

Introduction...

This morning we are celebrating something that is absolutely essential to the Christian faith, to the degree that if it is not true then Christianity is pointless.

1 Cor 15:17 If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins...¹⁹ If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone.

What we are celebrating is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We call it Easter, which is an old English term identifying the Christian festival of the resurrection. I prefer to call it ***Resurrection Day*** because that cuts through all the cultural and religious confusion to get to the heart of what this day is all about.

- **We are celebrating the historical reality** that a first century Jewish rabbi named Jesus, who also happens to be the one and only Son of God, was crucified in Jerusalem during Passover week and then three days later he was raised from the dead.
- **We are celebrating the theological reality** that by His death, burial and resurrection we who believe have been saved from our sins and have been granted eternal life.
- **We are celebrating the present reality** that because of Christ's resurrection from the dead we of all people have reason to live our lives with ***indestructible hope*** no matter how good nor how horrible the circumstances of our life happen to be.
- **We are celebrating the supernatural reality** that the founder of our faith went through death and came out the other side.

And because of these things we ***worship*** Jesus Christ as our risen Savior and our God.

The worship of God is the ultimate purpose of our lives and the ultimate purpose of the church and it is also the goal of today's sermon. In **1 Peter 1:3** we read this, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" The word ***bless*** means to worship or praise. It means to express gratitude toward God and to express joy in what He has done. Which begs the question, "What has God done?"

1 Peter 1:3 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

Transition...

Now, if we miss the first few words of this verse, then we will miss the point of all that we are going to learn in this passage. **It is not Peter's goal to simply expound on Christian theology so that we will marvel at theology itself, but that we would praise and worship the God who has revealed Himself in that theology.** The result of these truths is that we must worship God. So working backward from the response of worship we need to understand the truths that motivate us to worship. IOW, why do we bless God?

My purpose in preaching this morning is to help us understand how the resurrection of Jesus Christ leads us to love, worship and serve God.

Sermon Focus...

I. We worship God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, because He has shown us mercy.

I Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! *According to his great mercy*

Mercy happens when someone shows kindness to another even though it is within their power and right to punish them. When our kids get in trouble they want us to show them mercy. When we do something wrong we want to be shown mercy. When we are pulled over for speeding we deserve to be held accountable, but we would much rather our crime go unpunished.

Now, there is something that we need to understand about the God of the Bible and it is that He shows us mercy every day. God shows us mercy when He withholds from us the punishment we rightly deserve because of our sin against Him. **God owes us nothing but judgment**, and yet He shows us mercy every day by holding back that judgment from us.

God's mercy is the divine restraint that keeps Him from unleashing the righteous wrath our sinful rebellion demands.

Notice in the text that God's mercy toward us is **great**. We are the recipients of His abundant mercy. Our God is **merciful** and this means that His desire and ability to withhold what we deserve is like a storehouse so full that it is constantly overflowing (**Lam 3:23**). The mercy that God has for His people will never run out and **we praise Him for this**.

(**Illus...**) Most of us would like to think of ourselves as merciful, showing kindness instead of judgment to others. ***But this tends to fall apart when we actually try it.*** Try to be merciful toward your children, your rude co-workers, that person who cuts you off on the road...And you come to see just how difficult (or impossible) it is to be merciful. But our God is so filled with mercy that He never stops showing us kindness.

But there is another side to God's mercy. Divine justice demands that our sin be punished, which means that for God to withhold punishment (show us mercy) is to short-circuit His justice, unless the punishment we deserve is poured out on another. That is where Jesus steps in. Friends, this is what makes the gospel so beautiful.

Jesus stepped in to receive the justice of God that we deserved. He bore the wrath for you and me, so that we could be free. That is what He was doing on the cross. He wasn't dying because He deserved to die, He was dying because we deserved to die. He took our place so that God's justice would be upheld and so that God's mercy would overflow toward us, ***and for this we Praise our God.***

I. We worship God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, because He has shown us mercy.

II. We worship God because He has caused us to be born again (v. 3)

It was Jesus, in John 3, who told us that in order to enter the Kingdom of God we must be born again. In our first birth we were stamped with the image of Adam, but the new birth emblazons us with the image of Christ. This new birth is given to us as a gift from God. He is the cause of our new birth.

But why do we need to be born again? Because our nature is totally corrupted by sin and we are powerless to overcome that nature on our own. The Bible teaches that by nature we are dead in our sins and children of wrath. This is what our first birth in Adam has afforded us. We need to be brought from death to life and Paul tells us how this happens in **Titus 3**.

Titus 3:4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

We weren't born again because of our good works; it was God's mercy that fueled our new birth. The new birth is not the result of your prayer, or your baptism, or your trip down the aisle to talk to the pastor. The new birth is the work of the Holy Spirit in you. The Spirit brings life where there was death. He opens our eyes to see the truth of the gospel that we hadn't seen before. He gives us a new heart of flesh replacing the heart of stone, and the result is that those who possess new life will respond with faith and repentance.

(Illus...Let's imagine that a man is pulled from the water having just drowned and someone present begins to administer CPR. The man's heart has stopped, there is no air in his lungs, and his brain function has ceased as well. But when the first responder begins to work he is able to bring all of those dead functions back to life. He compresses the heart to make it beat again, he fills the lungs with air in order to make them breathe again, he does all this in order to call the dead man back to life.

When that life finally rushes back it is only natural for the man to begin breathing new fresh air into his lungs, his heart begins to beat again on its own and his brain function jumps into high gear. The first responder has done his job and now the revived man has to do his job, which is to live.

The Holy Spirit is like a first responder who works within us causing us to be born again and the signs of our new life are faith in Jesus and repentance from sin. Faith and repentance are not the cause of our new birth; they are the evidence of it, meaning that we praise **God and not ourselves** for our new birth.

II. We worship God because He has caused us to be born again (v. 3)

III. We worship God because He has given us a living hope (V. 3)

What does Peter mean when he tells us that we have a **living hope**? What He means is that the source of our hope is not an idea it is a person. Let's think back to the events of this past week some 2000 years ago.

On the night when Jesus was arrested, Peter was by His side and at first it seemed that Peter was willing to go to war in order to remain by Jesus' side, but that is not how the night ended. Before the night ended, Peter denied that he even knew Jesus. And to make matters worse, Jesus told Peter that it was going to happen.

Earlier in the night Jesus told His disciples that the Jews would seek to put Him to death and that His followers would run in fear. When Peter heard this he jumped out of his seat to confess his commitment to die at Jesus' side. But the Lord knew Peter better than Peter knew himself.

By mid-morning the next day Peter had denied His Lord and Jesus was hanging on a Roman cross atop Golgotha's hill. *Jesus was dead and Peter was devastated.* Jesus' death on the cross dashed Peter's hopes. His death made Peter's denials all the more bitter. It meant that there was no possibility of making amends or being restored to the one Peter had come to love. The crucifixion robbed Peter of hope.

But when the girls came in from the tomb on Sunday morning and told Peter that it was empty, can you imagine what this did to his heart? His hopes had been dashed to pieces, but this news was enough to cause hope to flicker in his heart again. Peter heard this news and then flew out of the door to go and see for himself and when He saw Jesus His hope was restored. But it was a new kind of hope. It wasn't a false hope, a misplaced hope, a blind hope, a fond hope; it was a **living hope**.

Peter's hope was not based on an idea it was based on a person, a person that is alive and for whom death has no hold. So when Peter writes to us about our living hope he writes from personal experience. **His hope is alive because his hope is in Christ and Christ is alive.** The resurrection of Jesus was not a mythical tale for Peter, it was a life-changing reality.

III. We worship God because He has given us a living hope (V. 3)

IV. We Praise God because He raised Jesus Christ from the dead (v. 3)

The Roman crucifix meant one thing death. It signaled the end of rebellion. It was the great silencer of those who dared to stand against the power of Rome.

The men who cried out to Pilate for Jesus to be crucified trusted that if they were successful Jesus would be no more. They were voting NO to Jesus and His Kingdom, but the resurrection shows that God voted YES.

N.T. Wright says,

Death is the last weapon of the tyrant, and the point of the resurrection, despite much misunderstanding, is **that death has been defeated**. Resurrection is not the re-description of death; **it is its overthrow** and, with that, the overthrow of those whose power depends on it.

An earthly court sentenced Jesus to death but a higher court reversed his sentence. Death couldn't hold Jesus because death had no claim on Him. He did not die because of His own sin He died for the sins of His people. Therefore, death could not hold Him.

Now, it's one thing to claim that Jesus was a great rabbi worthy of our attention. It is quite another to claim that Jesus was raised from the dead, but that is exactly what Peter is doing here. He is claiming that Jesus, the man crucified on a Roman cross was raised from death to new life by the power of God.

The resurrection of Jesus is proof that He was the Christ and the God appointed Savior of the world. Friends, there is no reason nor is there any hope that you will find peace in this life and the next unless you receive Jesus Christ as Lord. And the most powerful evidence that Jesus is worthy of your worship and devotion is the resurrection.

All of the things that we praise God for (His mercy, our new birth, our living hope) are only made possible through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection was absolutely necessary; otherwise none of these gifts could be ours. If Christ had somehow failed, then His sacrifice would not have been accepted by God as a sufficient ransom for our sin. If Christ had somehow failed then there would be no reason for Him to be raised from the dead, because His work was not complete and acceptable to God. If there was no resurrection then we would receive death and not new life, wrath and not mercy, despair rather than hope.

The Apostle Paul makes this clear in **1 Corinthians 15** when he writes,

V. 14 If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

V. 17 If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

V. 19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

If it weren't for the resurrected life of Jesus we would have nothing to celebrate, nothing to rejoice in, nothing to hope for and no reason to want to praise God.

V. 20 *But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead,*" which means that all of these things, all of these gifts are ours and they should result in praise to our God. Because of the resurrection we have received the Father's mercy. Because of the resurrection we have been born again. Because of the resurrection we have a living hope.

Conclusion...

I. We worship God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, because He has shown us mercy.

II. We worship God because He has caused us to be born again (v. 3)

III. We worship God because He has given us a living hope (V. 3)

IV. We Praise God because He raised Jesus Christ from the dead (v. 3)

Here in this text, Peter is leading us to praise God because our salvation is His work and not our own. We couldn't begin to accomplish it and we do not in any way deserve it. For Peter, praise is not a religious duty that earns us God's love, rather it is the overflow of our joy in what God has done for us through Christ.

One of the things that today should force us to do is to look upon the empty tomb and ask ourselves ***what must I do with Jesus?*** It is easy to come to church on Easter Sunday and celebrate a cultural holiday. It is easy to get together with family to hunt Easter eggs, wear new spring clothes, and go to church. But we've gotten really good at ignoring the earth shattering truth that this day is all about.

Jesus Christ a man attested by God with signs and wonders died in the place of sinners and was raised to new life on the third day. The power of God in his life, death, and resurrection is the un-ignorable truth that we must all reckon with today.

So my plea for you is that you run to Jesus, that you would see the weight of your sin before God and that you would see Jesus as the only one who can wash that sin away.