

Our Source of Hope for 2018 and Beyond

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Good Morning, unfortunately Pastor Tom has been fighting the flu for the past week and is not able to bring you his message this morning, so he asked me to share with you today.

I thought I would dive right into God's word to start the morning off, so if you have your bible or your app please turn with me to Chapter 1 of 1 Peter.

If you don't have a bible, there are some in the pew in front of you, or you can follow along on the screen behind me.

1 Peter 1

Prayer – insights into the word, opening hearts to hear the word and understand it's truth, for lives to be impacted for Christ Jesus, and God's wisdom to prevail.

I am going to break this into three sections as we walk back through portions of the chapter.

1 Peter 1:3-5

There are a couple of things that stand out for me in this passage from Peter.

The first, is that we are born again to a living hope – a hope that is alive, and active, that is working in and through us daily. It is a hope found in Jesus Christ who is our living Saviour, who has been raised from the dead and is seated in the heavenly realms.

It is a hope that equips and sustains us for the walk we are on, our journey while we are in exile here on earth and away from God in eternity. It is a hope that those who were with Jesus write about and experienced in their efforts to establish the early church.

The second thing to note is the inheritance we are born again into and receive along with this living hope.

It is an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading. There is nothing on earth that can compare to the inheritance that we will receive in and through Christ.

When I was 15 my Mom passed away and I received a small inheritance – it helped Alana and I get established, but it really didn't go very far – I squandered some of it, spent some of it to pay off debts, and used some of it for our wedding and honeymoon – it faded pretty fast.

The inheritance we have in Christ is imperishable – it will never perish!

It is undefiled – it is pure and perfect like Christ.

It is unfading – not only will it not perish, it will not fade – it will not become of shadow of what it starts out as.

As well, it is being kept in heaven for us. It is being kept safe for us and is part of the hope we have, for those that have trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior - that our names are written in the book of life and we will be with God for eternity.

God has done this by his grace. We didn't do anything deserving of this inheritance nor can we of our own accord be worthy of the inheritance. It is a gift of God and is available to all who believe in Jesus Christ.

Once you accept Christ as your Savior, God will send the Holy Spirit as a deposit or guarantee of the inheritance we have in Christ, and it will lead you into better understanding God's word, and who Christ is.

Turn back a few pages to Ephesians 1, verses 11-23:

Paul prayed that God would give believers the Spirit of wisdom that we might have the eyes of our heart enlightened, that we may know:

- the hope to which he has called us (the living hope we have in Christ Jesus because he was raised from the dead and seated at God's right hand in the heavenly realms);
- the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints
- the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe

We (I) need to never take for granted the gift of the hope and future inheritance I have in Christ. I need to do this in spite of my circumstances – good or bad that come into my life.

In both sets of circumstances we can find ourselves, for very different reasons, forgetting what Christ has done for us and the hope that we have in him – not because of what we have done, but because of what he has done for us.

That leads me to the second point I wanted to highlight in this passage from 1 Peter - Joy.

1 Peter 1: 6-9

1 Peter 1:6 ... In this you rejoice...

What do we rejoice in – the living hope we have in Christ Jesus and the inheritance that is kept in heaven for us.

When do we rejoice – always. There is no qualifier on the statement that Peter makes here.

We are not called to rejoice some of the time, or in certain situations, or under certain conditions.

He calls us to rejoice, and to rejoice with inexpressible joy. Paul does the same in other passages throughout the New Testament.

Do we know what that feels like – have you ever been speechless, I mean truly overwhelmed to the point of joyful tears and silence, where a hug or a smile was all you could manage.

I am not sure that many of us, myself included could say that is the case – there have been moments of great joy – kids being born, good news from a doctor, an engagement, a wedding ... children, friends, loved ones confessing Christ as their Savior.

These are all circumstantial reasons to rejoice. Peter reminds us that the living hope we have in Christ and our inheritance are cause for the greatest of celebrations, the greatest sense of joy and rejoicing – there is nothing on earth that compares to the hope we have in Christ.

That said, Peter does acknowledge that we may be suffering various trials and circumstances that test our faith, the genuineness of our faith – that try us, press us, crush us, and overwhelm our souls.

Consider Paul and all that he suffered. He shares some of this in 2 Corinthians Chapter 1:

2 Corinthians 1:3-11

We will have struggles in this life – three weeks ago we had a service of remembrance for those that had lost loved ones. We have had baptisms where people confessed their faith, and yet acknowledged tragedies or difficulties in their life. We have sickness and injury, broken relationships, lost loved ones...

These are very real situations we have to deal with all the time, yet Peter and Paul remind us to rejoice in spite of these circumstances because we have so much reason to rejoice, and the living hope we have in Christ can carry us through the most arduous of trials.

We are reminded that though these trials are real, they are difficult, and they hurt, they are fading – they will end. Our inheritance in Christ will not – it is imperishable and unfading.

And since we have that eternal inheritance we find comfort from God as Paul describes, and we are encouraged that we are better equipped through these circumstances to comfort others as God has comforted us.

Back in early November, Pastor Justin spoke about this when he spoke about Hosea and the trials and struggles he faced in obedience to God's word regarding his wife and prophesying to Israel.

He also took us to Romans Chapter 5, which I will get you to turn back to now:

Romans 5: 1-5

We rejoice in the hope of the Glory of God and our sufferings as they produce character and hope. Jesus is coming back.

Those who have accepted him as their Lord and Saviour are going to live with him in eternity and will be rejoicing in their unfading inheritance we have in Him.

It is hard – some of you have experienced this more deeply and painfully than I have so I won't presume to tell you it is easy, or even how to do it.

What I can do is encourage you with God's word and his unfailing love for his saints. We as a Church family, as the body of Christ can build one another up into Christ by coming along side those that are sick and hurting.

We can share with them the comfort that we have received, we can come alongside them and support them in their trials and sufferings.

We can and need to strive together to support each other as we face these trials such that we can together rejoice in spite of our situation.

This is an important part of the community of believers – we build each other up into Christ, in all our circumstances – we rejoice together even in our suffering and pain because we have a living hope in Christ that is eternal and imperishable.

1 Peter 1:13-23

After sharing these truths about God and the living hope, as well as the trials that would come and our rejoicing with inexpressible joy...

Look at verse 13

Peter teaches us that we have a responsibility to act on these truths, it is not enough to just leave it to the Holy Spirit and believe it will all just come together.

Verse 13 reminds us, instructs us, impresses upon us that there is a deliberate action required by Christians to set their hope on the grace we have and we will receive.

We are told to prepare our minds for action, to be intentional and deliberate.

The image of sober-minded here, from my perspective, is being “of sound mind and body” in our decisions and actions to strive after Christ. We are not being unwise, or haphazard, we are not simply falling into some actions – we are being deliberate.

We are not blindly following some fanciful idea or feel good statement, we are following God's purpose in our lives because of the very real grace that has been revealed to us in the death and resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ.

What do we need to be deliberate about:

- setting our hope fully on the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ – we have an unequal future available to us, and a grace that abounds to us in ways we don't deserve – it is this hope that will enable us to rejoice in all circumstances.

- not being conformed to our past practices and ways – before we came to know Christ we were held hostage to the sin in our lives. Know that we can strive after godliness instead of sin; and

- Being holy as God is holy – striving to be set apart for God, to be obedient to his word, and to his call on our lives – to walk in a manner worthy of the upward call we have in Christ Jesus.

Look at **1 Timothy 4:7-9**

Paul encourages Timothy, and us, to train ourselves for godliness – it has value for this life and the next. Why does he do that – because he has his hope set fully on the living God – not circumstances or things of this world.

He reminds us of the truth of this statement and contrasts it to following irreverent and silly myths – Christ is real, his death and resurrection are real, the hope we have in him is real, the inheritance we have in heaven is real.

So what does all this mean:

First – you need to decide where you will place your trust / your hope? In whom have you trusted? Have you made a decision to accept Christ as your Lord and saviour? Are you seeking to know who Christ is? Do you feel him calling you to accept his call on your life, to accept his free offer of salvation and grace?

Christ is standing at the door and knocking. Let him in, let his Holy Spirit come into your life and help to teach you the truths of God's word that you might strive after Him and know the hope that we spoke about this morning. Speak to myself, one of the Pastors, or a friend – don't delay.

If you know Christ, are you striving after him? Are you seeking to be holy as he is holy? Have you set your hope fully on the hope we have in Christ Jesus?

Do you think about the reasons we have to rejoice in spite of our circumstances? There are many but the greatest is the living hope we have in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and the inheritance we have in heaven.

Setting your hope on Christ requires constant effort and deliberate actions. The world will interfere with our best of intentions. I have spoken about this before; it is about striving.

Like many of you I have had ups and down on this journey so I have to remind myself of the need to stay in God's word, to be active in prayer, to serve others and to show unconditional love. Strive to make real the faith that you have in Christ Jesus, to be set apart and to build others up into Christ.

Finally, don't try to do this alone – join a small group, connect with other men and women through the Men's Ministry, Ladies Morning Out, Men's fellowship time, Primetimers, youth, College and Career and other groups.

Seek out an accountability partner to encourage one another, look for a mentor to speak into your life, seek out someone to mentor.

Find other Ministries to get involved in and connect with others through your service. Attend Sunday school, listen to the word on your morning drives, read the bible at breakfast, teach a Sunday School class.

Let me encourage you as strongly as I can as we go into 2018, we have a living hope in Jesus Christ and an inheritance that is imperishable and unfading.

This should be a cause for immense celebration and rejoicing. I don't know what 2018 has in store for any of us quite frankly, but I encourage you to face it in the knowledge that God has his hand upon you and he has a plan for you – not just for this year, but eternity.

If you have accepted him as your Lord and Saviour – you (we) have every reason to enter 2018 with joy that is unquenchable in spite of whatever comes our way.

If you haven't, why not let this year be the first year of the rest of eternity where you rejoice in the hope you have in Christ Jesus and the inheritance that is available to you through Christ.

Let's pray