

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Third Sunday after Trinity, June 24, 2012**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 515, 605:1-2, 21, 402, 352.

Lessons: Exodus 19:2-8, Romans 5:6-11, Matthew 9:35-10:7.

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 1:3-12.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltritt

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

We are constantly making plans for our lives. We plan for today, we plan for tomorrow, we plan for years ahead. But not all our plans come out exactly as we hope and intend.

However, when God plans something, it comes true. What God promises happens. That may be most obvious in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But God also has plans for believers, what we may call

**THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS PLAN OF THE FATHER**

- 1. We praise God for what he has done for us**
- 2. Yes, we suffer trials but through all these trials**
- 3. But they serve to refine our faith as**
- 4. We see the eternal glories that follow the sufferings of Jesus.**

Praise to God! Peter continues after last week's text. Why should we praise God? ***"In his great mercy he 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."***

Born again! New birth! That means new life. Whatever has come before is now gone, dead, and Jesus Christ is the reason!

And here is why: Peter speaks of baptism later in these words: ***"baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him."*** (1 Peter 3:21-22)

That is the new birth that God has given us. St. Paul says in Romans, chapter 6, ***"We were therefore buried with [Christ] through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."*** (Romans 6:4)

Luther uses that passage to show that baptism "means that our Old Adam with his evil deeds and desires should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and die, and that day by day a new man should arise, as from the dead, to live in the presence of God in righteousness and purity now and forever."

Believers – all who believe – have been given this new birth which gives you hope for life eternal – no matter what this life on earth brings us. This is a living hope. It was earned for you ***"through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"***. As you heard last week, this is because you have been sprinkled by the blood of Jesus Christ.

You have been born unto an inheritance that cannot ***"that can never perish, spoil or fade."*** That is really something when you think of what it is that humans pass on to others. People take great pains and strive to get possessions that they want to inherit. They fight over them. They file lawsuits over them. They connive to get and keep them. People have taken great pains to get or deliver inherited "things". But here is an inheritance what is free, grand and great, and can never even be tarnished, ***"that can never perish, spoil or fade."***

This is an inheritance kept in heaven for you – for you, the stranger in the world who has been elected, chosen by God for eternal life. This inheritance is a result of God choosing you and giving you eternal life. This inheritance is not things which rust, decay, get stolen. It is not even real estate, which always has some value, even if all the buildings and trees on it should be destroyed. This is something which cannot decay and never lose its appeal.

This is waiting for you, preserved for you, and will not spoil, perish, fade, like earthly possessions. And then Peter moves from talking about the possession to talking about you, dear believer.

He speaks of ***“you, 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.”*** What a comfort that is and should be to the believer in Christ: You are shielded and protected by God's power – his grand, glorious, incomparable power that can even bring someone back to life! And it is you who are shielded and protected and kept safe ***“until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”*** We can't see it all now in all its glory. We are looking forward to something we can't really see or comprehend. But it will be revealed – God's complete and final salvation will be revealed ***“in the last time”*** on judgment day, when time as we know it shall end. We can think of Paul's words from the KJV: ***“For now we see through a glass, darkly.”*** (1 Corinthians 13:12 KJV) The NIV tells us: ***“Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror.”***

You are kept, shielded, protected. How? Not by yourselves but by God's power. On judgment day, “The world will see” and “You will see!”

This gives us great cause for rejoicing. ***“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 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.”*** We rejoice – remember, he said “Praise to God”? Rejoice! Be happy, even though we have ***“to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.”*** Which of us hasn't had to suffer some kind of grief? And more significantly, which of us hasn't experienced some kind of persecution or suffering because of our faith in Jesus?

But sometimes God gives us suffering to keep us humble, and bring us back to him, so he is the most important thing in our lives again.

Maybe the suffering was great because the persecution was great. Maybe the suffering was something different. For example, how often don't we have to set aside something we want to do simply because of the timing and schedule of serving and praising the Lord? Yes, our worship schedules are creative. They involve Saturday mornings and Sunday evenings – and other times of the week, too, which often conflict with something we want to do. Yes, I wouldn't be totally honest if I didn't recognize that serving the Lord sometimes makes for us choices that seem hard now. Worship – or something else? Catechism Instruction or something else? Sunday School or something else? For children, these especially are trials. As a child I felt bad that I “had to” go to Catechism Instruction on Saturday mornings when others got to watch the Saturday morning cartoons on television. And there are similar choices our children must make to learn the Word of God, too.

But through all our sufferings, Peter assures us ***“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.”***

Also in our living as Christians we “suffer”. How often don't we all have to make choices because we are Christians? Choices in lifestyles. Choices in what we do and where we go, and who we spend time with, sometimes asking ourselves “would I be happy to have Jesus find me there, or doing that, when he comes in judgment?”

But many Christians are called upon to make even greater choices than the trivial things I have mentioned or hinted at. They are choices that involve giving up possessions – earthly possessions, not the heavenly inheritance of eternal life, which is far greater than some mere earthly possessions, as Peter has just assured us. There are Christians who have made choices that involve even giving up their lives to confess that Jesus Christ is their Savior. Stephen, who was stoned to death for steadfastly confessing Jesus Christ as his Savior was called the first New Testament martyr. Many over the centuries have lost their earthly lives for Jesus Christ, only to be immediately received into eternal life. Such choices may even come upon us, too, for Jesus

Christ and the truth of the Word of God is increasingly unpopular even in our supposedly liberated/ modern/ tolerant world today.

Notice how these trials which you, believers must endure are compared to gold. There isn't much in our daily lives that is much more valuable than gold, and gold is chosen because it must be heated and melted – tried by fire – refined by fire – to be purified. But it still perishes. Think of the gold that covers things such as domes or statues. Over time, even such gold – applied as very thin coatings of gold called “gold leaf” just disappears. It is worn off, it oxidizes, it perishes. Perhaps you even have some gold jewelry that has been worn smooth because the surface of it has been worn off. That's the kind of thing that Peter is talking about when he tells us that gold, one of the most precious metals known to man perishes.

***“These [trials and temptations] 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.”*** Your faith will be found to be genuine – the real thing – that gives you eternal life as a gift of God, not by anything you have deserved. This testing of your faith will ***“result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”*** When the glory of Jesus is revealed on judgment day, you, too, will share in his glory and honor!

Peter comes back to the source and reason for all these blessings: Jesus Christ. ***“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, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”*** You love Jesus. We've never seen him, but believe in him, by the power of the Holy Spirit working in us. This gives us real joy, a joy we can't really express, because through him we are receiving the goal of our faith, the salvation of our souls.

Notice how Peter keeps coming back to the eternal life waiting in heaven for us? He reminds us constantly about that. You love God though you haven't seen him. Not only will our souls be saved, but our bodies will be glorified when we receive eternal life.

How important is this salvation, which sometimes takes second or third place in our lives?

***“Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.”***

All the prophets were looking forward to Jesus. They were waiting for him. They were trying to figure out when and where he would come to redeem mankind.

We might draw a parallel today to people trying to determine when Jesus will come to judge the living and the dead. On May 21, 2011, many were deceived into thinking that they would be taken to heaven on that day. There are those who claim that the world will end on December 21, 2012, because the calendar of the pagan Mayan people ends on that day. But Jesus plainly said ***“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”*** (Matthew 24:36) Do not be deceived! Be ready every day, every moment for the coming of Jesus in judgment, for that moment when all this world will be destroyed and you will be taken to heaven! Nothing on earth is that important. We know that God has sent his Son to save us. Jesus came and accomplished all that he said he would.

And look at how Peter reminds you of how important you are to God: ***“It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.”***

All of God's Words have been fulfilled that pointed to Jesus Christ coming to earth to redeem mankind. And God's Words promising what will come will be fulfilled for you, too. Christ's sufferings were not signs of failure but were part of the Father's loving plan. Your sufferings, too, are not signs of failure, but are part of the Father's loving plan for you. May this be our comfort as we face every day. Amen.