

Advent 2020: Hope - 1 Peter 1:3-5

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[0:00] 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. Our study this morning will be outlined in the following three points. Number one, the praiseworthiness of God. Number two, the hopelessness of mankind.

And number three, the hope of the born again. Number one, the praiseworthiness of God. Peter begins the body of his epistle with a phrase of praise to God. There in the first part of verse three, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[1:08] What does Peter mean by saying blessed? This is not the Greek word translated in other places as blessed, meaning happy or fortunate.

This is an entirely different Greek word, which means praised. So verse three could be rendered 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, which simply means this. 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 as a hope that that we would bless God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But rather, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is blessed. He's making this praise declaration, right?

[2:16] God is praise worthy. In the book of Ruth, when Ruth returns after gathering barley in the field of Boaz and Naomi sees what she is, that she is able to bring home all of this food.

She exclaims, blessed be the man who took notice of you. This is Ruth chapter two and verse 19. She's not wishing fortune on Boaz, but praising him for his generosity towards Ruth.

So Peter begins with this exclamation of God's praiseworthiness before elaborating on his reason for praise. He is saying our God is worthy of praise.

But then he'll go on to tell us why. Why is God praiseworthy? 27 times in the Old Testament, the phrase Baruch Adonai, blessed be God, is used.

So it was a very common way to give praise to God, to ascribe it to him. But here Peter adds to the phrase, this Old Testament phrase, Baruch Adonai, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[3:36] He expands the Old Testament statement of praise to help us better understand who this God is that we are to praise. In John chapter five and verse 18, John records, this was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, being Christ.

Because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own father, making himself equal with God. So we relate most readily to God through his son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is God incarnate. And those who will worship God rightly will worship him through his son. And because of all that was accomplished by his son.

Which is why Peter elaborates in the following verses. The point being, theology should lead us to doxology.

Our understanding of who our God is in the person and work of Christ should make us praise him. He is praiseworthy. The Bible was not written for us to merely know things about God.

[4:52] To stack up the facts about him. If we see him rightly by this book, then we will know him and we will be known by him.

And this absolutely necessitates our praise. We ought to be moved to praise as we consider the things of God.

Is your life filled with the praise of God? We do this in varied ways. We do this verbally. We do this in our heart, in our emotions, as we feel things towards the world and things towards God.

We do this in the way that we love one another. Is your life bent in praise toward God? If not, it's very possible that you don't know the things about God that you ought to know.

That you're not aware this morning that God is praiseworthy. Or it could be that you know those things and yet you don't rightly hold them.

[5:58] You don't rightly take them up and meditate upon them. Understand your unworthiness and the way that God has loved you in Christ and therefore his praise worthiness.

Those of you who know me well know that I'm not a typically very emotional person. I often pray that God will help me emote as I ought to.

This morning I was on my way here early and listened to a song called Behold Our God being sung by a choir. And I started crying and I thought, what is wrong with you?

That was the immediate thought that went through my head. What is going on with you this morning? And I realized that I was actually having a wonderful response.

The praise worthiness of our God. That it was actually a good and natural thing that I should be so overjoyed with our God. Behold Our God.

[6:57] He is praiseworthy. So do not miss the praiseworthiness of God this morning in this text. We don't want to move on quickly to the particulars.

We want to recognize that Peter is saying to us, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord is worthy of our praise.

Christ. Second, noticed in the text, the hopelessness of mankind. In order to see this point, we need to read a bit through today's text.

Peter says in verse 3, According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again. Mercy is compassion shown where wrath is due.

Compassion shown where wrath is due. We would have no need of mercy if we had not transgressed God's law and therefore deserved his wrath.

[8:03] By transgressing God's law, which we have all done, we have rejected him as our king. We have done what is right in our own eyes.

We think that we ought to self-determine the way in which we should go. We have become rebels against our God. Things would be all good if we had not done that.

But we have. All mankind has acted with great wickedness. This is the curse of the fall. That Adam's sin, his nature passed to us and his guilt passed to us.

Apart from Christ, you and I are not all right. We have a huge, huge problem.

We are separated from our creator. This life will be miserable and without hope. And the life to come will be all the more miserable and without hope.

[9:05] As we are taken from him and devoid of his grace and mercy forever. Remember, the apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 12 of the Ephesian believers before Jesus intervened in their life.

Remember that you are 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.

This is a miserable state. The world is running around trying to find the answer to the great problem that they have and not recognizing that the hope that they need, the restoration that is necessary is one that comes from God and is to God.

Apart from the mercy of God and the person and work of Jesus Christ, mankind is utterly hopeless because their end is destruction. Paul wrote to the Philippian believers, chapter 3, verse 18 and into verse 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.

[10:24] If you have not believed in Jesus' accomplished work on your behalf, you are hopeless. As you see the hope of the born again and long for the hope that we have, turn from the hopelessness of mankind in repentance and faith.

Believe in Jesus, what he has done on your behalf. And we would pray this morning that you would discover hope, everlasting, abounding hope this day.

Now, beloved, those who are in Christ need to display this hope to the world around us. This desperately hopeless mankind.

Peter later in this letter is going to ask us to be ready to give an answer when people ask us about the hope that we have. Do we hope in the same things that the world hopes in?

Maybe this is why they don't ask the question. Because they see the failing of our hope just as their hope fails. We are meant to have a transcendent hope.

[11:33] An alien hope. A hope that is not our own but granted to us because of what God has done for us. We are meant to be strange in this world.

But people would say, what is this hope? And that we would give them the answer of the gospel of Jesus Christ. So let's look thirdly at the hope of the born again.

I hope that each and every person in this room today is, in fact, born again. Has this hope.

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.

[12:39] This is part of who he is. This identifies him. Moses wrote in Deuteronomy chapter 4 and verse 31, The Lord your God is a merciful God.

We have nothing to offer to the equation of our new birth. We bring nothing to the table to come and sit down and draw up a peace treaty with God.

We have nothing to offer. So it is owing entirely to the character of God that we receive any benefit from him.

It is according to his great mercy. Because God is merciful toward mankind.

He has caused us to be born again. Us who did not deserve to be given a new birth. Rebels, enemies, deserved his wrath.

[13:37] He instead has given to us his mercy. And he has caused us to be born again. What does it mean to be born again?

And how does this happen? In John chapter 3, Jesus has a conversation with a priest named Nicodemus. 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.

How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother womb and be born? Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again.

Right? So he says, Don't be surprised that I've said this thing. In your natural birth, you know, Nicodemus, that you have a sin nature and that you are guilty before God.

[14:48] That which is born of the flesh is flesh. And so there must be this renewal, this regeneration. We must be born of the spirit.

So to be born again is to be born of the spirit. We find this precious doctrine of regeneration. Right? A people made new, not just in degree, but in kind. Right? Not born again, now born again. Right? Enemies of God now made friends.

Right? Those without a family, without a people, now called God's family. Right? Adopted in Christ. We do not and cannot work our way into the kingdom of God.

This is all a doing of him by his spirit. In Ezekiel chapter 36 and 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] Right? This order is so very important. We don't work. We don't earn and then find ourselves saved. We're saved. And therefore, we work.

Because of the wonderful kindness of God to us in Christ. Right? Making us new. Giving us the ability by his spirit to obey. We obey.

Right? We declare his glory amongst the nations because he has caused us to be born again. This does not happen by human design.

Beloved, if we were left alone, we would never choose to do this. Right? Our nature would send us in the opposite direction, away from God each and every day.

This should be massively humbling to us. As you look around in a world in chaos right now, it is so easy. We are so quick to judge others.

[16:58] How could they think that way? How could they believe such a thing? How could they say that? How could they act so wickedly? You ought to say, but, from the grace of God, I would be the worst of sinners.

Right? That would be me had God not saved my soul. In every single way, I would be an enemy of God. Right? I would be so bent away from him by my design, but praise be to God because of his great mercy he has caused us to be born again.

Right? And let me add a little to the text, 1 Peter. From John chapter 3, he's caused us to be born again by the power of the Spirit.

John 3, 8, Jesus says, the wind blows where it wishes and you hear it sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

God brings about this new birth. John 1, verse 12, and following, but 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.

[18:18] Proceeding from God. 1 John chapter 5 and verse 1, everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.

We've been born of God so we believe that Jesus is the Christ and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever was born of him. So God causes this new birth by the power of the Spirit and he does it through the Word of God.

You can look a little further down in 1 Peter chapter 1 beginning in verse 23. There Peter writes, Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable through the living and abiding Word of God.

For all flesh is like grass and its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower falls 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 to be born again and he has caused us to be born again to a living hope.

This is so good.

[19:33] He has caused us to be born again to a living hope. And I think it's important at this point to make sure we're clear on what our Bibles mean when speaking of hope.

I believe this quotation from R.C. Sproul will serve us well to that end. He once said, Hope is called the anchor of the soul in Hebrews 6.19 because it gives stability to the Christian life.

But hope is not simply a wish. We do this a lot. I wish that such and such would take place. Rather, it is that which latches onto the certainty of the promises of the future that God has made.

That last part of it again. Hope is that which latches onto the certainty of the promises of the future that God has made. Hope is faith in future tense.

Believing in what God has said will come to pass. So Peter tells us not only that we have hope, but he uses a very interesting phrase to say it.

[20:49] He says we have a living. Hope. Suppose is meant by that. Now it could refer to an active hope as in a hope in the future promises of God that will yield fruit for us today.

It's a hope that's alive, it's living, it's right now. I think it does mean that. It could refer to us being born again and therefore we are alive and have a living hope because we are alive and I also think that it does mean that.

But I do think that most directly and most importantly, it refers to the phrase that immediately follows it. through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

We've been born again to a living hope 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 who is alive.

We can have an active hope that's in us today, it means something for today. We can have a hope that is alive because we are alive born again but all of that is because Jesus Christ is alive.

[22:06] He is our living hope. Jesus became a man in order to live the perfect life that we should have lived.

It was required of us by the Mosaic Covenant. We must be perfect before God to be accepted in God. How can we do such a thing? We've already screwed that up.

We've already transgressed the law. We can't make it right. We've already failed. Well, Jesus enters the scene in the incarnation and lives the life that we were supposed to live.

And not only that, he dies the death that we deserved. He pays for all of that wrath that is owed us. God is not able to not punish sin.

He doesn't simply wipe the slate clean. He must punish it somehow. So how? He punished it in Christ. So if you were in Christ this morning, you have been born again.

[23:13] What has happened for you is what's called double imputation. There's a trade that's taken place. What we bring is our sinfulness sinfulness, and Christ pays the penalty for that sinfulness.

What he gives to us is his righteousness. How unfair of a trade. We are beneficiaries of God's great mercy to us in Christ.

Double imputation. What a precious thing. So we live the life that we should have lived. He died the death that we deserve. And he defeated death by being resurrected.

Jesus Christ is raised from the dead. Jesus Christ now sits at God's right hand in what is called his session.

He reigns. He is ruling. Nothing is happening outside of his careful attention. He is working on behalf of his people all the time. Actively, not passively.

[24:21] He is interceding for us. This is a thing that he is doing in his heavenly realm. But he is ruling in the earth. We of all people in crazy times should be steady because we have a living hope.

Christ, the one who reigns. We have his spirit who helps us to walk obediently in him. Beloved, we cannot miss in the Advent celebration that we're looking back to a first coming but that we're actually meant to be thinking now about a second coming.

Christmas is aimed at Easter, the resurrection of Christ which guaranteed everything that God said would come to pass in Jesus.

Jesus. He has become the surety of all of God's promises to his people. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians chapter 1 beginning of verse 20.

I love the beginning of verse 20. 2 Corinthians chapter 1 for all the promises of God find their yes in Jesus Christ.

[25:35] The surety, the guarantee because of what he has accomplished. and in 1 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 1 Paul opens his letter this way. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope.

If hope depends on us, we are without hope. If you place any hope in me, you're going to be disappointed.

But you can anchor yourself in Christ. He is our living hope. He is our resurrected Savior.

Everything that follows in verses 4 and 5 elaborate on this idea of being born again to a living hope. So in brief, let me just talk us through those last two verses.

Number one, through Christ, we have an inheritance. Not only have we been made right with God, not only have our sins been forgiven, we've been found righteous in Christ, but verse 4 says, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.

[26:51] We have an immortal, perfect forever inheritance that is secured in heaven for us. An eternal treasure for us.

And this should dramatically change the way in which we live in this world. I see far too many Christians, I see myself, during the Christmas season, chasing the things of the world, finding joy and satisfaction, ultimate joy and satisfaction in the things of the world.

They will disappoint. But we have a future reward that we are meant to look to. Jesus said in Matthew 6, verse 19, and following, do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.

Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. It would be foolish to invest in this life and not be investing in the life that is to come.

Through Christ we have an inheritance. And secondly, through Christ we have security. Who by God's, verse 5, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

[28:10] Those who God saves, he keeps. Those who he saves, he keeps. Having been saved, if it were up to me to be saved, I would again and again and again lose that salvation.

I would run away from the kindness and mercy of God. but because he has saved me, he will keep me. Remember, he has caused us to be born again.

In John chapter 10, verse 28 and following, 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. Paul wrote in Philippians chapter 1 and 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.

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

[29:28] And we are being guarded by faith, by God's power to that end. This is why we can join with Peter and the church past and present and future and the chorus of heaven in saying, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Praised be our God for what he has done for us in 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, that we display the living hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that we proclaim the living hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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.

Let's pray together.