke*—what's the use in having grace if you can't share it and watch others enjoy it.

This passage from Colossians reminds us that we are invited into a life transformed by grace—into a life of *start agains* and *do-overs*—into a life of *you're forgivens* and *try agains*—into a life of *let it gos* and *leave it behinds*—into a life of abundance—not of possessions, but of grace and mercy and joy and love. This is God's gift to us, this is our inheritance—later AND now.

Because here's the thing about living like saints of light right now—here's the thing about living an abundant life based in your deep gratitude to God for your myriad blessings right now—I honestly think the best part of living an abundant life is the sharing of the abundant life. I've never met Oprah but if I could meet Oprah I would ask her about the day she gave away all of those cars and my best guess is that she had more fun that day that anyone else did—even the people who went home with a brand new car. I mean, if you've seen the video, she is over the moon "YOU get a new car. YOU get a new car. YOU get a new car. Everybody gets a new car."

That's what gratitude does—it transforms us into children of light who get more joy out of giving than we do receiving. That's what following Jesus does—it leaves us waiting and watching, right here and right now for the next opportunity to share what we have so we can lighten the load of another. It leaves us waiting and watching, right here and right now, for a chance to surprise someone with a gift for no reason or note in the mail to just let them know we're thinking about them. It leaves us waiting and watching, right here and right now, for a chance to show someone the love of Christ with a random smile or word of affirmation. It leaves us waiting and watching, right here and right now, to spend this inheritance of grace and mercy we've been given, to, in the words of my father, *spend it like we've got it* because friends, we do. We really do. We've got the inheritance of the children of light—we've got eternal life later and new life now—we've got it because God's got us. Thanks be to God.