

I Peter 1:3-9

Dear Friends in Christ,

If you looked at the Sermon Theme, then I'm thinking that you're thinking: "Where's this sermon going to take us? I'm not a hoarder!" Well, maybe not....like the ones on tv.....I guess. But....how many pairs of shoes do you have? How many extras do you have of whatever you think you need to have? How often do you think: "I've got to clean out these closets. I'm out of room." And if you have a basement, don't you love it? A place to store all that stuff you know you're going to need. Now, understand, I'm talking about you. I prefer to avoid any discussions about me concerning the subject.

In a sense, we're all hoarders, of sorts. Here are a couple of definitions of the word *hoard*: "A supply or fund stored up and often hidden away...to lay up a hoard of." That's a good one, don't you think: "to lay up a hoard of (something)."

Well, recall these words of Jesus: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal." (Matt. 6:19-20)

You see? In one sense, we do want to be hoarders. We should want to *lay up* - hoard - treasure in heaven. This Sunday after Easter we're examining . . .

## THE HOARDER'S PRIMER

### I. It's a Living Hope.

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..." (v. 3)

It bears repeating: There is only one promise this world can make and consistently keep and is guaranteed 100%: ***What is conceived will die.*** However, what we have in Christ is "a living hope through (His) resurrection from the dead." Everything of this world reminds us that "the wages of sin is death," and everything of this world is full of dying and death because of sin. Look! The Scriptures say:

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. (Rom. 8:22-23)

Therefore, as has been said so many times in the past, if all we have is what this world offers....well....that's a dead hope. And that is the result of our sin - our lawlessness against God. But listen, please, very carefully to what Paul writes:

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh (Jesus destroyed the death and damning power of sin by doing everything necessary to meet God's requirements on our behalf)... (consequently) "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you." (Rom. 8:1-3, 11)

He will "give life to your mortal bodies." Life. Real life! Life without the sin that results in upheaval, dying and death! Life without end! You noted that didn't you; the words, "According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope..."? We didn't deserve the Living Hope.

He gave it because He is merciful. Vance Havner remarked, "Bless God, He didn't come to rub it in; He came to rub it out." And that He did through Christ's suffering and death for our sin. Out with sin and death!

## II. Always Remember Its Value.

The question is: "What is the treasure?" It has been described this way:

We are not earning special heavenly blessings, but God will graciously bless us with perfect happiness in heaven, the fellowship of all the saints of all times, perfect health and strength, and total freedom from pain and sorrow and suffering and all the consequences of sin. (Albrechts, Matthew, People's Bible Commentary, CPH, p. 96)

More importantly, in The Book of Revelation, John writes of our Heavenly Inheritance - the treasures:

Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them...He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. (Rev. 21:3-4)

The treasures are there, in Heaven, ready for us to receive. We lay it up by doing everything necessary on this earth to walk with the Lord; to make everything He gives us in Christ our chief focus for living. Paul writes, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Phil. 2:12b) He is not saying, "Do good works, pay for your sin and earn heaven." He is saying, "Do everything necessary to safeguard the treasures of life, joy, happiness, and dwelling in the face-to-face presence and unending love of the Triune God!" *Lay it up!* In a sense, hoard it!

And note, as Peter writes, we have been "born again...to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you..." (vs. 4) Isn't that astounding? Everything of this world perishes; is already defiled by sin; will fade in its joy or purpose. Everything wears out and will pass away.

## III. Trials Sharpen Our Focus.

Next, Peter says:

"In this you rejoice, though now for a little while...you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith...may be found to result in glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (vv. 6-7)

Listen again: "you have been grieved by trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith may...result" in something, namely the heavenly inheritance! They - trials - impress upon us these words of Scripture: "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died (we are dead to this world), and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (Col. 3:2)

## IV. Joyfully Taking Out the Trash.

And for all the times we bemoan what we don't have or get to do of this world; for all the moments of tears and disappointments; for all the pain and loneliness that slap us against a wall, Peter puts everything in perspective:

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (vv. 8-9)

These words obliterate the perverse thinking of the liberal church that insists we follow the thinking of this world and work for a heaven on earth! On the contrary, the goal of our faith is the salvation of our souls, as won for us through the suffering, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Martin Luther wrote the following to Prince Frederick the Wise during a time when the Prince was seriously ill: "Thus it is good for us always to be oppressed with some trouble, lest in our weakness we succumb to the offenses of the world and fall into sin."

There's a story about a couple that sat down at a table in one of those restaurants where you thought you needed a flashlight to see where you're going and what you're eating. A few minutes after they were seated, the husband was surprised at how easily he could read the menu. His wife said, "Yes, it doesn't take us long to get accustomed to the darkness." It doesn't. It really doesn't.

We don't want to get accustomed or comfortable with the darkness of this world. Faith in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ assures us that we have laid up for us the treasures of Heaven - light and life. God help us to safe-guard them. God help us to hoard them, that is, keep them stored-up and safe-guarded. And God help us to direct others to the hoard - the treasure!

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

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*II. Always Remember Its Value*

*III. Trials Sharpen Our Focus.*

*IV. Joyfully Taking Out the Trash*

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