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Sermon Series: *In Times Like These 4*

Hope

August 27, 2023

1 Peter 1:3-9 (NIV)

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. This inheritance is 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 all 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 the proven genuineness of your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – 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 end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

We're in the first chapter of the book of 1 Peter today, if you'd like to turn there. First Peter, Chapter One.

Annette and I occasionally watch *Antiques Roadshow* on TV. This is a show where people bring in old items they have in their homes to learn more about what they are and what they're worth – or what they're *not* worth.

One of my favorite parts about that show is when someone brings in something that looks ordinary at best and maybe junky at worst, and is then told by some expert that their item is worth all kinds of money. It's great to see the look on their faces – the shock that this thing they've used for an ashtray or to carry wood or that's been stuffed in a box in an attic is worth way more than the house it's sitting in. Suddenly, they have a whole new appreciation and respect for the item, and so they treat it way better – with more interest and care, you know?

Now of course, what I do after seeing something like that happen is I go looking through our house or garage, thinking, "there has to be something here – what is it that we own that's worth way more than we think?"

I'm sorry to say that nothing like that has turned up so far in our house, but all of us do have something like that here in this first part of the first chapter of First Peter.

This little passage, our text for today, is an absolute diamond that is too often mistaken for ordinary glass.

Barclay says this is one of very, very few passages in the New Testament where so many foundational Christian ideas all come together.

Look at all the words and concepts that appear here in just these few verses: mercy, new birth, hope, resurrection, faith, salvation, rejoice, suffer, trials, refined, praise, glory, honor, joy...

It's like a huge dictionary of Christian terminology reduced into a tiny pamphlet.

So – what's really happening here?

Why is this done as it is?
And why is it so valuable?

It seems to me the key concept that ties all these verses together is there in verse 4 – the concept of "inheritance."

Inheritance.

That's a great word, isn't it?

It has such a nice sound.

Inheritance. It carries a message of blessing, gift, bestowal, and, let's just be honest, it sounds like money, right? That's what most of us think of when we think of inheritance.

One of my uncles (my dad's brother, my Uncle Clyde), all our family – his siblings and all of us nieces and nephews, we used to say that Clyde was a lot like a bird: cheep, cheep, cheep, *cheap*.

Because Clyde had some money, and Clyde kept his money.

Growing up, a lot of us cousins did a lot of hard work for him on his farms, and we were always well fed, thanks to his wife.

But for the most part, to him, the idea of "payment for services" was a foreign concept.

But, when he died at 94, having no heirs, my aunt, his sister, in distributing his estate, gave several thousand dollars to each of us who had worked for him through the years.

Now, he'll probably ask for it back when I see him in Glory, but the point is, a number of us cousins got a pleasantly surprising *inheritance*.

Of course, one can inherit bad things from those who come before us, too.

And, one can also inherit *good* things that are *not* financial, which is what Peter is talking about here in verse 4: the good inheritance that all in Jesus will receive.

The word he uses, κληρονομία (klēronomia) is a great word with a great history. This is the word used in the Greek language to speak of Canaan, Israel's promised land: the land God would give His people to possess.

So, when the original readers of this letter of Peter's (at least those with a Jewish background), when they read this business here about inheritance, their minds immediately recalled God's promised land of Canaan.

And Peter was very intentional in using this concept and terminology, because as we read on through this letter, we learn that the people to whom Peter wrote were undergoing tremendous persecution and hostility, which, not surprisingly, made them very discouraged.

That's the big reason why Peter wrote.

It would be like someone writing a letter to our brothers and sisters who live today in certain parts of the Middle East or India, or in North Korea, Somalia or

Nigeria, where Christian women and children are being abused and where Christian homes and churches are being burned.

You see, Peter wanted his original readers – and by extension *everyone* who undergoes persecution for Jesus' sake – to know how special they are to God.

He writes to remind them that they – and we, today, who are in Christ – are God's chosen people, God's new temple and God's new Israel. We see all those images in this letter.

Peter reminds them that they are temporary residents – foreigners, even – in *this* world, while assuring them that they possess full citizenship in God's Kingdom.

All this is to help them put their marginalized present position into perspective and to let them know that, though their circumstances may be, for now, very difficult, their future is absolutely secure, all because of this: *inheritance*.

Now, chances are that when you and I think today of *inheritance*, we think of something that we might possess at some point in the future, if we manage to stay in our benefactor's good graces.

But scripturally, and certainly to the Jew, the idea of inheritance is much more certain and even present-oriented. That's because when God says we will inherit something, He means the whole issue is already settled, and we can be completely secure in knowing that it belongs to us now, even if we don't yet tangibly possess it.

For example, the pre-Joshua Jews understood the land of Canaan was absolutely theirs even before they possessed it, simply because God said it was so.

In fact, doubting that they could possess the land amounted to suggesting that God is a liar, and that is the one big reason they had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years after resisting God's command to finally enter and possess the land.

God could not let a people who doubted His word, His character and His integrity represent Him to the world. They had to get their heads on straight about Him before they could fully receive their inheritance – which they did.

But of course, you know that, even then, Canaan was not a perfect situation.

There were rebellious people living there, and even after Israel possessed it, they had to fight over and over again to keep it.

Beyond that, just the basic sin condition of our world affected Canaan too. Sometimes it did not rain there, sometimes it flooded; sometimes crops grew and sometimes they didn't. There were wild animals and bugs that caused problems, and there were diseases and sicknesses and death in the land, just as there are in every land on earth – because of the weight of sin that bears upon our world.

Canaan, just because it was Canaan and just because it was an inheritance from God, was not exempt from those things, because as tremendous and as great as it was, it was still part of our fallen earth.

But that's precisely what makes this inheritance for Christ-followers that Peter talks about *so* much better!

In verse 4, Peter uses three words to describe the Christian inheritance. The words are, by the way, alliterated in Greek, meaning they all start with the same Greek letter. (This proves beyond doubt that God prefers sermons to have three, alliterated points.)

These three words used by Peter all begin with the Greek letter *alpha*, and in my version, they are translated into English as: indestructible, undefilable and unfading.

Peter says that our inheritance in Christ is, first, *indestructible*; it will never die or decay or be eaten by insects or blighted by disease or suffer capture or invasion from any enemy force – like the earthly Canaan did.

Followers of Jesus are promised a peace, a joy, a safety and a serenity which will never be compromised. Our inheritance in Christ is *indestructible*.

Peter says that our inheritance in Jesus is also *undefilable*; it will always be entirely free from moral impurity.

The earthly Canaan was polluted over and over again in all manner of ways, but especially it was morally polluted by the worship of false gods.

But, as Peter promises here, Christ-followers will enjoy a purity, a holiness, that the sin of this world cannot affect.

We can be, and we will be holy, as God is holy. No impurity, no pollution, no weakness of spirit or will.

In Jesus, we have an inheritance that is *undefilable*.

And then, Peter promises that our inheritance is also *unfading*; it will never experience the natural ravages of time.

We all know that in our world, and even in the earthly Canaan, flowers wilt. A lot of them did over this past week, didn't they? Flowers wilt here, and colors fade, blossoms fall, and in spite of Botox and the skill of surgeons and Rogaine or Keeps or Preference by L'Oreal, the fact remains, beauty diminishes over time.

But that is not the case for the Christian's inheritance. It is, and always will be, vibrant and lovely and strong.

Our inheritance in Christ is *unfading*.

Indestructible. Undefilable. Unfading.

You know, whatever you and I have experienced on earth, whatever we've known that has faded, that has died, that has been stolen or otherwise taken from us (it may be a *place*, it may be a *possession*, it may be a *person*, a *relationship*; it may be money, health, beauty, stability), whatever we've known on earth that has been defiled or polluted or destroyed in some way, you see, if we are in Jesus, we can have the sure confidence that God is going to redeem our loss.

He *will* restore; He *will* refresh; He *will* provide *better* for us – and *permanently* so – in the day to come.

Peter speaks to that next. He goes on to say here in verse 4 that in fact our inheritance is, in two different ways, "kept by God."

First, he says, "*our inheritance is kept by God for us.*"

God keeps our inheritance for us. That reminds us of Jesus saying things like, *“Store your treasures in Heaven, where moth and rust cannot destroy them and where thieves can’t steal them”* (Matthew 6:19-20).

You see, everything put on deposit with God, everything entrusted to God, including our very selves, God absolutely promises to preserve and to keep for eternity.

All things of the earth are tenuous at best, and they are temporary. But God guarantees the continual and eternal growth and security of all entrusted to Him.

Peter says, *“God keeps our inheritance for us.”*

But God also, verse 5 says, *“keeps us for our inheritance.”* God guards the *inheritance for the heirs*, and He *also* guards the *heirs for the inheritance*.

The word there is really the word “protects.” It’s a military word that speaks of a fortress with strong walls being guarded by soldiers. God stands guard over all in Jesus and He keeps us so that we can surely inherit all He’s promised.

And how does He do all this?

Peter says through our faith.

The protection of God is nothing we can do for ourselves, but just the same, God acts in response to our faith and trust in Him.

Here again is that partnership that we talked about last week: God working with us as we work with Him, all according to His wishes and will.

Remarkably, that’s how God chooses to accomplish things in our world, and equally remarkably, that’s how God chooses to accomplish things *in* us!

And *for* us!

The person of faith trusts that God is there, upholding us, standing with us, protecting us and working to ensure that we will receive our inheritance, even when He cannot be easily seen.

And this is where our *hope*—the Christian’s hope—comes from!

Our hope does not rest on what we see right now—what our world is like.

As the Apostle Paul says in Romans 8:24, *“hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?”*

Our hope rests on what God promises is ours, even today, even though we cannot see it always clearly.

This tremendous inheritance that belongs to us already because of Jesus: this is the reason for our *living hope*, as verse 3 there says.

You know, it seems like every time we turn around in our world, we’re confronted with more tragedy, more suffering, more immorality, more chaos and loss and dishonesty, more reason to be hopeless about the future.

But Peter says for those in Jesus, that is just not so!

Why? Because in Christ we are heirs to a great, secure, beautiful, eternal inheritance that is nothing less than life in God’s presence.

It is ours in Jesus today, and it will be ours forever. No one can steal it, and it will never die or fade.

It is as sure and eternal as God Himself.

Someone summed it up like this, *“The certainty of future salvation enlivens the hope in which Christians now live, making that future the present reality, which sets our current situation, whatever it may be, in right perspective.”*

As troubled as our world is, it can be easy to think that this is all there is and that things will always be this way. In fact, our enemy wants us, and works with all he has, to push us to think that way.

But nothing could be further from the truth for the follower of Jesus.

Because of Jesus, we already own a future, an inheritance that is far better than we can even ask or think.

That is our sure hope, which should bring us great joy and peace, even in times of great turmoil and pressure—even in times like these.

Do you need that reminder this morning—that in Jesus you are heir to eternal life with God?

In Jesus, it’s as good as done!

Are you in Jesus today? And is Jesus in you?

That’s the most important issue here, because all who live apart from Jesus have no real hope. All they can do is wait for random future events to occur.

Only in Jesus does hope have substance.

If you haven’t done so already, would you place your faith in Jesus, so you might find in Him the confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see (Hebrews 11:1).

Closing Prayer

Closing Song: 404, The Solid Rock

Benediction:

Dave and Carol Coulliette have a gasoline pressure washer that I use and seem to break, from time to time.

It wasn’t working as it should a couple weeks ago, and I learned it had a faulty unloader valve. This thing right here [hold up valve].

When you run a pressure washer without squeezing the trigger of the wand, all that pressure builds up and so you need a valve to automatically release it, or either the engine quits or the pump explodes.

In the world in which we live—in times like these, *recalling* and *living in* the *truth* of our *inheritance* in *Jesus is our spiritual unloader valve*.

If we couldn’t rely on this eternal reality, the pressures of life would become too much for us, especially as our culture here becomes more and more ungodly, and so more and more broken.

That’s exactly why, when life’s pressures increase, we have to remember: in Jesus, we have a sure hope: an eternal inheritance that is *indestructible, undefilable* and *unfading*, kept for us by God.