

He is Risen – He is Risen, Indeed! Amen.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

This is God’s Word.

Dear Fellow Recipients of God’s Blessings,

What was your happiest day in 2019? I’m sure we could fill hours having people respond to that question. Maybe it was a memorable holiday or a special birthday. Maybe it was the birth of a new child or grandchild. Maybe you got married. Maybe you retired or got a new job. Maybe you bought a different home or moved. There are a lot of things that bring us an almost inexpressible joy. As you listened to the Gospel lesson this morning, John was describing a time of inexpressible joy – the appearance of Jesus to his disciples on that 1st Easter evening.

Last Sunday, we celebrated Easter, it was a celebration that was different from other years but it was still a joyful day. But what about today? Are you still feeling the joy of Easter or are these stay-at-home days starting to wear on you?

Peter, in this letter to the early Christian churches and to us, wants to encourage us by reminding us that, **“We Have a Gold Mine of Joy,”** because we have a **“Living Hope.”** This Gold Mine of Joy brings us, **“The Riches of our Living Hope,”** **“The Comfort of our Living Hope,”** and **“The Goal of our Living Hope.”**

I. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is what makes Easter a great day of joy and rejoicing. That’s what Peter is thinking of as he begins this portion of scripture with, **“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope”** With these words Peter reminds us that our Joy comes to us because of God’s great mercy for us. We don’t have to find our own reason to be joyful, God in his mercy gives us every reason to be joyful and to praise him. He has given us a “new birth,” practically speaking he has given us new life.

We didn’t even know we were dead. We didn’t know we needed to be born again, but many years ago Jesus told Nicodemus that a person must be born of the water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of heaven. (John 3:5). And so, through the sacrament of Holy Baptism, we have been “born again.” We have been given spiritual life as the Holy Spirit worked through the water and the word to create faith in our hearts. We didn’t do anything to deserve it – we were babies but God in his mercy gave us the gift of faith. Faith in Jesus that helps us to understand the scriptures. Faith in Jesus that helps to see how he has redeemed us. Faith in Jesus that gives us reason to rejoice. We have the richness of salvation from our Living Savior – our Living Hope.

“In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” This Living Hope is only possible because of Christ’s resurrection. Christ’s resurrection guarantees us that the price for our sins has been paid in full. The Holy Spirit has given us the gift of faith to bring us the benefits of Christ’s resurrection. Because Christ lives, we can have spiritual life. Because Christ lives, we have the forgiveness of sins. Because Christ lives, we are part of God’s family and as part of God’s family we have an inheritance.

Peter describes this inheritance as, **“An inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you.”** This inheritance God gives us isn’t anything like what we might inherit here on this earth. People inherit all kinds of things like money and boats and houses and jewelry and cars and anything you can think of but along with all these worldly things a person might inherit comes the fact that these things will wear out and can easily be lost or stolen or destroyed by a tornado, fire, flood or even a pandemic. God’s inheritance isn’t like that. It never wears out, never fades, never changes.

It is kept in heaven for us because the inheritance God has for us is salvation and along with salvation comes eternal life in heaven. Our inheritance is a heavenly mansion that God has prepared for us and that comes to us through faith in Jesus as our Savior. But we don’t have to wait until we die to get our inheritance. We reap the benefits of this inheritance already – today. Salvation not only brings us the sure hope of eternal life but it also brings us the forgiveness of sins and the joy in knowing Jesus as our Savior.

II. At times it is so easy to forget about the joy of our salvation. We set the riches of God’s Word aside and forget about the wonderful gift God has given us.

But sometimes our journey through life isn’t always so joyful. Sometimes life comes at us like a truck and knocks us flat with unexpected challenges. Maybe it’s that diagnoses of cancer or the death of a loved one or the loss of a job or problems with our children or this pandemic we all have been dealing with. There are any other number of difficulties that can and do come into our lives and sidetrack us.

Peter reminds us, **“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”** Troubles and trials are part of everyone’s life. The Christian can approach troubles in a different way. **The Christian holds onto the promise of God to work everything out for the good of those who love him. (Romans 8:28).** I think that this is a time when we are all being refined by the challenges we are facing. It’s not easy and it’s not fun but where are you looking for relief? Video games, food, alcohol – those things can only bring us short term relief but God wants to draw us closer to himself and so maybe this is a time to turn to the comfort found in his Word.

The Apostle Paul wrote, **“That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”** (2 Corinthians 12:10). Paul understood that when he was suffering – when he was weak – he was drawn more and more towards God for strength and comfort and to carry him through difficult times. Along with the Apostle Paul, we rejoice in God’s strength that carries us through

the difficulties of life. Michael Schroeder, a Christian singer, has a song called, *Send the Storm*. The chorus of that song is, “Send the storm, Lord, so that I may fall, Back into your waiting arms, For when I am weak, then I am strong, So I will reach for you – send the storm.”

We don't usually pray for troubles and hardships to come into our lives but when they do it is a reason to rejoice. That's right – to rejoice because our Savior is working to draw us closer. He is giving us an opportunity to praise him as we let our faith and trust in our Savior shine. Then we feel the Comfort we have in our Living Hope – Jesus Christ. The comfort he brings us as he wraps his arms around us through his Word and assures us he will take care of us. And he does for all of us – more times than we think or remember.

III. Even in the midst of trouble we don't want to lose sight of our destination. For heaven is our goal and faith in Jesus as our Savior takes us there. **“Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”**

The goal of our faith is salvation and heaven. Faith in Jesus makes that goal a reality. Not because of the amount of our faith but because of the object of our faith – the Living Hope – Jesus Christ. The devil has fooled the world into thinking that everyone will go to heaven, whether they know Jesus or not – whether they have faith in Jesus as their Savior or not but that is not the truth found in God's Word. Don't be fooled by the ways of the world but rather be comforted and rejoice that your faith in Jesus Christ will take you to your final goal of heaven.

That is what brings us an inexpressible and glorious joy. As we continue in this Easter season remember our **“Gold Mine of Joy”** that comes to us through our Living Hope – Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Rejoice in your Rich treasure of salvation, the comfort of God's Word and the gift of eternal life. May God continue to bring you these treasures through his Word as you deal with the challenges of this life. Amen.