

Living Hope

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[0 : 00] Verse 3, it's printed in your worship guide. You also can find it on your phone. You can find it potentially in your Bible if you brought that with you. And as we come to this, remember that this is God's word. And God tells us that his word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

In other words, God has not left us to walk alone in the dark, stumbling. But instead, he's given us his word to show us the way to go. And so that's why we read it starting with verse 3.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Verse 4, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. Kept in heaven for you, verse 5, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Father in heaven, we praise you and we thank you.

[1 : 09] And we thank you that you haven't left us alone, but that you've spoken to us. We thank you that your word is powerful. That it's your word that brings dead things to life.

It was your word that created the world. It's your word that called us to faith in you. And it's your word that you give to us this morning.

We ask that you would help us as we come to it. That you would speak to us clearly in ways, in words that we can understand. Because you know that we're but dust.

We ask that you would do that now and that we would leave here loving you more and knowing you more. And believing that you are worth it and that you're our Father. We ask these things not because we deserve them, but because Jesus has earned them for us.

And so we ask them in his name. Amen. Amen. Amen. So a few weeks ago before we started 1 Peter, we looked at, I believe it was Psalm 133, which talked about the beauty and glory of relationships.

[2 : 13] And if you've been in the church for a while, you've lived in communities, you know there are varying levels of relationships, especially when it comes to closeness. There's people that maybe you just greet them on Sunday morning. There's people maybe they come over to your house if you invite them.

And then maybe you've gotten to kind of the highest level of a relationship. You have people who they'll drop by your house even if you don't invite them. Now hopefully you have that kind of relationship with them.

There are certain people that have folks in their lives who drop by to their house uninvited even though they don't have that kind of relationship. That's a different discussion. But you know as we grow in community, there's people that we become closer and closer with.

We live life with them together in their houses constantly. Some of you in this church have those kinds of relationships. Peter, writing this letter, had that kind of relationship with Jesus.

He had a drop by the house anytime kind of relationship. In fact, it was probably more than that. We have indications in the Gospels that Peter and Jesus lived in the same house.

[3 : 15] When Jesus was in Capernaum where he met Peter, he would probably spend his time at Peter's family's house. At one point, they were so close that Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law.

Now if you're like me, sometimes when you open up your phone, if you swipe to a certain section, it will give you suggestions about what you should do. It will list maybe apps that you open a lot. I'll get suggestions about who I should be texting.

And it's usually based on who I've been texting a lot recently. When Peter opened up his phone, he got a suggestion to text Jesus. When Jesus, if he lived today, opened up his iPhone, he may have

gotten the suggestion to text Peter, James, or John.

Because those are the ones that were closest to him. And so Peter had this incredibly close relationship with Jesus. And there's another thing that's less known about Peter that people don't always tell you. And that's Peter has a verb that goes next to his name constantly in the Gospels. And that's the verb remember. Peter is the one who remembers. And that's why church history tells us that Peter was the source for much of the Gospel of Mark.

[4 : 17] Because his job was to remember what Jesus taught his disciples. It's with that in mind that we come to verse 3. Peter tells us, according to his great mercy that's talking about God, he has caused us to be born again.

Peter is telling us what he learned from Jesus. We read it as our preparation to worship this morning from John chapter 3. Jesus has this conversation with Nicodemus about what it means to love him and follow him.

And he says it's like being born again. In other words, becoming a Christian is so radical, it's like becoming a whole new person. There's a whole new identity and reality that you exist in. And there's all kinds of things I could tell you about the new birth. We could spend multiple sermons talking about what it means to be born again. What this is that Jesus was teaching that Peter remembered. But Peter gives us a couple things to focus on specifically in this passage. First of all, it's that he's been born again, not just in general, but we've been born again. This is still verse 3, to a living hope. And he's also going to tell us, verse 4, that we've been born again to an inheritance.

[5 : 19] When I was growing up, like some of you, I, during the summers, I would go to summer camp. And this was in the forest of West Virginia, right outside the George Washington National Park.

And my brothers and I loved going to camp. It was one of our favorite things. In fact, we loved it so much that there was one year, one of us had a camp-themed birthday party where we tried to reenact what it was like to be at camp for our birthday party because we just thought it was the best. We looked forward all year to going to camp. We loved being there with the other kids, doing all these fun things outdoors. And so it was wonderful, except for one year. So I grew up going to camp, elementary school.

And then I got to junior high, and I was no longer able to go to the camp where you just, you know, shoot guns and shoot bows and arrows, but you had to pick an activity. And so I decided that year I was going to go to a go-kart camp.

And so you'd show up for the week, and you'd have different teams of kids, and they would build a go-kart, and the goal was at the end of the week you'd get to race it. Now that sounds wonderful. It was terrible.

[6 : 24] And it was terrible because this was a camp on a shoestring budget, and so part of what they would do is they'd break up these teams, and they'd have different volunteers who would lead them. So you'd have dads who had a background in mechanics who'd take a group of kids, and they'd say, okay, we're going to build this go-kart, this dad's going to lead this go-kart, so-and-so.

I got on a team with a dad and his son and me. And this dad and his son had an amazing time building their go-kart that week.

However, they didn't invite me to help them with things. I mean, I was there. I was 12 or 13 at the time. I didn't really know exactly how to self-advocate, you know. I would ask them at times, what can I do?

There wasn't really a lot. And this father that I was working with wasn't the greatest man in the world. At one point, he would tell us, you know, these other teams, they're not going to win at the end of the week because they don't understand how wheel alignment works in the front of go-karts. Like, we're 12. We're not supposed to understand how wheel alignment works in the front of go-karts. It was terrible. On top of that, there was this other punk in my cabin. And he and I had interacted in previous summers, and he let me know that he had some tricks.

[7 : 38] He and his dad had figured out, you know, the right way to race go-karts. He was not going to share that with me, however. Capone, you're not going to get in on our secrets. It was awful.

It was my worst week at camp. It was awful day after day, feeling like I was excluded from these people. I didn't belong right there of a different birth than I am. There's a father and a son. I can't break into this. I'm supposed to be having this amazing week building go-karts.

And yet it turned out to be quite the opposite, right? I was feeling out of place in this situation. Wasn't doing what I was supposed to be doing. I was shut out. But I had one hope. With this camp, you got dropped off on a Sunday, and it went all the way until the next Saturday. And I knew that when Saturday came, there was a road in the camp, a dirt gravel road that ran across a creek on a bridge, and then it ran into camp. And I knew that on Saturday morning, rolling down that road with dirt blowing behind it, there was going to be a red manual transmission, 1998 Subaru Forester rolling down the road, probably in second gear.

[8 : 51] And behind the wheel of that 1998 red Subaru Forester was going to be Charles Capone Jr., my father. And no matter what happened that week, I knew at the end, he was going to come and pick me up.

And that wasn't a faint hope. It was a living hope. It was a living hope because my father was alive. It was also a living hope because I knew my father's character, and Charles Capone Jr. was not going to be late on Saturday morning to pick me up. He had picked me up in previous years from camp. He was my father, right? He loved me, he cared for me. There was no way he was going to forget that that was his day to come to camp and give me full and final salvation from this situation.

Why does it matter that God is our father? No matter what happens in this world, no matter what the people reading this letter face, they know no matter what, God is going to come for them. And he is going to give them, verse 5, a salvation that's going to be revealed in the last time. And when he comes back, he is not coming back on a red manual transmission, 1998 Subaru Forester, but he is coming back, as the Old and the New Testament tells us, on the clouds with all authority and power and glory and dominion.

[10 : 27] And as Philippians 2, chapter 2, verse 10 tells us, every knee is going to bow down and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. Because God is our father, we know that he is coming for us.

And no matter what happens in this world, nothing can change that. It's according to his great mercy. This is the word from the Old Testament that we've translated as God's never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love.

He's called us to be born again to a living hope. It's not a dead hope. It's a living hope because Jesus is alive. It's happened through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Because Jesus died and actually rose from the dead, these people have real hope in real time because God is their father. As they look back to something that actually happened in the past that Jesus died and rose from the dead, they can also look forward to a real historical event that is going to happen when Jesus comes back.

And so they can live in the present with hope and faith no matter what's going on around them. Now Peter would have known that Jesus rose from the dead.

[11 : 45] And he would have known because he would have met Jesus after he rose from the dead. Peter interacted with Jesus. He walked with Jesus. One thing that Peter's going to tell us later in this letter is that we need to have a reason for the hope that's within us.

In other words, we need to know why it is that we believe that Jesus rose from the dead. We need to know why we have a living hope. Now of course ultimately we have this living hope because God works it in us through his spirit, but of course there's many things that encourage us that he uses. One of them is the testimony of Peter. Remember that Peter is a middle class fisherman, small business owner, and after Jesus died he could have easily gone back to that business.

There's no indication that there was a tank in the fish business in Capernaum during the couple years when Peter was following Jesus. In fact, we were told at the very end of the Gospel of John that Peter did that at one point.

He went back to his fishing boat. Had Jesus not risen from the dead, Peter would have had every reason to go back to his old life. But instead, because he knew and had experienced that Jesus had risen from the dead, he chose something that was much more challenging, hard, and difficult.

[13 : 00] He chose something that was going to be less lucrative for him financially. Instead of going back to his job as a fisherman, he followed after Jesus, preaching about him. We see this in the book of Acts and suffering for him.

Peter's testimony is part of the reason that we have confidence in Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Why else would Peter, a man who hated suffering, choose to suffer?

And why else would Peter, a man who could have gone back to fishing, instead transition to preaching the Gospel and being persecuted for it? Peter does it because he knows that God is his Father who has caused him to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

And so that no matter what, he has a salvation that's ready to be revealed in the last time. If we have faith in Christ, the same is true of us.

Saying that God is our Father is not a sentimental story to end a sermon. And it's not a line in a devotional to make us have a warm feeling.

[14 : 25] But it is the actual reality and fact that we need to know to give us hope, to look forward as we live now to what God is going to do in the future and we have confidence in that because of what he has done in the past.

And that is how we're going to be able to do what Peter is going to tell us at the very end of chapter 5 which is stand firm. That's why it matters that God is our Father.

That's not the only thing that this new birth has given, however. When I was at this camp and things weren't going well, this was in West Virginia.

Now I didn't live in West Virginia. I lived in Southern Maryland right outside Washington, D.C. And while I was at camp, my home in Southern Maryland still existed.

Imagine that. I had a room in this home. That room could not be touched by anything that happened at the camp. I had relationships at this home.

[15 : 37] I had a family. There is nothing that happened in West Virginia that could touch that.

When Peter says, we've been born again to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, he is saying not only what we've already seen that no matter what happens, God is coming for us.

He's also saying that no matter what happens, there is nothing in this world that can touch or affect what God is preparing, has prepared, and is securing for us.

Nothing that happens to these readers in modern-day Turkey as they're experiencing persecution as Christians will affect their inheritance. It cannot be touched.

It's imperishable. Nothing can ruin it. It's undefiled. Sin doesn't have any effect. It's unfading. No matter how long it's there, it will still be as beautiful as ever, and it's kept in heaven for you.

When I was in West Virginia, just because I was separated from my home in Maryland did not make that home any less real. When we live in this world feeling out of place and facing opposition from the world and in the world, the fact that we cannot see and are not with our inheritance from God right now does not make it any less real.

[17 : 10] The salvation that's talked about in verse 5 is not just a salvation from, but it's a salvation to. My Father was not just coming in his Subaru Forester to rescue me and provide a salvation to be revealed in the last time from West Virginia, but he was also taking me back to Maryland.

The readers of this letter are not just going to experience salvation from their struggles in this world. They're also being delivered to this full and robust salvation that includes their inheritance.

They have become, because God has adopted them through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, brothers and sisters of Jesus and sons and daughters of God, which means that they are heirs.

Everything that God has given his son belongs to them as well. That's the full salvation. Of course, the salvation includes being removed from the penalty of sin, right?

It's not less than that, but it's more than that. It's taking part in the world that God has prepared that no longer has the effects or presence of sin. It's like the new creation.

[18 : 31] It's like the original creation in Genesis 1 and 2 and even better. And not only is it even better, it's like the creation that never had Genesis 3.

No sin was introduced. That's what these people have to look forward to. Why does it matter that God's their father? It matters that God's their father because he has given them and is and will give them an inheritance.

And it's an inheritance that cannot be touched by anything in this world. It's kept in heaven, verse 4, for you.

Now, how do they access all these privileges of the sons and daughters of God? Peter tells us that this is something that happens through faith, verse 5.

Now, we've talked about faith before. Remember, faith is three things. It's, first of all, knowledge. It's knowing the facts, knowing that Jesus died for our sins and he rose again from the dead, that he's paid the penalty that we deserve and therefore we're going to have life with him.

[19 : 38] It's not just knowledge, though it's belief. It's actually believing that those things are true. And then finally, it's not just belief, but trust, living as if those things are true. And what does that faith look like?

Well, it looks like Peter kind of faith. Peter had so much faith that when Jesus was suffering and praying, Peter fell asleep.

Peter had so much faith that when Jesus was going to the cross and people asked Peter if he knew Jesus, Peter said no because he was afraid of being persecuted.

And Peter had so much faith that after Jesus went back to heaven and he'd been given his mission to evangelize, there was one point where he avoided the Jews because he thought it would embarrass him.

And so Paul had to come and rebuke him. That's the kind of faith Peter had. That's the kind of faith that God uses, faith that is imperfect, flawed, and faltering to provide his sons and his daughters with salvation and an inheritance.

[21 : 13] And that faith God used in Peter's life to grow him. And so he also had other kinds of faith. He had the kind of faith in the book of Acts where he boldly proclaimed the gospel even when it led him to suffering.

And Peter had the kind of faith that at the end of his life he was willing to be crucified upside down because he did not believe, this is what church history tells us, he did not believe that he was worthy of suffering a death like Jesus did.

He believed he needed something that was a step further going upside down. In other words, it is Peter's faith, verse 5, but also, verse 5, God's power.

these people facing the potential of loss in this world, perhaps wondering if they have what it takes to stand strong and remain firm, have the example of Peter who's writing to them who failed over and over again as an illustration of God's power to his people in their weakness, guarding them and holding them firm.

We're told in verse 4, this inheritance is kept in heaven for you, so the inheritance is being guarded who by God's power you are also being guarded through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

[22 : 49] In other words, we can't lose our inheritance because if we have faith in Christ, God refuses to lose us. We cannot lose our inheritance because God refuses to lose us.

It is by faith our faith, but it's not our power. It was Peter's faith, not Peter's power. the beginning of his time with Peter, Jesus says to him, calls him, he calls him to follow after him.

And then Peter fails dramatically as I've already discussed in this sermon. And so he goes back to what he knows, he goes back and fishes again. This is at the end of the Gospel of John.

And Jesus comes and finds him and performs the same miracle that he did at the very beginning. He causes Peter again to catch a whole boat full of fish when he can't catch anything.

And then he makes Peter breakfast over the same type of charcoal that was in the fire that Peter was standing by when he betrayed Jesus. And finally, at the end, Peter asks him about another disciple and Jesus says, Peter, don't worry about that other disciple.

[24 : 14] You follow me. Peter's faith, God's power, calling him over and over again despite Peter's failures and mistakes.

It is Jesus who comes to him with his grace, the same grace that Peter offers to his readers now, helping them understand why it matters that God is their father and why that's not a sentiment but a true and living hope that they can, like he has, stake their lives on.

And so he offers that same power to anyone else who is willing to follow after him like Peter in faith. Why does it matter that God is our father?

it matters because he is coming back for us to provide a salvation in the last time. And it also, and there's nothing in this world that happens that can threaten that and take us from it.

It also matters that he is our father because he has provided an inheritance for us and no matter what is taken away from us in this world, that inheritance cannot be touched. And finally, God being

our father matters because like my father driving down the road in West Virginia, it is not us and our faith that seek out God.

[25 : 47] But like with Peter, it is God and his power that seeks out us and guards us through faith for salvation. And so that's why we can say as Peter begins here, verse 3, blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Please pray with me. Father in heaven, we thank you that you are our father. And we thank you that we can approach you boldly, knowing that you guard us.

And while it's our small and weak and feeble and faltering faith, it is your power that holds us and keeps us, we ask that you would help us, that you'd remind us of the hope that you hold out to us and you'd help us to stand firm.

We ask these things not because we have earned them, but because Jesus has earned them for us and so we ask them in his name. Amen.