

When Joshua addresses the Israelites, he speaks on behalf of God and reminds them of God's long standing and faithful commitment to them, culminating with their taking possession of the promised land. It is "a land with fine, large cities that [they] did not build, with houses full of goods of all sorts that [they] did not garner, with cisterns that [they] did not dig, with vineyards and olive groves that [they] did not plant" (Dt 6:10-11). If we read too literally, we might feel for the displaced Canaanites and the injustice of their losses. But we need to dig a little deeper to see how those who live today may be equated with the chosen people.

Jesus suffered and died on the cross that we might share in eternal life. Because of his sacrifice, we too will take possession of a dwelling place in a mansion that we did not build. "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be" (Jn 14:2-3).

Jesus is the Bread of Life that came down from heaven to nourish us in this life and in the next. He teaches: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world" (Jn 6:51). The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross is part of a new covenant that frees us from sin and offers us the promise of eternal life. "They will not hunger or thirst anymore, nor will the sun or any heat strike them. For the Lamb who is in the center of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Rev 7:16-17).

Joshua reminds the Israelites of God's faithfulness in order to help them keep up their end of the covenant. For their part, the people acknowledge how the LORD, their God, liberated them from slavery in Egypt, sustained them through the entire journey through the desert and has most recently offered them all that is good in the Promised Land. "At our approach the LORD drove out all the peoples... Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God" (Jos 24:18).

For our part, we must acknowledge all the LORD has done for us. Jesus liberated us from slavery to sin. As God has been merciful to us, we are called to be merciful to others. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

God has generously given so much to us and called us to be good stewards of God's gifts by freely giving to others. "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me" (Mt 25:35-36). Feeding the hungry and giving drink to the thirsty is but one important aspect of our faith. We are also called to help share the Good News. "The criterion of judgment for all the nations is their treatment of those who have borne to the world the message of Jesus, and this means ultimately their acceptance or rejection of Jesus himself" (Note Mt 25:35-36).

Just as the Israelites, entered the Promised Land with cities and vineyards in place, likewise we do not start from scratch but build on the works of others who have come before us. Jesus taught, "'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap what you have not worked for; others have done the work, and you are sharing the fruits of their work" (Jn 4:37-38).