

Sermon preached by Pastor Ben Kuerth on 1 Peter 1:3-9 on March 27, 2016 at Victory of the Lamb.

“Easter Means You Have An Inheritance”

Friends, what comes to mind when I say the word “inheritance”? Money? Property? Grandpa’s fishing pole. Of course an inheritance can be anything, anything at all, that is received from someone when a person dies. And as far as inheritances go, they vary.

According to a CNN study, in 2013 the average American inheritance was \$177,000. In other words, American retirees expect to leave an average inheritance of almost \$177,000 to their heirs. That puts our country as the 6th highest in the world. Topping the charts world-wide is Australia of all places with an average of \$500,000. In China it’s about \$68,000 and in India it’s \$46,000. Of course all this pales in comparison to what someone like Donald Trump received as an inheritance when his father passed away. What he received is estimated to have been worth between 40 and 200 million dollars. As far as inheritances go, they vary, don’t they?

What about for you? What I’m going to talk about today is this truth: **Easter Means You Have An Inheritance!** Did you know that? The people that Peter was writing to in the Bible, they didn’t know it. Or at least they sure needed to be reminded of it. Because the world they lived in was a shifting kind of scary place. Because it was a world where everything eventually falls apart, breaks down, wears out, or dies. A world where even the happiest moments are painfully short-lived or tainted by sad experiences. A world where everything beautiful eventually fades away. Sound familiar?

People in Peter’s day needed some hope, because they were living in a world of death. Peter personally knew all about this. He was one of Jesus’ close disciples. His sense of well-being was shattered when Jesus was arrested, falsely accused, tortured, mocked, nailed to a cross and left to die and it was Peter himself who was left with the shame and guilt of remembering how he had cowardly denied even knowing Jesus. So Peter knew what it was like to be hanging ten on the edge of despair, so overwhelmed with sorrow that he felt paralyzed and powerless to do anything about it.

You ever feel like that sometimes? But then something happened that would change Peter’s perspective forever. You know what happened? Easter. Peter got to see and spend time with Jesus alive after Easter. Peter was one of many eyewitnesses Jesus appeared to in order to prove that he was truly alive, just as he had promised. And so after Easter, Peter was transformed from being a coward who would not even admit he was a disciple of Jesus into a

bold proclaimer of Jesus who was willing to die for this truth: **Easter Means You Have an Inheritance!**

In the passage that we'll look at today, Peter was writing to Christians who were experiencing severe trials, including persecution for their faith in Jesus. The world at this time was a dark place getting scarier by the day. The politicians of the empire did not support their Christian faith. In fact the Roman emperor Nero was increasingly opposed to their faith. To be an open believer in Jesus was starting to mean that they faced the potential loss of means of income or the confiscation of property. So being a believer in Jesus did not mean that they were going to have it easier than most. Rather it was getting harder by the day. It meant feeling like they were refugees in a foreign land, exiles without a true home, pilgrims just passing through. It meant realizing they couldn't get too cozy here on earth when just going to church meant the possibility of winding up in prison or worse. In some ways this doesn't seem much like our world where the only thing we generally risk leaving behind to go to church on a Sunday morning is the comfort of our pillow, right?

Yet in many ways, Peter's world does sound a lot like our world, doesn't it? I mean let's be honest. Even with all our modern technology and all our medications and all our government programs and all our education, we still live a world where there are piles of pain and plenty of problems and a whole laundry list of empty promises and uncertainties, don't we? It's a world where this past week we again witnessed the carnage of a terrorist attack in Belgium leaving 31 people dead and many more wounded. It's a world where there are over 60 million refugees, people without a home, displaced because of poverty and war and where the politics about how to deal with them all is getting pretty ugly. It's a world where there are so many diseases, so many potential addictions, so many potential accidents or disasters lurking around the corner.

So what should we do? Panic? Worry? Despair? Should we hide in our homes or stick our heads in the sand? Should we spend our days engaged with endless diversions to distract ourselves from reality or just self-medicate the world away or take to social media and spew our complaints? Should we just hang out with friends and hope for the best? Let's listen to what Peter says to people who felt as if they were living as exiles in a land not their own as he points them to their true home in heaven:

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. 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. ⁶ 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.

The Easter season is an interesting time of year, isn't it? There's this peculiar mix of things secular and sacred. Nowhere else on the calendar can you find a holiday that blends an ancient Roman crucifixion with chocolate bunnies, an empty tomb with egg hunts and sugar coated peeps. I saw a headline on a popular news website this week that said: "Prices for chocolate bunnies rising." It was right under news about the terrorist attack in Brussels. I mean I had to do a double take. You know every week I receive piles of prayer requests for people who've been diagnosed with cancer, from families of those who have died or committed suicide, from people struggling to help loved ones caught up in destructive addictions...but you know I've never had a prayer request because the price of chocolate bunnies is going up. This was not a problem that Easter was designed to actually fix.

But, friends, there is a problem that Easter was designed to fix! There is a disease for which Easter is the only cure. It's called sin. Finally this is the terminal disease which we have all inherited. It's the inheritance that no one wants but everyone gets. It's the reason our highest hopes cannot be fulfilled here. It's the reason this country cannot be our true home. And it's the reason that all of us eventually die and we don't get to look at our Google Calendars and choose which day we want it to be. But we will all perish, we will all spoil, all our glory will fade away. This is what's wrong with the world. This is what's wrong with us. Only the Bible tells us what that something is. It's called sin. But friends, God refuses to let sin and death be the last word on our lives because he loves us so much. That's why **Easter means you have another inheritance!**

You see like a springtime herald, Easter proclaims anew each year the resurrection of God's Son, Jesus Christ, whose great sacrifice on the cross provides salvation to all who trust in him for the forgiveness of their sins. Without this Good Friday message of the cross, Easter might as well just be about chocolate bunnies. And without Easter all we might as well do is hope for the best. But Peter says, "No, because of Easter we have a living hope!" We have a *living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*. Why? Because His resurrection proves that the devil has been defeated. His resurrection proves that sin has been erased. His resurrection proves that death has been swallowed up in victory. And practically...what does

this mean for you and for me? **Easter Means We Have an Eternal Inheritance!** And notice...this inheritance doesn't depend on how good a person you've been. It doesn't depend on how smart you are, or how beautiful you are, or what neighborhood you live in, whether you're all dressed up today, how faithfully you've attended church up to this point, or whether you've ever even called yourself a Christian before today.

Did you notice what's true about your inheritance? Peter says, *It won't perish*. That means it won't rust out like your car caked in road salt. It won't wear out like your kids' trampoline net. It won't get moldy like those hot dog buns in your pantry. It's not subject to death and decay. *It won't spoil*. That means nothing can ruin it. You can't mix anything bad in with good to ruin its quality. *It won't fade*. In other words it isn't going to lose its beauty. It won't get ugly. It's not a chocolate bunny that might melt in the hot sun. It's not like money which is here one moment and can blow away with the wind the next. But this is what your inheritance is like... *It can never perish, spoil, or fade*. Sound too good to be true? That's because we know of nothing else like it here on this earth. We live in a world of sin and death here on this earth.

But **Easter Means You Have an Eternal Inheritance**. What's different about this inheritance? It's kept in heaven for you. *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*. In other words, because of Jesus heaven is now your true home. Your citizenship is in the kingdom of God in glory. And it's kept there, protected there, safeguarded for you there. And who is keeping it? Jesus is. For you. For 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*.

Friends, how can you tap into God's power that shields you right now? By regularly hearing and reading God's Word. God's word and God's power go hand in hand. This is how God has chosen to work. He packs his power into simple words and humble sermons. This is why coming to church beyond Easter is important. It's your weekly opportunity to plug into God's power. I mean think about it. Any of you have a freezer in your garage or in your basement? We do too. We have a freezer in our garage but if I unplug it and go on a vacation until Christmas, can I expect it to keep the ice cream from melting? Not a chance. It'll stay cold in there for a while depending on a number of factors but eventually, inevitably, a freezer without power becomes a tomb for melted ice cream and moldy pizzas and spoiled meat. That's what will happen to your faith and your soul if you disconnect from God's powerful, life giving word.

But God doesn't want that to happen to our souls! So he promises to safeguard our inheritance in heaven and to shield our faith with his power until our time comes from God to call us home. That's why he promises to use even the trials of this life to drive us constantly back to his word

and his promises so that we would not lose sight of what we have in store. You see nothing is more important than this. Your faith in Jesus, proven genuine, is of greater worth than gold because God's goal is to work behind the scenes of everything you experience whether good or bad to bring you home to heaven—that place where there is nothing ever again sad, no more bad, no more pain, no more death...only endless joy. This is your eternal inheritance!

Steph Curry said something profound about this. You know who he is? Steph Curry is the reigning NBA MVP. Here's what he said about Jesus Christ: "The Man who died for our sins on the cross... I know I have a place in Heaven waiting for me because of Him, and that's something no earthly prize or trophy could ever top."

Friends, no earthly prize, no earthly trophy, and I would add today...no earthly inheritance can ever top the fact that you have a permanent place in heaven. Because the reality is you may not have any trophies on your shelf. You may not have a fancy title at your place of employment. You may not have a lot of money in your bank account. You might not have good health. You might not have a big happy family. You might not be expecting any big financial windfall anytime soon. But if you have Jesus in your heart, you have an eternal inheritance waiting for you in heaven, a heavenly mansion being prepared for you by the Son of God, your dear Savior. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! He's the real MVP of our lives because **His victory on Easter means we have an eternal inheritance!** Amen.

Take Home and Apply

Think: An inheritance is usually something a person receives when a relative dies. Our inheritance is something we receive when we die because our Savior Jesus lives!

Share: ³ *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,* ⁴ *and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.* 1 Peter 1:3-4

Challenge: Who do you know whose life right now could use some "living hope"? Tell them what it means that Jesus has given us an eternal inheritance. Invite them to join you at church next Sunday as we unpack this truth some more in our next series based on Romans 8: Greatness.