

Our Living Hope Is Christs Resurrection

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Date: 18 March 1990

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[0 : 00] Our God and Father, we ask that as we turn our minds and hearts to your word, that you by your Holy Spirit will illuminate your word, and that your word may illuminate our minds and hearts.

We ask in Jesus Christ's name. Amen. Can you take your pew Bible and turn to page 216 in the New Testament section towards the back of the Bible, and we'll look at these verses 3 to 5 of 1 Peter.

During this season of Lent, we're going to concentrate completely on the first chapter of Peter's first epistle.

And so this is the second sermon on that text, verses 3 to 5. Last Sunday, Dr. Ian Rennie was here and gave a wonderful sermon, and I would almost prefer to have it repeated, but I will press on. And I'd like you to look at these verses, 3 to 5. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[1 : 30] By his great mercy, we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and unfading, which is kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are guarded through faith for salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

Now, that to my mind is a brilliant passage of scripture. I mean, I think it's almost like a, you know, like a burst of fireworks, a sort of great golden spray against the night sky.

And it's a magnificent statement of worship. Most people, when they start to write a letter, say, I, dear, whoever it may be, I've had a cold lately, and the horse has gone lame, and there's quite a drought in this area, and the weather's been bad for quite a while, and things aren't looking too good, and your Aunt Maggie is failing in health, and on they go.

But when Peter writes a letter, he says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who of his great mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance unfading, imperishable, undefiled, kept for you in heaven.

And it's a wonderfully positive statement we make about God. Now, the reason we tend to do the other thing is, when we start talking, we start talking from where we are.

[3 : 37] That is, what our complaints are, and what our difficulties are, and where we hurt, and where we're sick, or where we're offended, or, you know, it's where we hurt that we start talking.

But these people were hurting just as much as we are, and they were facing persecution of a kind we wouldn't even dream of. But when Peter starts his letter to them, he says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has begotten us again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

He answers the most basic question. He answers the profound question, Who is God? Well, we know who God is, primarily, and in a sense exclusively.

We can speculate in all sorts of directions, but historically, we know him as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And you can ask the question, What is the purpose of life?

And in the wonderful words of the prayer book, and I can't find them in the prayer book, but I know they're there, so if any of you could find them, please let me know where they are. But in the wonderful words of the prayer book, it teaches, it says, What is the purpose of life?

[5 : 03] And it is to so pass through things temporal that we finally fail not to win things eternal.

It is that we live our temporal life in order to come finally to our eternal life. It tells us that, this passage tells us, that we are born the children of Abraham and subject to death.

And that's a universal experience of the whole of mankind in every part and corner of the globe and in every age of history.

We are the children of Adam, subject to death. But he says of us, it says of God, that he has begotten us again.

He has effected regeneration in us. You know how modern medical science can show you how in the system of your body, one tiny germ can in effect lead ultimately to your death.

[6 : 15] So in the body of the whole of humanity, there is one tiny germ, historically and temporally. It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And by reason of that, the whole of humanity is going to be infected with life because he has begotten us again to a new life by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

And he's done this because he is a merciful God. And you, by God's grace, will recognize that the thing you need most from God is his mercy.

You may think that you need a payoff of some kind, but you don't. What you primarily need, what we all need, is the mercy of God. And in his mercy, he has brought us to regeneration through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

That tiny event in the Western Mediterranean 2,000 years ago is the beginning of a living infection of hope which will spread to the whole world.

[7 : 28] And that's why Peter says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has begotten us again of his great mercy to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

That's what belongs to us. Three key words in the passage. One is a living hope. All our human hopes are like a car from Ontario.

That is, no matter how shiny it looks, it has rust spots on it, and those rust spots are ultimately going to destroy it. And similarly with our human hopes, no matter how shiny they look, they will perish.

And only the hope that God gives us through Jesus Christ is a living hope that is focused in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It's a living hope which cannot be subject to death. And he talks not only about a living hope, he talks about an inheritance.

[8 : 44] It is a promised land which is ever being renewed. We can trace how in the hundred and more years of the history of this country, we have exploited it and have done enormous amounts of damage to it from which it may never recover.

But when Peter talks about the inheritance which belongs, the promised land which belongs to the church of Jesus Christ, it is an inheritance which is not capable of being corrupted.

It's not capable of being defiled. It's not capable of perishing. It's an inheritance undefiled. It's something quite different.

Something we couldn't even imagine because we're developing a tremendous sort of sense that anything humans touch is destroyed by it.

And so we're building up a world where you're not allowed to touch anything because of the destructive nature of what happens when you do touch anything. Any natural system.

[10 : 00] We live in a world which has built-in obsolescence. But this is an inheritance that God has prepared for us which is not subject to that process.

So there is a living hope. There is an inheritance which is undefiled and imperishable. And there is salvation. Do you see that down in verse 5?

Whom by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time. You know, that's why this whole verse, this whole text is moving through things temporal to things eternal.

The things that God has prepared for us. That's the direction we're going in. God's mercy is the reason that we're going in that direction. God's resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the focus that we're going in that direction.

And all this is to tell us that. That we have this living hope. That we have an inheritance which is undefiled.

[11 : 08] We have a salvation which is secure. I have a bank account. And I recently got a notice that I've had it for a number of years and never put any money in.

And I just recently got a notice from the bank saying I owed them money. Because the cost to them of maintaining my little treasure has got to the point where it has used up my little treasure and now they'd like a little more treasure.

to, you know, that's the kind of, that's the kind of thing that happens in our world. But this salvation is something that God guards and we receive by faith.

It's faith in the God who provides it. Well, we suffer from, in our world, from frustration and a tendency to despair because spoiling, perishing, fading are the things that mark the whole of our life.

You know, I think you need to read these verses against the background of some of the great questions that confront us as a people. What does it mean that our capacity to catch fish on the West Coast is far greater than the number of fish there are on the West Coast?

[12 : 33] And that, what does it mean to have wood mills with the capacity to strip this province as bald as a billiard ball? What does it mean to live in a country where our prairie breadbasket is in danger of becoming a desert?

And what does it mean to live in a country that worships wealth, health, and youth when you no longer have any of them? What does it mean to be a millionaire in a country which is hundreds of billions of dollars in debt?

It probably doesn't mean as much as you'd like it to mean. What does it mean to live in a country which struggles with language rights when we have nothing much to say? the, uh, well, you see, these verses speak exactly to those problems.

We need bread, but we don't need bread alone. We need love, but not love without truth.

We need housing, but we also need families to live in them. We need to be subject to government, but that government needs to be subject to truth and justice.

[14 : 06] process. We need art and imagination not to create ideologies, but to stimulate worship. Ah, I went to a play last week called Shirley Valentine.

I don't know if any of you have been there. It's a very amusing play, and it takes the human problem and portrays it with an eloquence which just knocks you right out of your seat, puts the finger right on what the problem is.

But while it does that, it, having defined the problem, it's absurdly inadequate in suggesting any answer to it. And, you know, that's sort of typical of our world, is that we know the problem, but we don't know what the answer is.

Well, the biblical perspective on all this is that as human beings, our true wealth is in God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who of his great mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance undefiled, imperishable, that fades not away, ready to be revealed at the last time, kept by God and appropriated by faith.

That's our true wealth. And if you have nothing but this faith, you have everything, and if you have everything but this faith, you have nothing.

[15 : 58] And if you have that's how you have to read these verses. There's no other way to read them. And that's why you will remember that Jesus said, you know, blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those that mourn, blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness.

And he goes on with all the beatitudes, the blessings on various people in what you might generally classify as difficult circumstances.

We are blessed because we mourn. We are blessed because we are persecuted. And that's true, we are. But you see, the result of that blessing is that we in turn recognize that we are to bless God. We are blessed and so we bless the God who blesses us. And that's what we're doing here today. And that's what the whole of our life should be, a blessing of the God who has abundantly blessed us.

That's how, that's, that's what the faith of our, our baptism is all about. God's purpose is to use this life to bring us with the consent of our wills and the understanding of our minds to give our lives primarily to the worship of God, to give the whole of our lives primarily to the worship of God.

[17 : 39] That's why we bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's why that is expressed in hymns and psalms and that's what we are called upon to do.

And it's because, well, when I say this is our baptismal faith, you see, the reason we're baptized is because we have suddenly recognized or been confronted with the fact that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has of his great mercy begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

And it's into that faith that we are baptized. We are baptized because that is true and by our baptism we acknowledge that it's true. true. And by our participation in the Holy Communion, we again

acknowledge that it's true, that we are saying, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who of his great mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope, to an inheritance uncorruptible and undefiled, to a salvation which is kept for us in heaven.

All that is ours because of what God has done. And you see, that's the place you start from in your life. It's not the place you end up at after a life of amazing inconsistency in almost every department, which is characteristic of most of us.

That's where you start. You start with God, with the God who has blessed us by regenerating us to new life through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

[19 : 54] It is God who has granted us a promised land, an inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled. It is God who has kept a salvation for us which is incapable of being eroded or taken away.

All that is ours because of God. And so it doesn't matter in one sense what the particular problems of your life may be.

this has to be the first thing that you acknowledge. And it has to be the last thing that you acknowledge. That's why it's important to people if they're lying on their deathbed and everything else is gone.

Wealth is gone. Health is gone. Youth is gone. It's all gone. And yet at that point supposing you have the strength even to listen it remains true wonderfully and richly and deeply true that the response of your heart to God from that condition is blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance undefiled to a salvation which cannot be taken away.

And we are personally and individually reminded of that as we partake of the bread and wine. We acknowledge that reality is the dominant reality in our lives.

[21 : 53] Amen.