

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Sixth Sunday After Trinity, July 11, 2021

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)
Hymns: 39, 34:1, 41, 38, 570:1,8.
Lessons: Psalm 150, Romans 15:5-13, Luke 19:28-38.
Sermon Text: 1 Peter 1:3-9.
Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltritt

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

What kind of praise do you hear in the world right now? People are praised for giving health care. People are praised for doing something great for business. People are praised for winning at sports. People are praised for doing something good. People are praised for all sorts of things.

Peter is talking about praise today. But who is he praising? God.

And why? The reason for praising God is God's mercy. And then Peter explains in great detail why God should be praised. Today we hear again that

PETER PRAISES GOD FOR HIS MANY MERCIES.

- 1. He has given us new life, and**
- 2. He has given us hope.**

We have been born again and our new man has received a "living hope" and an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This new man, this new self was *"created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."* Ephesians 4:24 (NIV) With Paul we rejoice that *"in my inner being I delight in God's law."* Romans 7:22 (NIV)

This inheritance is a heavenly inheritance.

So we rejoice – we are happy, we have something to be glad about, we figuratively jump up and down for joy. The story is told of a little boy many years ago joyfully bouncing and almost clapping his hands during a choir concert in church when the choir was singing the joyous words "O Clap your hands, all ye people."

When Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews who came to Jesus secretly by night because he considered Jesus a great teacher, Jesus told him that he must be born again to enter the kingdom of God in John chapter 3. John 3? You remember that – it's where Jesus tells us about God's marvelous love that he sent his only-begotten Son into the world to give eternal life! For that we praise God!

Peter praises God and we should, too.

We received new life through the Word of God and baptism, for most of us, when we were infants. We were born again to a new hope, a living hope. But don't we have it pretty good right now, on earth? Maybe in some ways, yes. But we are living in a time of a pandemic and much social unrest. But we see others not obeying laws and realize that that activity may very well hurt us. We don't always have all we want. We may not have enough money. We may not have enough people who care about us, or so it seems. And the "buts" could go on and on to remind us that we are still living in a sin-filled world.

God *"in his great mercy ... has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."* And because of that new birth we have hope, a living, growing hope. The final fulfillment of that hope gets closer every day.

In the Bible, hope is not wishful thinking, like "I hope I will stay healthy" or "I hope we will have good weather" but a firm conviction, much like faith that points to the future. That certain hope we have includes the

idea that because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, we, too, shall rise from the dead to be taken to heaven with Jesus.

The resurrection of Christ shows our salvation is secure. We can wait confidently for Christ to come with our final salvation.

The goal of faith is eternal salvation. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the mercy of God gives the believers a special inheritance. The faith of the believer is a shield through which God's power preserves him and her until full salvation is revealed on judgment day. God's power, not human works, assures eternal security for believers.

And there's more! We have a great inheritance, too. What do we inherit from our parents and grandparents? Furniture? Money? Jewelry? Bonds? Pictures? Knickknacks? Real estate? How much of what we inherit decays or gets broken and loses value! But what we inherit from God is eternal! It does not decay or deteriorate and cannot be stolen as earthly possessions can be. God ***"has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you."***

This inheritance is the substance of the hope we have through faith in Jesus Christ.

Peter reminds us that this inheritance is kept safe "in heaven" and that we ***"through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time."*** God provides that shield, though we, because of our sinfulness, want to take down that shield at times and do what Satan wants us to do. Remember this was written by a man Jesus had warned and he blew it off – and then he denied Jesus three times. Now Peter in his letter wants to warn us. Remember ***"Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."*** 1 Peter 5:8 (NIV)

You are shielded, protected, guarded by God's power, not the power of anything or anyone or any army on earth.

Those who have been begotten to a living hope in Jesus, to an inheritance incorruptible are guaranteed the benefits of that salvation, not because they are able to keep themselves saved, but because they are guarded by the power of God. This assures believers that they will be preserved until the moment Jesus comes to judge the living and the dead. Jesus himself assures us: ***"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*** John 8:31-32 (KJV)

So are we greatly rejoicing in all this? Isn't it easy to get so caught up in all the things of this world that we can't or won't or don't take time to rejoice in all God's done for us?

But Peter also speaks of grief and suffering and trials that have come upon us. ***"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials."***

Such trials include persecution. We don't know yet all that we must suffer for Jesus and for our faith.

Later in this letter, Peter reminds us: ***"However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name."*** 1 Peter 4:16 (NIV)

And Scripture tells us why trials have to come upon us. ***"These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."***

Peter sees trials of faith as essentially productive. To illustrate this, he refers to the common practice of subjecting gold to such intense heat that it melts. When the gold is ready to be remolded, however, the impurities have also perished in the flame. Trials and difficulties may attack the life of believers, but such trials also have the ability to identify and get rid of those impurities which might hinder our growing ***"in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."*** 2 Peter 3:18 (NIV) Several times in this letter are passages which view suffering as essentially fruitful and necessary.

The final result of this is that your faith ***"may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."***

He goes on: ***"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."***

Sometimes we think of rejoicing when we get to heaven. Sure, we will rejoice then, but we don't have to wait until we get to heaven to rejoice and praise God. We can do it right now. Because even now ***"you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls."***

Think of the peace you have with God knowing your sins are forgiven. Think of the confidence you have knowing that ***"that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."*** Romans 8:28 (NIV) Yes, we love God and rejoice in him and all he has done and is doing and will do for us. But more important is that each of us has ***"been called according to his purpose."*** God has purposes and goals for us that we don't yet know, that we may not even have imagined! If you are young, you have no idea of all the purposes God has for your life, how you may serve him. Even in your old age God still has work for you to do for him.

The Bible speaks of salvation as past, and present, and future in various places. Peter is here thinking of what will be revealed for us in the future as well as what God is doing for us right now.

In God's right time, in God's good timing, he will come to take us away from this world of sin to eternal glory where with all believers we will praise him forever.

Our souls even now are receiving the glorious gifts of God. Right this very moment you are hearing of what God has done for you, and why you should praise God!

We are among those Jesus called blessed, when he told Thomas who had to see the risen Jesus to believe, ***"because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*** John 20:29 (NIV)

And so let us praise God in every way we can – through our thoughts, through our words, through our actions and lives so that others may come to faith in Jesus Christ who ***"has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you!"***

For all God has done for us, we can only praise him – here on earth and hereafter in heaven! May all our lives be praise to God! Amen.