

Our “Blessed” God and His Resurrection Blessing

2nd Sun. of Easter – 04/16/23 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: 1 Peter 1:3-9 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 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.**”

Introduction

✘ Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

✘ Give me a show of hands: How many of us have ever been frustrated at the high cost of groceries? Of fuel for our vehicles? At those same times, have you ever taken into consideration the tremendous blessing God has given us to be able to just walk into one store and find almost anything we might want in the way of food and other items? Or what a great blessing God has given us to just drive up to a pump and so easily fill our car with the fuel required for us to get from one place to another?

→ There are so many blessings from God that we take for granted every day. Ralph Waldo Emerson once said that, “If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore; and preserve for many generations the remembrance of the city of God which had been shown! But every night come out these envoys of beauty, and light the universe with their admonishing smile.” Why did he say that the stars shine each night with an “admonishing smile”? Because you and I have grown so used to seeing them, every night, that we have taken the blessing of their beauty and grandeur for granted, just as we so quickly and easily take so many, if not most of God’s blessings for granted, including the greatest blessing of God Himself.

I. “Blessed be God...”

✘ But St. Peter will not allow us to do such a terrible thing today in our Epistle Reading. After his initial greeting, Peter begins his first letter to the New Testament Christians by saying, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!”

→ We hear more often about God’s many blessings to us or even Him saying that we are blessed by Him and His saving work. But, what does it mean to say, “Blessed be God”?

✘ Quite simply, this is Peter putting first things first; getting the “Blessing Train” set onto the tracks in the right order. He’s setting the example for how each and every believer in Christ should order our thinking, our words and our lives. Before we can ever understand the concept of God’s blessings showered out upon us, Peter shows us how important it is for us to express our complete adoration of God for all that He has done for us!

→ The original Greek for “Blessed be” literally means “well spoken”. So, Peter and we speak well of God for who He is and what He does. The commentator Richard Lenski says, “No task should give us greater delight” than to do this (pg. 30).

→ And yet we do far too little of this, don’t we? Why? because of our “busy”ness, our self-focused attitudes, our fear of how people might react, or the fact that we don’t think we even know what to say in “speaking well” about God.

✘ Well, if that last item is your concern, after today Peter takes that excuse away. He lays it all out before us, in great detail, why God is so blessed!

→ To begin with, Peter says in verse one that it is because of God’s “great mercy” toward us that “He has caused us to be born again”. We only truly grasp how truly “great” God’s mercy is

in this when we understand what we were originally from birth in comparison to what we are now that God has given us an entirely new and different life. The very fact that God would willingly stoop down to such wretched creatures as us displays a “mercy” and love that we can never even begin to grasp.

→ Think about it: in our complete sinful state from conception, every one of us deserved God’s full wrath and eternal condemnation to hell. And then in our actual sins after birth we have spiritually looked God right in the eyes and said things like this: “We know that Your Word says we should have no other gods before You; that we should love our neighbor as ourselves and so much more, but we don’t. In fact, we’re going to do what we want instead.” And you and I have all done that over and over again; more times than we can count, haven’t we?

→ So, the last thing we deserve is mercy of any kind. We should have no hope; no expectation for anything but punishment and hell!

✘ Yet that is not what our “blessed” God gives to us. In His “great mercy” He has given us an entirely new life; causing us “to be born again,” Peter says, “to a living hope” (v.1). How is this possible? By what power? He continues, “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

→ No man has spiritual life and hope without the resurrection of Christ. He alone is “the resurrection and the life” (Jn. 11:25), and so you and I live only because He lives! Later on in chapter 3:21 Peter shows us that God’s gift of baptism is the instrument; the way that He connects us to Christ’s resurrection power. Peter says, “Baptism...now saves you...through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

✘ And not only are we “born again to a living hope”, but in verse four Peter says we are “born again...to an inheritance...”. In Matthew 25:34 Jesus describes this inheritance as coming from the Father with this invitation, “Come, you who are blessed..., inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Since this inheritance was prepared as a part of Creation, this is clearly no ordinary earthly inheritance.

→ In fact, Peter says it has four characteristics. #1, it is “imperishable”. That means that there is no destructive force of nature or man that can in any way harm, corrupt or destroy this inheritance. #2, it is “undefiled”. The Greek literally says it is “unstained”. This inheritance is so pure; so perfect that it is impossible to improve. No earthly inheritance comes even close to it. #3, it is “unfading”. No matter how much time passes, this inheritance will never grow stale or out of date. Most importantly, we believers will never grow tired of it! And #4, it is “kept in heaven for you”. There is no more secure place possible than heaven itself.

→ Peter expands in verse five on this last point by answering the question of who “you” and I are that have this inheritance from God. We are the ones, “who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” That speaks to our situation right “now” and in the future. Right now we believers in Christ are being “guarded” “by God’s power”, it says! The word for “guarded” in the original Greek is “froureo” (φρουρέω) which is a military term that describes “soldiers keeping guard to protect the weak”. And you and I folks; we are the “weak”, being guarded by God’s almighty power. Peter says it is “through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

→ Once again, we’ve done none of the work; we are unable to do it in our sin. But God’s gift of faith is what makes it possible for us to trust God’s power to keep us from going backward in our previous life of sin with the devil as our father. In every temptation and danger we face, our faith turns to God; prays to Him that He might use His power to shield us and make a way of escape for us.

→ And the goal? God's goal and ours is "a salvation" kept safely for us in heaven that is "ready" for the Day of God's perfect timing. Everything is done! Everything is in place! Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

II. "In this you rejoice" (v.6)

✘ With that certainty in place regarding God's great-mercy blessings which are given and guaranteed by Christ's resurrection, Peter now says in verse six, "In this you rejoice..."! That word "rejoice" in the Greek is in the present tense which means it is an ongoing, continuous, every-single-day rejoicing that God gifts to us while we await the consummation of our salvation. In other words friends; "rejoicing" is what our life is all about as reborn Christians; shouting out in every aspect of life our resurrection joy; Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

→ And verse six says we even have that joy while we are "grieved by various trials" here in this earthly life. How is that possible? How can a person "rejoice" in the midst of great trial and tribulation? Well, first Peter assures us that these trials are only temporary. In the grand scheme of our eternal life, he says they last only "a little while" (v. 6).

→ And second Peter says the trials that we face in this earthly life have an important Godly purpose. He tells us our trials are actually "necessary" because they serve the purpose of "testing" the "genuineness of your faith" (v.7). Peter uses the example of how gold is tested by fire, to which Martin Luther explained, "The fire does not lessen the gold but makes it pure and bright, removing any ad-mixture. So God lays the cross upon all Christians in order to purify and cleanse them well that their faith may remain pure even as the Word is pure, and that we may cling to the Word alone and trust in nothing else. For we all need such a purifying and cross greatly because of our old, gross Adam" (Lenski, pg. 39).

→ Yes, our joy continues even through the trials of our faith because, in these trials our blessed Father and His Son, Jesus never leave us; never stop loving us, but only prove their presence and power so that our "praise and glory and honor" (v.7) only grow stronger in the truth that Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

→ In fact this is a double-sided "praise and glory and honor" there in verse seven; for when Christ is revealed to all mankind on the final Day you and I, dear Christians – we will be included in, and embraced by Jesus' "praise and honor and glory" as well!

III. Blessed to live in the Now Not Yet

✘ Until that glorious day, God has blessed us believers in Christ to live in what theologians have coined as the "Now Not Yet". Verse eight says, "Though you have not seen [Christ], you love Him. Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory."

→ Remember, Peter has seen the resurrected Jesus in the flesh there in that room from our Gospel Reading on the evening of His Resurrection Day. But now, Peter places himself below us as his readers and says we who "have not seen" Jesus are even more blessed because God has gifted us with His grace to both "love" and "believe" in Him without the crutch of basing our faith on first having to see Jesus in the flesh as Thomas required in that same Reading today. Jesus told Thomas in John 20:29, "Have you believed because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

✘ This gift of saving faith that Jesus has given us is so important; so life-changing and all-encompassing that we Christians can't help but "rejoice with joy" (that's a double dose of joy) "that is inexpressible and filled with glory"! (v.8)

→ This, friends, is our Christian life right now! We live in “inexpressible” joy and glory right now today. Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

✘ And even as we do, we live knowing that all of this – our faith and joy and love from God – for God, is still not yet as grand and glorious and perfect as it will be once we have, as Peter says in verse nine, “obtained the outcome of your faith,” the final and fullest “salvation of your souls”.

→ The Greek word for “souls” there is “pseekā” (ψυχή). It’s a word that encompasses a person’s “life, soul, self, breath, and entire psyche (thinking, reasoning, emotions, heart & mind). So the “salvation of your souls” that Peter is talking about here is when, on the Final Day, our entire being – body, soul, life and spirit enters into the full and eternal glory of heaven with our “blessed...God”; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

→ Oh, the very thought of it just makes our joy explode beyond comprehension, even “Now” as we look eagerly to all of the glories of eternity in the “Not Yet”! And all of it is ours; promised and guaranteed because, Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia! Amen.*