



Easter 3

April 30, 2017 - 10:15 a.m.

Rev. Todd Goldschmidt, Pastor

Theme: The Resurrected Jesus Makes You Eternally Free!

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 1:17-25 (NIV)

¹⁷ Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. ¹⁸ For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. ²⁰ He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. ²¹ Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

²² Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart.^[a] ²³ For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴ For,

"All people are like grass,
and all their glory is like the flowers of the field;
the grass withers and the flowers fall,
²⁵ but the word of the Lord endures forever."^[a]

And this is the word that was preached to you.

Footnotes:

- a. [1 Peter 1:22](#) Some early manuscripts *from a pure heart*
- b. [1 Peter 1:25](#) Isaiah 40:6-8 (see Septuagint)

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You or may not be familiar with Clint Dempsey, the Texas born and bred striker for the Seattle Sounders and the man who is one goal shy of Landon Donavon's all-time record for goals scored as a member of the U.S. Men's National Soccer Team. Last year, at the age of 33, Clint had to step away from the game he'd played since he was a young boy, a game that catapulted him to international stardom as one of the premier soccer players on the planet. Diagnosed with an irregular heartbeat, Clint wisely took a break from the sport he loved rather than take the chance that he might drop dead on the pitch one fateful day. When doctors finally cleared him to play again, Clint came back with a fierce determination to prove that he hadn't missed a step during his hiatus. His goal-scoring prowess was instantly evident the minute he stepped on the field, netting a hat trick in the U.S. men's 6-nil win over Honduras. In the Sounders' 3-0 drubbing of the L.A. Galaxy last Sunday, Clint scored on a stunning header. The commentators pointed out that since his comeback, he plays like he has a whole new lease on life. Because he does.

People like Clint Dempsey realize how fragile life is. In an instant, a person's hopes, dreams, plans and prospects can vanish into thin air. A frightening medical diagnosis, losing your job, a near-fatal car accident, failing a final exam or the end of long-term relationship are but a few of life's scary situations that have us on our knees in prayer and searching our souls—and, more importantly, God's Word—for guidance and direction as to how to move forward. When God opts to bring us safely thru such troubled times, we rejoice! We sing with the psalmist, "I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live" (116:1). We've all had our own personal "near-death experience" whether we realize it or not. Each one of us was headed for perpetual pain and suffering in the white-hot furnaces of hell. We deserved that awful fate because we earned it. God sets forth His verdict in no uncertain terms in [Romans 6:23](#): "The wages of sin is death"—eternal death in hell.

But thanks to Jesus, we have a whole new lease on life! His resurrection changed everything, not only for us who have come here to worship Him this morning but for the entire human race of every generation. In today's 2nd Lesson, we hear the Apostle Peter revel in our heavenly Father's kindness. He rescued us from our dire predicament. Not only did He pour out His Son's priceless blood to ransom us from the guilt and power of our sins, but He raised Him from the dead, assuring us that Jesus will keep His promise "that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day" (John 6:40). On that day, Jesus will invite us, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). We'll be escorted by His mighty messengers to the gates of Paradise, and ushered by them into God's presence to sing His praises forever and ever. With Jesus' resurrection on his heart and the hope of heaven in mind, Peter proclaims:

THE RESURRECTED JESUS MAKES YOU ETERNALLY FREE!

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Since the human genome has been mapped, scientists are discovering a great deal about the design of our genetic code. Your hair color, eye color and potential for height and intellect were all established at conception.

Sadly, we all inherited a terrible birth defect as well—a fatally flawed human nature. We were spiritually stillborn from the moment of our conception; our eternal fate was sealed. We were “born ... of perishable seed” spiritually speaking. And what did our parents give us for our birthright? An “empty way of life.” To be fair, it’s the same legacy that they received from their parents. In fact, it’s a birthright “handed down to” every single soul from their “ancestors” no matter their race, creed or ethnicity. But Peter declares the cure for our inevitable dilemma: “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” Only Jesus could ransom us!

“Ransomed” is such a beautiful word to describe Jesus’ saving work in our behalf. Jesus once said of Himself: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). “Ransomed” means “to set free.” It’s the word in the Greek language that’s used for purchasing a slave’s freedom—a useful image for winning our release from eternal futility and death. If “perishable things such as silver or gold” could’ve paid the ransom price we needed, that’s what God would’ve used. But the Bible maintains that “No one can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for them—the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough” (Psalm 49:7-8). Only the “precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” could provide sufficient payment to set us free from our captivity to sin, death and the power of the devil. And that was the price Jesus willingly—lovingly—mercifully—paid on the cross to buy us back “from the empty way of life handed down to us from [our] ancestors.” Praise God!

Think about it from the world’s perspective. Isn’t the death of Jesus and the blood that He spilled seemingly the most futile thing imaginable? No one—apart from the aid of God’s Spirit—can look at a dead Jesus hanging on a cross and see the value of His sacrifice. It appears to be such a waste. How can the horrible death of a man who opened the eyes of the blind, unstopped the ears of the deaf, healed the sick and infirm, cleansed lepers, drove out demons and even raised the dead count for anything other than a tragic loss? But we know different! We’ve been led by the Holy Spirit to see in Jesus not only a perfect man, but God in human flesh; to view Him not as a lost cause but as **the** cause of our eternal salvation! Because at Easter, God raised Him from the dead, assuring all of us in whom God lives by His Spirit that we, too, will rise on the earth’s last day to live forever with Jesus in the mansions of His Father’s heavenly home—mansions that He’s even now preparing for us! What tremendous blessings you and I have in Jesus!

We didn’t earn heaven; Jesus did. And He gives it to us as a free gift, just like the gift of faith He’s given us by the indwelling of His Holy Spirit.

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This is the beating heart of our lesson, of this joyful season, and of every Sunday. The Lord is risen! His is risen indeed! Alleluia! The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the exact antithesis of futility. Now death has lost its sting! Now the grave has lost its dreadful power! The resurrection of Jesus gives us reason for hope in the midst of despair, for joy in the midst of suffering, for life in the face of death itself.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead has taken the venom out of the devil's fangs and left him contemplating what might've been had Jesus' lifeless body remained in His tomb. But we know that's not the case. We know what the angels told the women who came that morning to finish giving Jesus' body a proper burial: "He's not here. He has risen, just like He promised He would!" Peter reminds us that "[Jesus] 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." To which we can't help but exclaim, "Amen and Amen"!

How do we respond to such glorious good news? Peter tells us: "Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear." We're "foreigners" in this world of sin. Heaven is our real home; our final destiny, thanks to Jesus! We live each day with an eternal perspective! We get life's big picture! By way of application, Peter adds: "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God." By the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in us, we live our lives "in reverent fear," "obeying the truth" of God's Word by "loving one another deeply, from the heart." The love we demonstrate in our lives—first for the Lord, and then for others—is genuine, not counterfeit; it's real love, not fake; it's a love like just Jesus' love for us—a love that lasts forever and ever and ever!

"For," Peter concludes with a quote from the prophet Isaiah (Ch. 40), "All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever." God's Word endures! God also spoke through the prophet Isaiah, proclaiming: "So is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (55:11). God's Word works! His Spirit works through it to bring about the spiritual transformation of God's elect, to effect lasting changes—sometimes moment by moment—in the hearts and lives of those who are led by Him to put their hope and trust in Jesus. Do you want a more fulfilling faith life? Do you want to honor the Lord in every way, shape and form? Do you want to demonstrate your gratitude to Him for the countless ways He's so graciously blessed you? Of course you do! Then spend time meeting the Lord where He means to be met: in His precious Word! For this life-giving, soul-transforming Word of God "is the word that was preached to you." Friends, **THE RESURRECTED JESUS MAKES YOU ETERNALLY FREE!** To God be the glory! Amen.

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