

May 4, 2014
3rd Sunday after Easter

Hope Because You are
Redeemed
UNEDITED DRAFT

1 Peter 1:17-21
Pastor Michael Ewart

Dear friends in Christ,

Starting last week, and going through June 1st, we are looking at a series of readings in 1 Peter under the theme: HOPE. Last week we talked about the living hope that our God has given us. We talked about how a person has hope if they have a worthwhile goal in front of them, and they have the will to strive toward it, and the pathways and strategies in place to achieve it. God has given us the worthwhile goal... it is the salvation of our souls and our eternal dwelling with God in heaven. He has shown us the reality of the goal. He has provided the means to achieve that goal, and it's through his Son who lived for us and died for us and rose again. He gives us the pathways and strategies necessary to achieve the goal. Through Word and Sacrament he created faith in our hearts, and in the same way we remain in the faith, focused and progressing toward the eternal goal.

Today we look at another facet of the hope that we have. We will see that we have hope not only for the distant future, but we have a nearer term goal as well. Although heaven is the big goal, the ultimate goal, the long-term goal, God gives us a goal for right now too. In other words the hope you have in Christ Jesus and the hope you have for heaven is also a hope that shapes your life here on earth. And that hope for eternity and the hope that changes you now is **hope because you are redeemed.**

So what is the shorter term goal as we await the fulfillment of our long-term goal? Look at 1 Peter 1:14. **“As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”**

Your goal is to be holy. That is to live a life that is set apart from the way the world lives, and set apart for God. Your goal is to conform your will, your behavior, your words, your actions... your whole life... to that of your heavenly Father.

You are child of God, and so you are to be an obedient child of God.

But why? What is to be our motivation? What should we keep in mind in our daily life? What should we keep in mind as we have choices and decisions before us to obey God or to disobey?

Here is the first thing we must remember:

17 Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.

God wants you to be ever mindful of the fact that each and every one of us will stand before God in judgment someday. And when we stand before him, we must know that God will judge us impartially.

Now some might be thinking. “Well that's not right. He will give preference some, won't he? Surely he favors the church people. Surely he favors the religious people. Surely he favors the people that volunteer at church the most. Surely he favors the people that go out of their way to be kind to their neighbor. Surely God favors someone who comes from a good Christian family.” What does the verse say? God judges each man's work impartially.

You see, God's benchmark for justice is simply this: “Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy.” And all get judged by that same measure. There are only two categories at the final

judgment. Holy and unholy. Those in the holy category as God belong with God in heaven. Those who are in the unholy category will be separated from him for eternity.

So what does it look like to live holy? God has called us to live a life that is radically different than the way the world lives. And so he says, **“Live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.”** What’s the opposite of living as a stranger in reverent fear? Living as a permanent resident in comfort and ease. If you feel perfectly comfortable in this world, that’s a warning sign. If you feel at ease around your unbelieving friends, that’s a warning flag. If you don’t feel uneasy by the way they talk, by the things they value, by the priorities they set, by attitudes they have, and by the direction of their life, then there is a huge problem in your relationship with God.

Will you let that sink in for a second? If you can hang around with people who have no time for God, and you feel comfortable around them, and you have no problem with what they say, or do, or their view points, there is a problem. You are called to live a holy life that lines up with God’s word, and his actions, and his view points. If you find that you more closely line up with the world... with unbelieving friends... something is terribly wrong.

God reminds us that we call on our Heavenly Father who is the judge of all people and we will stand before him. That fact, if we truly believe it, ought to cause us to live our lives as strangers, pilgrims here on earth, and to live in reverent fear. If we recognize that God is infinitely greater than us... that his power is beyond measure, and that his position is judge over all, how can we be indifferent about the life we are living? How can we be calloused? How can we shrug off the sin we observe in our own life? How can we shrug off, or join in or condone the sin we see in the lives of others?

The clock is ticking. Our lives will end. This world will pass. A new, eternal era will begin, and the check point for entering it is the courtroom of God. How can we sin with indifference?

TRANSITION: Are you feeling a little scared yet? I hope you are. I’m trying to scare you because I love you, and because sin is bad, and standing before God in sin truly is a scary thing.

What we desperately need is rescue from our sinful, empty way of life. What we need is to be **redeemed**. So here is a key word in Scripture, and a key word in our text today that removes our fear, gives us HOPE, assures us of our big goal (heaven) and also empowers us for our intermediate goal: holy living. Our lives need to be redeemed.

Redeem and ransom are similar words. In our culture today, when we hear of a ransom, we probably think of the crime of kidnapping. The kidnapper demands a price for a person’s freedom. But in ancient times, the word redeem or ransom did not have criminal overtones. A person who was a slave could be redeemed or ransomed. Many times, a person became a slave because of debts. There was no “bankruptcy” back then. If you owed a debt and you couldn’t repay it, then you became a slave until the debt was repaid. Slave’s didn’t usually make enough money to redeem themselves, they needed a rich relative or a benefactor to purchase their freedom. And when the required amount was paid, the slave was set free.

Three things I want you to know about your ransom, your redemption.

- 1) *What has he redeemed us from?*
- 2) *What has he redeemed us with?*
- 3) *What has redeemed us for?*

What has he redeemed us from? Jumping back to verse 14 and then looking at the verse we just heard, we see three things that God redeemed us from. **“As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.”** In our inner most being, what is at the heart of every human being? The secular world would say “reason.” That’s what fundamentally defines a human being from an animal. But there is something besides reason that is within us, and it frequently overpowers reason, and that is evil desires. Evil lusts. It’s easy to demonstrate that evil desires trump reason, because reasonable people frequently sin in unreasonable ways. The unredeemed person frequently conforms to his evil desires. We need to be redeemed from them.

That same verse says that the unredeemed are characterized by ignorance. That’s not meant to be offensive, just factual. The apostle Paul describes himself before his conversion as ignorant. This was a man who was highly educated and even knew the Old Testament extremely well... even having large portions of it memorized. Yet unredeemed, he persecuted the very person that could redeem him: Jesus. Those who do not believe in Jesus are in ignorance when it comes to God, salvation, forgiveness, and life. They need to be redeemed from that ignorance.

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty[futile] way of life handed down to you from your forefathers,

Isn’t that an interesting way to speak of an unholy, sinful life? It’s an empty, futile way of life. Satan tempts us to think that living the way we want is free and happy living. We think that is we live how we want, with who we want, when we want, that is the best life. It’s a lie. And if you have any experience in life, you know that this is true. Any number of things look like a good idea in our own eyes. Hanging around with the wrong people, cheating on a test, disobeying our parents, having an affair, getting drunk, gossiping about people, watching too much TV, hours of video game playing, internet porn, ... these seem like they would be fun and or fulfilling, but you know how they make you feel the next day. Regret. Sorrow. Negative consequences. This way of life is empty... futile.

We need to be redeemed from slavery to such disobedience to God. A single sin would be a debt to God we can never repay. We sin multiple times each day. Our debt before God is unfathomable. And it’s not just the number of sins, we must consider whom we have sinned against. If someone commits a crime, it matters whom it’s against, doesn’t it? Crimes against those who hold authority in government are more severe. If a person plots to murder his neighbor, that is a punishable crime. If a person plots to murder the President of the United States, the punishment is far greater. Before God, not only are our crimes great, but against whom have we sinned? The one with all authority... the creator of the universe... our Maker. The wages of sin because it is against God is death.

We need the debt forgiven. We need our sin removed. We need to be completely holy, blameless and pure or we will die forever. We need to be redeemed. A ransom price must be paid or we will perish.

That’s what we need to be redeemed from. How can we be redeemed? Or the better question is: *what are we redeemed with?* What price must be paid to secure our release? The price necessary to redeem us was enormous. Not with gold or silver. Those things are too cheap. What is precious enough to redeem us? To ransom us?

Not with gold or silver, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times

for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

The only payment that can redeem us is the precious blood of Christ. In describing him as a lamb without blemish or defect, we are reminded of the lambs sacrificed in the Old Testament for the sins of the people. Especially at Passover, a one year old Lamb without blemish or defect was sacrificed. When the blood of that lamb was put on the doorposts, the angel of death passed over that house. The Egyptians suffered great losses, but the Israelites, who had sacrificed countless lambs, were saved. The lamb's blood redeemed the first born in that house, and they lived.

In a few minutes, we will be celebrating the Lord's Supper. As you do, remember your redemption. Jesus shed his blood on the cross for you. His sacrifice was holy and complete as the full payment of your sin debt. You receive his holiness as a gift. You stand before God holy and blameless in his sight because of the redemption of Christ Jesus.

What has he redeemed you from? You know. What did he redeem you with? His own blood poured out for you on the cross. Now one more quick question:

What did he redeem you for? We talked last week about how you have a living hope for eternal life. We keep our eyes focused on that final goal, and so we have hope. But God hasn't given it to us yet. What were we redeemed for as long as we are in this world? We were redeemed so that we belong to God, paid for by the blood of Jesus, and we live out our lives for him. We line up our thoughts to his thoughts.... words... actions. We've come full circle, back to where we started.

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.

God has called you to have hope, and you do have hope, because you are redeemed. Bought with the highest price imaginable: the blood of God's one and only Son. Go in hope because you are redeemed! Amen.