

Advent 2017: Hope - 1 Peter 1:3-5

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[0 : 00] Thank you, Caleb and crew. I'm pretty sure at some point in history, the number one criteria for the writing of a Christmas song was that it'd be difficult to sing.! Please turn with me to 1 Peter chapter 1.

As previously stated in today's gathering, today marks the first Lord's Day of our Advent season.

The word Advent is from the Latin Adventus, which simply means coming, or I prefer, arrival.

Our tradition of lighting Advent candles and preaching sermons concerning the topics of each candle is aimed at helping us place Jesus Christ at the very center of our holiday season.

Now, I know that because you have gathered with a Christian church this morning, it is most likely that you are very aware that Christmas is the celebration of the coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I know that some of you may be thinking that our Advent practice is an exercise in redundancy. But I also know how very fickle our hearts can be.

[1 : 16] While giving Jesus lip service during this season, we, just like the world, so often get wrapped up into all the trappings that accompany it.

We stress ourselves through all of its busyness. We get distracted by the glitz and glimmer of lesser things. And we functionally forget what the incarnation of God means for today.

What it means for this month. And what it means for next year. We are so forgetful. So we need reminders. I am repetitive because we are slow learners.

My prayer for us this morning is that we will be reminded of Jesus Christ's immeasurable worth so that we will treasure him as we ought, as we consider the hope that is ours in him.

J.I. Packer once said, The Christian message is that there is hope for a ruined humanity. Hope of pardon. Hope of peace with God.

[2 : 23] Hope of glory. Because at the Father's will, Jesus became poor and was born in a stable so that 30 years later he might hang on a cross.

Our text for this morning is 1 Peter 1, verses 3 through 5. And before I read this for our benefit, beloved, let me remind you that this is God's word to us.

It was written for his glory and for our good. And we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

1 Peter 1, verse 3 and following. 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.

To an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

[3 : 37] Our study this morning will be outlined in the following three points. Number one, the praiseworthiness of God.

That's right, note takers. The praiseworthiness of God. Number two, the hopelessness of mankind. And number three, the hope of the born again. So number one, the praiseworthiness of God.

Peter begins the body of his epistle with a phrase of praise to God. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But what does Peter mean by saying blessed? Blessed. We use that word in ways much like hope and we'll see joy and peace and love across this coming month.

[4 : 38] That the Bible does not use it. This is not the Greek word translated in other places in the Bible as blessed.

We may read it, but rather blessed, meaning happy or fortunate. This is an entirely different Greek word, which means praised.

So it could be read, praised be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The indicative mood of the Greek word for blessed is used instead of the optative mood.

Don't write any of that down. The optative mood is used to express a wish. The indicative mood is used to make factual statements.

So not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be blessed, but rather the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is blessed.

[5 : 48] In our Bible reading from two weeks ago in the book of Ruth, when Ruth returns after gathering barley in the field of Boaz and Naomi sees what she was able to bring home, Naomi exclaims, Blessed be the man who took notice of you.

This is from Ruth 2.19. Naomi is not wishing fortune on Boaz, but rather praising him for his generosity toward Ruth.

Peter's doing the very same thing here. Blessed be. Praised be. He is, in fact, to be. Because of the text that will follow.

Peter begins with an exclamation of God's praiseworthiness before elaborating on his reason for praise. But the rest of our text does just that.

Why is it that God is so praiseworthy? 27 times in the Old Testament, the phrase Baruch Adonai is used.

[7 : 01] Blessed be God. So it was a very common way to give praise to God. But here Peter adds something pivotal, something extremely important to this phrase.

He adds, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In John 5.18, amongst many other places, this is recorded by John of what Jesus claimed of himself.

This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him. Why? Because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. And so what Peter is saying is that we now relate to God through his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is God incarnate.

And all those who will worship God rightly will worship him through his Son. And because of all that was accomplished by his Son. Which is what Peter is going on to elaborate in the following writ.

[8 : 20] The point being, theology should lead us to doxology. Rightly understanding who God is should move us to rightly praise him.

This book was not written for us to merely know things about God. If we see him rightly by this book, then we will know him, and we will be known by him, and this will necessitate our praise. So do not miss the praiseworthiness of God this morning. Secondly, let's look in brief at the hopelessness of mankind.

In order to see this point from this text, we need to read a bit through it. Peter says in verse 3, according to his, God's great mercy, he has caused us to be born again.

Mercy is compassion shown where wrath is due. We would have no need of mercy if we had not transgressed God's law.

[9 : 38] Had we not rejected him as our king, doing what is right in our own eyes, things would be all good. But we have. All mankind has acted with great wickedness.

Apart from Christ, you and I are not all right. The apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 12, of the Ephesian believers before Jesus' intervention in their life, he said this, remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

So to be apart from God, the true God that we worship through Jesus Christ, is to be hopeless.

Apart from the mercy of God and the personal work of Jesus Christ, mankind is utterly hopeless because their end is destruction.

Paul wrote to the Philippians, Philippians 3, verse 18, part of 19, many of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Their end is destruction. If you have not believed in Jesus' accomplished work on your behalf, you are hopeless.

[11 : 17] As you see the hope of the born again and long for the hope that we have turned from the hopelessness of mankind in repentance and faith this morning.

Third, and we'll spend most of our time here, let's look at the hope of the born again. Peter tells us that God is praiseworthy because according to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again.

Notice first that it is according to His great mercy that we have been shown mercy. God is merciful. It's part of His very character.

Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 4, 31, The Lord your God is a merciful God. We have nothing to offer to the equation of our new birth.

So it is owing to the character of God that we receive any benefit from Him. It is because He is merciful that He shows mercy.

[12 : 34] Because of God's mercifulness toward mankind, He has caused us to be born again. Now, what does it mean to be born again?

And how does this happen? I want you to turn with me to John 3. I'm going to come off of 1 Peter for a bit, but we'll get back there. So mark it if you'd like.

What does it mean to be born again?

And how does this happen? In John 3, Jesus has a conversation with a priest named Nicodemus. And beginning in verse 3 and following, John records, Jesus answered him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

[13 : 42] So we get some clue to what it means to be born again that in order to see the kingdom of God, we must be born again. Those who are not born again will not see the kingdom of God.

Verse 4, Nicodemus said to him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?

I think this is some of the question we may have. We're going, wait a minute, what does born again mean? Verse 5, Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

So clearly a different kind of birth to be had. Nicodemus said, wait a second, how is it that you're born again? And he says, no, I'm not talking about that birth. I'm talking about a different birth, a birth of the spirit.

This is a spiritual being born. Verse 6, That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.

[14 : 46] Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again. So, to be born again is to be born of the spirit.

Here we find the precious doctrine of regeneration. God makes us new. We do not and cannot work our way into the kingdom of God.

We are not in some degree of rightness with God. We are either not justified before Him, or we are made new, regenerate, placing faith in the personal work of Jesus Christ.

We are justified before God. It's positionally different. So, we see that to be positionally different, to be born again, is to be born of the spirit.

In Ezekiel chapter 36, verse 27, God speaks to the prophet Ezekiel and says, And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and be careful to obey my rules.

[15 : 58] So, we see that this does not happen by human design. It is not our plans that cause us to be born again. It is not our willing that causes us to be born again.

God, by His great mercy, has caused you to be born again. And, I will add from John 3, by the power of the Spirit.

He goes on in John 3, verse 8, The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from, or where it goes.

So, Jesus is saying, the wind is a bit of a mystery. Right? We see the effect of the wind. We see it moving through. But, where does the wind come from? Where does the wind go?

So, it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. This great mystery that God works within us. New birth.

[17 : 02] So, turn back with me a bit in the book of John, chapter 1. Let's continue to explore this idea a bit of what it means to be born again. Verse 12 and 13, John chapter 1.

To all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Okay? So, we see once again, it is not this working of ourselves, not a working of the flesh, nor of our will, but we are born. Well, what is the contingent placed upon that in John 1.12?

Belief in His name. Belief in His name. And if you are familiar at all, and I hope you are in some degree with the gospel of Jesus Christ, you know that we must believe in Christ.

Right? In His personhood. His name represents all of that. But how does that come to pass? Turn with me now to 1 John, chapter 5.

[18:28] 1 John 1.12. It's a helpful hermeneutic principle to you as you're studying the Bible, and you see things that seem confusing.

You need to go and see where else the Bible talks about these things. The Bible, God so cleverly helps us to turn an idea over and get our minds around what these phrases mean.

So, 1 John, chapter 5, verse 1. So, we're seeing that we must be born of the Spirit. God works as He causes in us this new birth, and that new birth necessitates believing in Christ, I'd say, His person and His work.

You can hear me say that to you often. 1 John, chapter 5, verse 1. John writes, Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.

And everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him. So, see what John's doing for us. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ. So, there we're going back to John, chapter 1, verses 12 and 13, right?

[19:47] Those who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave this right to. But in 1 John, He clarifies for us, right? Those who have been born of God believe.

If we believe, if we place faith in Jesus Christ, it's because we've been born of God. You see that in 1 John 5, verse 1?

I hope you do. That's why I had you turn there to it. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. God causes new birth by the power of the Spirit through His Word.

So, He brings all of this about. It's a presentation to us. He works it in us by His Spirit, makes us new so that we will believe. And this is a highly contested doctrine in the church today.

And it's altogether biblical. Go back to 1 Peter, chapter 1. I want to show you the one other place that Peter uses the phrase, born again, and kind of drive it all home for you.

[20:55] Look down in verse 23 and following.

Peter writes, Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through, what? The living and abiding Word of God.

For all flesh is like grass and all gets glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower fails, but the Word of the Lord remains forever.

And this Word is the good news that was preached to you. So, God has caused us, if you have in fact been born again, He has caused you to be born again by the power of His Spirit in the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ.

Whether you heard that in preaching, or you read it from the Scripture, or a friend told you about it, watched a well-done YouTube video, there are many ways in which the truth of Jesus Christ can be communicated to us.

[22:13] And the Spirit of God uses the Word of God to bring about this new birth, to cause us to believe. So, why belabor the point?

I know many of you are going, yeah, yeah, like, we get it. God saved us. Why? Because Peter takes the time to do that. It's the very thing he's trying to say to us. Why?

Because he wants us to say with Him, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Look at what He has done for me, an unworthy sinner, a wicked man.

He, because of His great mercy, has caused me to be born again. Beloved, this is the fuel for Christian living that we recognize that God in His good, sovereign purpose has saved us.

So, not only has He caused us to be born again, but He's caused us to be born again to a living hope. I think it is important at this point to make sure we are clear of what our Bible means when we speak of hope.

[23:31] I've got a quotation here from a man named R.C. Sproul that I think will serve us well to that end. He wrote, Hope is called the anchor of the soul. That's from Hebrews 6.19.

because it gives stability to the Christian life. But, hope is not simply a wish. That, by the way, my wife, I found out was sick this morning.

Hope is not simply a wish. I wish that such and such would take place. Rather, it is that which latches on to the certainty of the promises of the future that God has made.

I'm going to read that to you again. Not simply a wish. Rather, it is that which latches on to the certainty of the promises of the future that God has made.

Hope is faith in future tense. Peter tells us not only that we have this hope, but that it is a living hope.

[24 : 36] What do you suppose is meant by that? It could refer to an active hope. As in a hope in the future promises of God that will yield fruit for us today.

That it means something now. It's living in that way. And I think in some measure it does mean that. It could refer to us being born again.

Peter is using lots of living language here, isn't he? We're born again and he talks about it being through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. So maybe he's simply trying to characterize hope.

And I also think that it could and probably does mean that. I think, however, that most directly and most importantly, it refers directly to the phrase that immediately follows through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

I think that Peter means to tell us that we have a living hope and that hope is Jesus Christ. He's alive.

[25 : 49] He is our living hope. Jesus became a man in order to live the perfect life we should have lived, to die the death that we deserved, and to defeat death by being resurrected.

Christmas is aimed at Easter. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ became the surety of all God's promises to us.

You see, I think this is Peter's logic, right? Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again. He's talking about our regeneration, our salvation to this living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who makes all of God's promises sure.

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 20, for all the promises of God find their yes in Jesus Christ. And in 1 Timothy 1, 1, Paul opens his letter with this.

Paul, the apostle of Christ Jesus, by command of our God, our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, our hope. So, we have a living hope, which is our resurrected Savior.

[27 : 17] Everything that follows in verses 4 and 5, I believe, elaborate on this idea of being born again to a living hope. Now, if we were working and doing verse-by-verse exposition through 1 Peter, at this point, I would say, and next week, we will see those things.

This would be the part 2 of 1 Peter 3 through 5, but we're not right now. We're working through the Advent season. I want you to see that we have this living hope, which is Christ.

This is the prominent thing we want to have on our minds, but I don't want to leave you hanging for the last two verses. So, in brief, let me try to pack this in before we move on and do baptisms here soon.

So, elaborating on this idea of a living hope, one, we see that through Christ, we have an inheritance. Peter says it is an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, and it is kept in heaven for you.

We have an immortal, perfect, forever inheritance, and it is secured in heaven for us. We have a much greater and grander thing that awaits us beyond this place.

[28 : 36] I would love at this point to make an elaborate case to you that Jesus Christ himself is that inheritance, but I'll digress for now. But this is why we are instructed in places like Matthew chapter six to store it for ourselves, treasure in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, rather than here on earth where moth and rust destroys and where thieves break in and steal.

We have an inheritance that is being kept for us. Secondly, through Christ we have a security. Verse five says that by God's power we are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, that final day when we are glorified, when we persevere and are preserved to the very end.

Those who God saves, he keeps. And remember, he has caused us to be born again. Rejoice in God's sovereignty and your salvation because it is a sure thing.

If you are his, you are his forever. In John chapter 10 verses 28 through 30, Jesus said, I give my sheep eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

My father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the father's hand. I and the father are one.

[30 : 14] What a precious, truth that we are secure forever in him if we are his. Paul wrote in Philippians chapter 1 verse 6, and I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

And so we have, through Christ, this inheritance and this security. We have a living hope and a careful consideration and reflection on this ought to lift our eyes from the din of this world across the next month in order to praise God's name.

name. So those who God has caused to be born again have the living hope to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and a perfect inheritance kept in heaven for us.

And we are being guarded through faith by God's power to the end. this is why we join with Peter and the church past and present and the chorus of heaven in saying blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved, this Christmas season may it be true of us that we will be a people who experience the living hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Display the living hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ and proclaim the living hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[31 : 49] May it be true of us this Christmas season that we will be a people who say with all that we feel and do and speak, blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Join me in prayer.