

Easter III

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Preacher: Fr. Wade Miller

[0 : 00] We began this Easter season focusing on our new life in Christ, which was magnified with the baptism of little Henry McAvoy on Easter morning.

! New life, new beginnings, a new road or path is what Easter is all about. This new life, this new beginning, this new path is not just something we sing about on Sundays, nor is it merely a theory that we sit around, analyze and debate.

No, this new life, this new beginning, this new path is our new reality that we are to live in as baptized Christians who are no longer slaves to the ways of this world.

Our collect, that is our prayer this morning for the third Sunday after Easter, asks that the Lord show us the air of our ways and to grant unto all those who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, the discernment to avoid those things that are contrary to our profession of faith or to our confession.

Living as free and liberated people from sin, death and the devil means living a life of following our victorious Lord, listening to and obeying his voice from Holy Scripture throughout our lives here on earth.

[1 : 31] Our epistle text for this morning reiterates this point quite beautifully as we heard those words from 1 Peter chapter 2.

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, meaning unbelievers or those who do not follow Christ, that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold glorify your God in the day of visitation.

Friends, we are not called to be purposely eccentric, shocking or weird, to draw attention to ourselves.

Our calling is to be strangers and pilgrims to the values, to the ways of this world. That is, we are to practice a life of abstaining from all unruliness and avoid the sinful passions of the flesh that war against our souls.

[2 : 47] We are to do the works of Christ by following him rather than following the influencers on social media or certain cultural icons that put forth messages of promiscuity, self-empowerment, and hate.

St. Peter goes on to say that we are to live as free people, having been liberated from death by our Lord Jesus Christ and his resurrection over death.

Therefore, we are to be people of hope. We are to be people of hope. He says here in 1 Peter 2, verse 16, as free, not using your liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

That's what we're called to be as baptized Christians, servants of God. I don't want to sound flippant or trivial this morning, but living in the grace of our baptism, where we now have hope and the promise of new life, it's really not some grand mystery or some difficult puzzle that we have to figure out.

It's simply being the people that we are created to be in holy baptism, liberated followers of our deliverer and our savior Jesus, the Christ.

[4 : 19] We are the ones that make this so much more complicated than it really needs to be. And this complexity comes when we want to be relevant to the people around us, refusing to live as strangers and pilgrims to the ways of this world.

It's when social media takes more of our time and energy than reading scripture, praying, and spending time with others who love our Lord and who also keep us accountable.

It's when social media becomes first and foremost in our lives. It's when right-wing or left-wing news that pretends to be objective, they pretend to be the dispensers of truth, monopolize our thoughts, rather than focusing on the hope that we have in Christ Jesus.

It's when we excessively follow things like the stock markets and freak out about what's happening, rather than getting outside, getting away from all the noise and enjoying our Lord's creation, where our worries disappear as we give thanks to our great God and creator for the marvelous work that he's done.

In other words, it's when we give lip service to being people of faith. We know the language, we know the lingo, but we live as people who have been baptized into the ways of this world that leads to destruction and death.

[5 : 53] Is it any wonder that depression and anxiety continue to escalate in this country, and more and more people are medicated? Our hearts and minds are often held captive to the spirit of this age, rather than being free people to think upon that which is pure, holy, and true.

St. Peter says, Do not live by conforming your minds, your lives, your hearts to the ways of this world. Don't follow the herd. Don't be puppets to the ways of this world.

Instead, live as strangers, as pilgrims, fixating your hearts and minds on the hope that you have in Christ Jesus. Live simply.

Live thankfully. Live lives of gratitude. Live in the freedom you received as a baptized child in Jesus Christ, liberated from sin and death.

Inheritors of the great resurrection, where your resurrected body will be raised up and will no longer decay nor die.

[7 : 09] And where we shall dwell in a renewed and transformed earth, where love and peace and justice and truth reign supreme.

But until that glorious day, we are called as baptized Christians to follow the way of our Savior.

And as we heard in our gospel text, it could be difficult. There could be mourning. But like a woman giving birth. After that process and she sees her child, she forgets the pain.

And that's what it will be like when we enter into glory. What a great message for Mother's Day. What a great message for all of us.

We are called to grow deeper. Deeper in our love for Christ. Through prayer. Through meditating on scripture.

[8 : 11] Through sharing his love with an anxious and noisy world that so desperately needs order and purpose. And most importantly, to make that the priority.

To come and feed on Christ in the Eucharist. In the words of that great hymn that we sang, and we are going to sing for the recessional, at the name of Jesus, let us joyfully sing, and may our prayer be from those words.

In your hearts enthroned him. There let him subdue all that is not holy, all that is not true. Crown him as your captain in temptation's hour.

Let his will enfold you in its light and power. Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Amen.