

3Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By His great mercy, He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, reserved in heaven for you, 5who through faith are protected by God's power for the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice

Psalm 103

*1Bless the LORD, O my soul,
And all that is within me, bless His holy name.*

*2Bless the LORD, O my soul,
And forget none of His benefits;*

*3Who pardons all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases;*

*4Who redeems your life from the pit,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion;*

*5Who satisfies your years with good things,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle.*

*6The LORD performs righteous deeds
And judgments for all who are oppressed.*

*7He made known His ways to Moses,
His acts to the sons of Israel.*

*8The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.*

*9He will not always strive with us,
Nor will He keep His anger forever.*

*10He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*

*11For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.*

*12As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

*13Just as a father has compassion on his children,
So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.*

*14For He Himself knows our frame;
He is mindful that we are but dust.*

*15As for man, his days are like grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.*

*16When the wind has passed over it, it is no more,
And its place acknowledges it no longer.*

*17But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to
everlasting on those who fear Him,
And His righteousness to children's children,*

*18To those who keep His covenant
And remember His precepts to do them.*

*19The LORD has established His throne in the heavens,
And His sovereignty rules over all.*

*20Bless the LORD, you His angels,
Mighty in strength, who perform His word,
Obeying the voice of His word!*

*21Bless the LORD, all you His hosts,
You who serve Him, doing His will.*

*22Bless the LORD, all you works of His,
In all places of His dominion;
Bless the LORD, O my soul!*

Bob Stapp asked if our little family here would be willing to encircle his family and help them honor the remembrance of his wife, Julie Mendenhall

Bob says Julie was raised in a family who honored the christian God and this little church is the place she would have wanted to be remembered. I said, yes, absolutely, we would be happy to help them in any way we could.

We don't think about death every day. Mortality. Mostly we just go about our business as if our lives would never end.

How interesting that an ancient book has stayed relevant largely because it does approach that subject and speaks of it as though it was the most normal thing in the world.

I got a new camera the other day. Pam bought it for me. Actually it's 10 years old. So we got a semi-professional machine that can make amazing images for pennies on the original cost. I'm thrilled to have it.

It came with a bunch of pro lenses that I could never afford. And the first images I made with it were with a macro lens that lets you get right up next to what you're photographing. So it was one of our few warm days and I went out the front door and made some images of the apricot blossoms.

Gorgeous images. I could blow them up to 20X24 and make the individual blossoms about 10 times life size.

As I read Psalm 103 while I worried about what to say this morning, my mind went immediately to those pictures. Safely in my computer. Not a safe place, but that's our modern techno world. We accept it for what it is.

Listen again to what the ancient book says about my apricot blossoms.

*15As for man, his days are like grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.*

*16When the wind has passed over it, it is no more,
And its place acknowledges it no longer.*

I can prove that the blossoms were there. They were exquisite in their beauty and if you're an apricot fanatic like me, they were full of hopeful promise.

But the wind blew. The storm came. The wind passed over them, and they are no more. I can't retake the same picture. The beauty didn't last. They're gone. What the wind didn't get, the frost did.

This ancient book uses the illustration of a simple flower to show us word pictures that have a deeper meaning. We are like that flower in the field. We flourish for a little while, the wind passes over us, and we vanish from our place. And we are seen no more.

Now, if that was the end of the lesson, if that was the sum of what we could learn from this book, we would think, what unspeakable futility. Here for a while and vanish away?? Is that all there is???

In 1967 Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller wrote a song that Peggy Lee recorded, which if you are part of my generation as many of you who sit here seem to be, you will remember by that title. Is that all there is??

I remember when I was a very little girl, our house caught on fire. I'll never forget the look on my father's face as he gathered me up in his arms and raced through the burning building out to the pavement. I stood there shivering in my pajamas and watched the whole world go up

in flames.

And when it was all over I said to myself, "Is that all there is to a fire"

Is that all there is, is that all there is

If that's all there is my friends, then let's keep dancing

Let's break out the booze and have a ball

If that's all there is

And when I was 12 years old, my father took me to a circus, the greatest show on earth.

There were clowns and elephants and dancing bears.

And a beautiful lady in pink tights flew high above our heads.

And so I sat there watching the marvelous spectacle.

I had the feeling that something was missing.

I don't know what, but when it was over,

I said to myself, "is that all there is to a circus?"

Then I fell in love, head over heels in love, with the most wonderful boy in the world.

We would take long walks by the river or just sit for hours gazing into each other's eyes.

We were so very much in love.

Then one day he went away and I thought I'd die, but I didn't, and when I didn't I said to myself, "is that all there is to love?"

I know what you must be saying to yourselves,

if that's the way she feels about it why doesn't she just end it all?

Oh, no, not me. I'm in no hurry for that final disappointment,

for I know just as well as I'm standing here talking to you,

when that final moment comes and I'm breathing my last breath, I'll be saying to myself

Is that all there is, is that all there is

If that's all there is my friends, then let's keep dancing

Let's break out the booze and have a ball

If that's all there is

The logic expressed in that rather depressing song is sound. If that's all there is, that we're here for a very short span and then the storm comes and then the wind comes over us and we are no longer seen, if that's all there is, then perhaps the best thing to do is dance, and dull the pain with

whatever you like best.

That song is 50 years old. That generation had jettisoned this ancient book and their logical conclusion was sound. In the 50 intervening years we have run as fast as we can even further away from this Holy book. In our remaining lifetimes we will see marijuana legalized and most likely in the supermarket aisles. Some think it remedies the pain of hopelessness more efficiently than the booze mentioned in the song.

Funny thing is, the ancient book says the same thing. In 1 Corinthians 15, the apostle Paul says; *32 If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for human motives, what did I gain? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."*

Paul agrees with the worlds logic, if, IF! the dead are not raised.

You see this book tells you, you're like a blade of grass that dries up and is gone, or a mist that appears for a time and vanishes before your eyes, or a flower that blooms for a time and blows away and is never seen again in it's place, but that isn't all there is. There is more. Much more. In fact so much more that those illustrations picture the insignificance of the brevity that we have here.

We began a verse by verse study in the book of 1st Peter last week. The depths of the information in that little book are astounding. Astonishing because the truths revealed there are revelations from the God who created all things.

Peter tells us things beyond finding out. We have no capacity to discover the truths he reveals. That is because God reveals things we cannot find out by science or reason, in this book of truths that are God breathed.

Without this book, Peggy Lee is exactly right. That *is* all there is. But with this book, we have hope. Let that word roll around in your head for a moment. Hope. Hope that there is more to all of this than the futility of those who have no hope. Just this life, then one day, you're gone.

Listen to Peter, who walked 3 years with Jesus, and who witnessed that same Jesus, alive from the dead, after He was crucified, buried, and risen again.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice

My purpose this morning is not to do an exegesis of those verses, but rather to simply take a quick look at what Peter says here as opposed to the hopelessness of the current world view, stated so well in Peggy Lee's song.

The first word I want to highlight is in the opening sentence. It's the word **our**. *Blessed be the God and Father of **our** Lord Jesus Christ*

Peter is speaking to a select group here. It is a group who hold in common that Jesus, the Christ is also to them, Lord.

These folks hold in common that Jesus is their Master. The words are from slavery. Someone who owns someone else. In this case, Jesus the Christ is the master of these folks.

It's a happy slavery. Their previous master, sin and Satan was a despotic and hopeless ruler. And Peter here launches into a paean of praise about belonging to Jesus because of what God the Father has done for those He owns.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

God has had pity on us, and has caused us to be reborn. We were dead

spiritually. Our sin had separated us from the Father. We were helpless and hopeless.

But Peter blesses God, the Father because He in His mercy has caused us to be re-born. To be made alive, together with His Son, the Lord Jesus, by the forgiveness of our sins.

And Peter says the new birth has given us hope. *has caused us to be born again to a living hope*

The world around us is saying, that's all there is, so grab for what you can get. But this book says we can be born again to a living hope. A hope of life, after life.

And the basis for that hope, Peter says is in *the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*

Jesus was alive. He lived a perfect sinless life. He was murdered on a cross. He was buried. And then He was alive again. Risen from the dead. Reliable witnesses, honest reliable men, witnessed that and wrote it down for us who would follow them 20 centuries later.

That's the basis for life beyond this short life. That's the basis for our hope. Jesus said, *because I live, ye shall live also*. That wouldn't mean a thing if He had stayed in the tomb like every other religious leader. But He rose from the dead. And it means exactly what it says.

Peter doesn't stop there. There's more. Lots more. Next he says this; *4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you*

Born again. Living hope. To obtain an inheritance.

I'll be gone . . . soon enough. I always laugh and say my kids are going to have to clean up the mess. My kids will inherit . . what? Rusty Fords. Old cameras. Junk. More junk.

I'm a Model A nut. I've been in the hobby 52 years. We used to know

where every Model A in town was at. In fields. Behind garages. Under shed roofs. They weren't in all that bad of shape. They were only 35 years old then.

Now any Model A that has sat in the weather, unprotected, at this point, is solid rust. The paint faded away and rust took its place. The wood in the bodies rotted away. The cloth roofs are gone. The bodies are literally falling apart because the interior wood is gone.

In the 52 years since I've been playing with them, they, if left to themselves and not preserved have become perishable, defiled, and faded away. All the words that Peter used.

Except Peter says we have an inheritance that isn't susceptible to the wearing of time. Our inheritance does not fade. It doesn't rust. It doesn't return to the earth like an unprotected old car.

Why, because Christians have an inheritance, waiting for them, in heaven. We have an inheritance, reserved for us, it lasts forever,

5who through faith are protected by God's power for the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

What if you're a Christian living in Syria. Or Iraq. Or fast forward 10 years, the United States. Someone has painted a giant red N on your house. N is for Nazarene.

Can the world that hates Christianity and Christians take your inheritance away from you? What is the protection this verse is offering?

The world can kill you. This verse is no protection against the world killing the body. Although I would add the world cannot touch a hair on your head unless our sovereign God allows it.

Never-the-less, this verse is not a protection in this life. It is a promise that the inheritance, held for you in heaven, by the power of the creator God, cannot be touched or moved. Your inheritance, if you are a

christian, is waiting in heaven for you, and will on a coming day, be revealed to the watching world.

More on that in future weeks. We'll close this morning with these simple thoughts.

We christians, like all flesh, are coming to a day when we go missing. The world will see us no longer. We'll be moved out of our place, just like the beautiful flower of spring when the wind passes over it. But for us, that isn't the end, it's only the beginning.

We look forward to that day when we will see our Saviour, face to face, and He will welcome us home where we will spend eternity in His glory. That is our living hope that this world does not have. And that truth gives pregnant meaning to Peter's final words I quoted this morning.

6 In this you greatly rejoice

Pray with me;

Lord Jesus, I want what these ancient christians and indeed many of the ordinary folks in this room obviously have. I want to come out of this world and that you would own all of me. I long to have forgiveness of sins, and I long to have a future hope of a life beyond this one, in glory, with you. Please fill up my life with your Holy Spirit and make me your own. Amen.