

Victory of the Lamb – April 23, 2017

Easter Brings Living Hope – 1 Peter 1:3-9 – Pastor Bill Limmer

Pastor Ben shared an article from Sports Illustrated with me (and you thought all we did was sit around reading ancient manuscripts – no we are well rounded hence Sports Illustrated). It was an article about a former NBA player and coach Monty Williams. Monty and his wife Ingrid had five children. And so the story goes: It was a little after 8 pm and Ingrid was driving north on a four-lane highway in downtown OKC in the family's SUV with three of their children. A sedan driven in the opposite direction by a woman whose toxicology reports would show had taken substantial amounts of methamphetamine. Police estimate that this oncoming car was driving twice as fast as the 40-mph speed limit. She swerved to avoid rear ending the car that was in front of her which sent her across the center line and head on to Ingrid's SUV. The Sedan driver was dead at the scene. The Williams children would survive without major physical injuries. But the following afternoon, Ingrid would slip away at the age of 44. That's a trial. Tough times are all around. Flooding in Texas, fires in Florida, shooting around the country and in our county, hospitals are full, a loved one loses a battle, impossible employers, and not so motivated employees. Do you have any battle scars from the past? What storm are you in right now?

With heartaches, headaches, hate, trouble, trials all around Peter, the one who had boldly stated the Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, Peter the one who even more adamantly said in his time of fear about Jesus, I don't know the man, the one who was reinstated by Jesus – don't miss that, who sinned by denying that he even knew Jesus, is forgiven and set free to serve, the one who would preach at Pentecost says to those facing persecution and trials, to you and me: (1 Peter 1:3a) **Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!** Really Peter, praise in the storm. Praise when our heart is sunk down, when we have butterflies of anxiety in our stomachs, when we just received the shocking diagnosis, when we don't know how this illness, this relationship is going to turn out, how this circumstance is going to resolve. Praise when we just want crawl back into bed, pull the covers over your head and just stay there. How do you come off telling us to praise?

If Peter were here, he would say I'm glad you asked. Here is why: (1 Peter 1:3b-4) **In his great mercy he (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.** According to his mercy, not according to me doing the right thing, but his mercy. Not according to me not doing the wrong thing, but according to his mercy. According to his mercy even when I do the wrong thing, according to his mercy even when I don't do the right thing. According to his mercy, not because of my accomplishments or lack thereof, not according to my looks or lack thereof, not according to my skills or talents or lack thereof, not according to my wealth, not according to my profession, my gender, my ideologies, my political views, but according to his mercy God gave us the reason to praise him. He gave us new birth. He gave, it is a gift. If you pay for it, it is not a gift. If you pay for part of it and therefore are responsible for a part of it, it is not a gift. The great reformer said: I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing to believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. God gives the gift of a new birth, just as you and I didn't decide to be conceived and be born from our parents, so also you and I didn't decide to have this new birth. It is a gift of God. It is a gift of God into a living hope. This hope is not like a rollercoaster. This hope is not a pipe dream, wishful thinking or the latest predictions based on Marquette University pole. This hope is for sure because it is not based on human achievement but it is based on God's

achievement. That achievement is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Let's see you do that!



And the result of the resurrection is that you and I have an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. The idea the word imperishable is that an enemy army will not be able to ravage the land, take prisoners, injure, or kill. There will not be serene gas to burn or suffocate life. There will not be a mother of all bombs to destroy or distort it. Evil will not be able to afflict it or even touch it. It will be unfading. It will not wilt like a flower. The Easter flowers that decorated last Sunday and this Sunday are beautiful but you know as well as I do they don't have many Sundays left. This inheritance has supernatural beauty that time doesn't impair. The inheritance will not get tarnished, it will not acquire a defect. This inheritance is untouched by death, unstained by evil or unimpaired by time. Never fear it will never disappear. Rather it is of God. It is immortal, pure, and glorious!

So where is this inheritance. Peter says (1 Peter 5) **This inheritance is kept in heaven for you**, it is kept for you. It already exists, it is already in place, is in heaven. John describes heaven this way: **I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.** ³ **And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.** ⁴ **'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'** No more suffering, no more trials. The place is going to be packed. There is going to be singing. If you think Summerfest has a great line-up, it is nothing compared to the line-up in heaven. And I have great news. It is for you. You will be a part of this. This is how I know:

God wants you to have this, to be a part of it: **This inheritance is kept in heaven for you,** ⁵ **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.** You are being shielded by God's power. God is protecting and defending you both offensively and defensively. The victory is sure because you are being protected by God's power of grace! Grace is not dependent on you. Grace is new every morning. Grace never fails. Grace is without condition. It is not 75% God's grace and 25% our effort, not 85% and 15%, not even 95% and 5%, not even 99.99% and .01%. It is 100% God. No matter what goes on here by grace through faith you have a 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 away, an inheritance kept in heaven for you who are shield by God. And now you know why Peter began Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we see God, we have joy. We have a joy which springs from contemplating God and the salvation which comes from God!

And so, Peter goes on: **In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.** ⁷ **These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.** ⁸ **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,** ⁹ **for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.** We do have trials in life. We have unexpected trials. We have trials that others place on us. We have trials that we place on ourselves. We have trials from our enemy who wants to destroy us. And at least some of these trials may very well be more than we can handle. In love God lets us struggle and suffer sometimes so that we don't become too emotionally attached to something that perishing and fading away. He wants us

to realize we are camping here, just passing through. Life isn't really about our strength, our accomplishments our fortitude. Soon he will take us to our heavenly home, a place without fears, tears. But God's glory, God powerful grace. Somethings may be too much for us to handle but they will never be too much to handle for God. He has it.

And so, we face trials, some like what Monty Williams faced. I want to quote for you some of what Monty said at his wife's funeral. "Everybody is praying for me and my family, which is right. But let's not forget that that there were two people in this situation. And that family needs prayer as well. That family didn't wake up wanting to hurt my wife. Life is hard. It is very hard. And that was tough, but we hold no ill will toward the Donaldson family, and as a group, brothers united in unity, should be praying for that family because they grieve a well. So, let's not lose sight of what's important. . . . And when we walk away from this place today, let's celebrate because my is where we all need to be. And I'm envious of that. But I've got five crumb snatchers that I need to deal with. I love you guys for taking the time to celebrate my wife. We didn't lose her. When you lose something, you can't find it. I know exactly where my wife is."

And so, as we face these trials, some of them that hurt way, way down deep, we are being refined, the impurities are being removed, the dross of trusting in ourselves is being skimmed off so that we have nothing left but God, pure and pristine in every way. And when we see God all that is left is inexpressible and glorious joy because then we will have received what has been promised, the salvation of our souls. Because Jesus lives, we too will live. God is with you. God loves you. God is going to get you home to heaven. Living hope!
