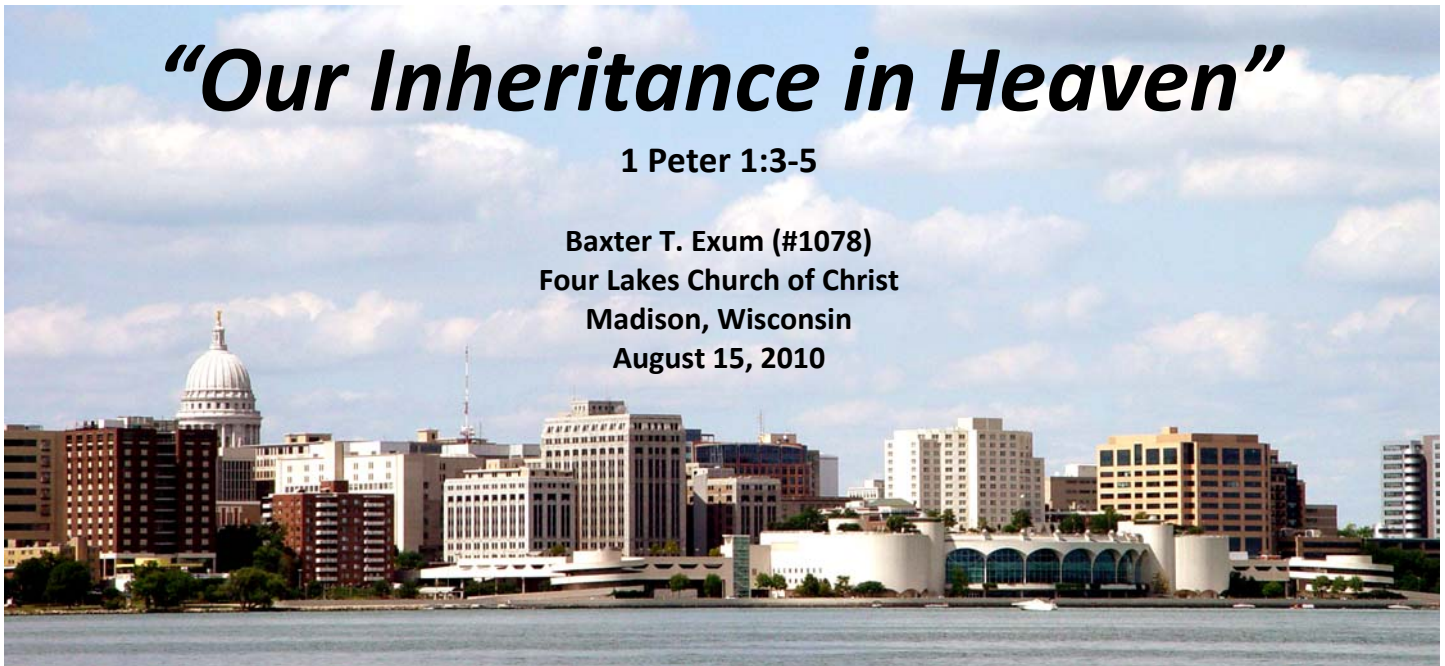


“Our Inheritance in Heaven”

1 Peter 1:3-5

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Introduction:

This morning we are so thankful for the grace and the mercy of God! We praise God for the resurrection and for the fact that we have been born again—buried and then raised up with Christ in baptism! This morning, as we thank God for the blessing of being His children, and as we think about the reward that is coming, I would invite you to turn with me to a brief but very encouraging passage of scripture in 1 Peter 1. The book of 1 Peter was written by the apostle Peter to the Christians who were scattered across what is basically modern-day Turkey, a group of Christians who were starting to face some serious challenges. They were going through some persecution, and Peter wrote this letter to encourage them to hang in there, and certainly that is a message that all of us could use this morning!

In fact, one of our members has specifically asked for a lesson on the subject of *HEAVEN*. We have studied heaven several times over the past ten years, but this morning I would like for us to focus in on the idea that heaven is a place where we go to receive our inheritance. And as you can see, our text for this morning's lesson is 1 Peter 1:3-5. In our pew Bibles, the passage is found on page 1893.

I realize that all of us here this morning are facing different challenges. Some are having some rather serious health concerns. Some are having some serious financial issues. Some are facing marriage trouble. Some of you are facing the end of summer vacation. Some of you are having trouble with your kids. Some of you are facing some special stress at work right now. We could talk about our problems for the rest of the day, but let's not do that! Instead, along with the apostle Peter, let us praise God for the blessing of being born again, for the blessing of hope, for the blessing of looking forward to our inheritance in heaven! After a brief introduction explaining who the letter was from and who it was to, the apostle Peter gets to our text for this morning, the first time Peter writes anything in the New Testament, 1 Peter 1:3-5...

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.

This morning, then, we are taking a few minutes to look at our inheritance. We know what it means to inherit something. Normally, it means that we are part of a family. It means that someone has gone on before us and has passed down something valuable. But when it comes to our inheritance in heaven, I would like for us to focus this morning on several ways that our inheritance as God's children is much better than anything we could ever inherit from our earthly parents.

I. **And one of the first things we notice comes in verse 4 as we find that OUR INHERITANCE IS IMPERISHABLE.**

The word refers to something that cannot be corrupted, to something that cannot rust or decay. We remember what Jesus said in Matthew 6:19-21, ***“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”***

This, of course, is in contrast to the earth and everything in it that will be burned up (according to 2 Peter 3:10). Even from our own experience, we know that an earthly inheritance can be stolen, it can rust, we can lose it, it can deteriorate, its value can go down over time, inflation can happen. And yet as Christians, we know that our inheritance is ***“imperishable.”*** The word that Peter uses here in verse 4 is the same word that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 9:25, ***“Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.”*** Everything around us, though, is perishable. Around here, the grass is only green in the summer, and even here, three feet of snow only sticks around for a few weeks or maybe months. The natural state of this world is a state of decay. Of course, we try to make things last. We do our research before buying a refrigerator, but we know that everything wears out. We buy a brand new car, and it loses maybe a third of its value as soon as we drive it off the lot. We are so careful, but that new car gets a few dents and dings along the way. Maybe one of our kids throws up in the back seat, and suddenly we realize that our brand new car is perishable. Or maybe we build a brand new house, and for the first few weeks, everything is great. But then a light bulb burns out, or maybe we notice a little crack in the drywall, or maybe the utility sink starts dripping and we need to replace one of those little rubber washers, or maybe we nick the siding with the weed-whacker—and then after just a few years, it seems that we can hardly keep up with the maintenance. Everything around us is falling apart. Everything around us is temporary, but Peter says that our inheritance in heaven is ***“imperishable.”*** This morning, then, we praise God that we have been born again to inherit a reward that will never be corrupted or decay.

II. **There is a second aspect of this great blessing (also found in verse 4), and that is, OUR INHERITANCE IS UNDEFILED.**

And the idea here is that our inheritance is unstained, it is not polluted or dirty, it is not infected with something, and there are no stains or impurities. As the Bible tells us in Revelation 21:4, in heaven, ***“...there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”*** Later on in that chapter (in verse 27), the Bible also says that, ***“...nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.”*** There is no sin in heaven, and so our inheritance is ***“undefiled.”***

The same word is used in Hebrews 13:4 where the Bible says that the marriage bed is to be ***“undefiled,”*** that is, the marriage relationship must be pure. In the same way, our inheritance in heaven is also ***“undefiled,”*** or unadulterated. Our inheritance has not been watered down or tampered with. It has not been changed or polluted in any way.

We know that a stain can make something nearly worthless. Maybe you have a favorite shirt that you can no longer wear out in public. Several years ago I got a nice jacket at a garage sale and wore it often, but somehow I got something on it. I now use that jacket for changing the oil in our cars in the winter. Now that the jacket is stained, I have no problem crawling around in the frozen slush on the garage floor. I have no problem with the warm oil running down my arm, because the jacket cannot really get any dirtier than it is right now. It is basically worthless. But our inheritance in heaven is unstained and ***“undefiled.”*** It is perfect in every way. We learn, then, that our inheritance in heaven, first of all, is ***“imperishable,”*** and then we also learn that it is ***“undefiled.”***

III. As we go back to verse 4, we also find that OUR INHERITANCE WILL NEVER FADE AWAY.

Our inheritance will always be fresh and amazing. Our inheritance in heaven will always be shining. And unlike our clothing after it is washed over and over again, our inheritance will never ***“fade away.”*** Today, of course, we struggle with stuff that fades. When I think of things that fade, I think of all of those pictures of our family that were taken by Sears in the mid 1980’s. Many of those pictures are fading away. But our inheritance in heaven will never fade.

Not only does our clothing fade over time, and not only do pictures fade, but we know that stuff just gets dirty and dingy. Several years ago, our state finished a major restoration of the capitol building. At \$145 million, by the way, the cost of the restoration was more than 20 times the cost of the original building! The renovation took 14 years, beginning in 1988 and completed in 2002. About two months after we moved here to Madison, workers were being lowered down the outside of the dome to clean off all of the dirt and grime with sponges. They worked on the outside of the dome for more than a year. I say this to emphasize that even the most beautiful building right here in Madison is in a constant state of fading away. And as long as the world stands, that building will need constant cleaning and maintenance to keep it from fading away completely.

But in contrast, our reward in heaven will never fade. Unlike a new house or a new car, heaven will never get boring. It will never diminish. But it will always be amazing.

Well, so far this is great! Our inheritance as children of God is death-proof, stain-proof, and fade-proof! But in the middle of it all as we face challenges with our health, and families, and finances, how do we really know that we’re going to make it there? That brings us to another reason for us to praise God this morning, and that is...

IV. ...we find in verse 4 that OUR INHERITANCE HAS BEEN RESERVED IN HEAVEN FOR US.

We know what it means to make a reservation. On our way to Ohio last week, we called ahead to reserve a room at a hotel down in Champaign, Illinois. And when we got there, we walked up to the front desk and gave them our last name, and in just a few minutes we were enjoying the room that had been reserved. Most of us know what it means to make a reservation at a restaurant. Unfortunately, Culver’s doesn’t take reservations,

but there are other restaurants in the world where we may need to call ahead. Several weeks ago, we went to a Mallard's game here in Madison, and when we got there we bought tickets for "reserved stadium seating." That sounds expensive, but basically that's just a fancy way for saying that your ticket has a seat number printed on it! And so when you go up in the stands looking for your seats, you have a spot that is reserved just for you, and if someone is sitting in your seat, you have a right to ask that person to move. And so there are times when it is important to have a reservation, and heaven is one of those times!

And perhaps in a slightly similar way, Peter says that those of us who have been born again have an inheritance that has been "**reserved in heaven**" specifically for us. The word "**reserved**" (in verse 4) refers to the fact that our inheritance is being guarded or protected. It means that our spot has been set aside and that no one can step in and take it away from us. Right now, our spot in heaven is being protected and reserved, and that spot is awaiting our arrival. There is no probate court that can take our inheritance away. The government will never be able to tax it into oblivion. Washington cannot take half of it away when we die. But there is an inheritance that is being reserved and protected for us in heaven right now.

However, unlike the Mallard's game, there are no tickets available at the gate. In fact, the tickets are not even for sale; but, as Peter says, we are talking here about an inheritance. In other words, someone died to let us in. Someone died to let us in! Someone died so that we could make that reservation.

Conclusion:

This morning as we think about our reward in heaven, we should remember that in order to receive an inheritance, there not only needs to be a death, but there also needs to be some kind of record. In most cases today, there needs to be a will (at least that makes it a lot easier). There needs to be some kind of written document giving us access to the inheritance. Our name needs to be in the will. Sometimes the Bible talks about the "Book of Life." Let's just say that the book of life is a book where we want our names to be written! In Revelation 3:5, Jesus said, "**He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.**" In other words, if our name is written in the book of life, Jesus will confess our name before His Father. That's the positive side of things. The negative comes in Revelation 20:15, where the Bible says that, "**...if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.**" I don't want to go to the lake of fire! I want an inheritance: Imperishable, undefiled, an inheritance that will not fade away, one that is reserved for me in heaven.

But the inheritance is only promised to those whose names are written in the book of life. And so at this point we face a choice: 1.) We can focus on all of the perishable, dirty, and fading things that this life has to offer, or 2.) We can focus on the inheritance that is being reserved for us in heaven. We start by reading and understanding the word of God. We come to a point where we believe in God. We see what God did for us on the cross, and then we come to a point where we are ready to make a change. We turn away from sin, and then we make an appeal to God for a good conscience as we allow ourselves to be buried in water for the forgiveness of our sins. And at that point, the Christian life begins. As Peter said, "**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.**" If you have any questions about what the Bible teaches, please ask and we would love to try to figure it out with you. But if you are ready to obey the good news right now, please let us know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: church@fourlakescoc.org