

## Sermon for April 23, 2023 – Easter 3

1 Peter 1:17-21 (EHV)

### Theme: Live in Reverence toward God

- 1) What it means to live in reverence.
- 2) Our reason for living in reverence.

*<sup>17</sup>If you call on the Father who judges impartially, according to the work of each person, conduct yourselves during the time of your pilgrimage in reverence, <sup>18</sup>because you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, not with things that pass away, such as silver or gold, <sup>19</sup>but with the precious blood of Christ, like a lamb without blemish or spot. <sup>20</sup>He was chosen before the foundation of the world but revealed in these last times for your sake. <sup>21</sup>Through him you are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*

Because Jesus rose from the dead, you can be sure that your sins are forgiven. Because Jesus rose from the dead, you can be confident that God loves you. Because Jesus rose from the dead, you can be certain that you will go to heaven when you die.

You may know these truths, but do you live in them – convinced that you are God’s fully forgiven, adopted child and heir of heaven? Can you imagine what it would be like to live guilt and shame-free - without any fear of hell - regardless of how horribly you have sinned? Well, you shouldn’t have to imagine it because that is precisely the kind of life God offers you through faith in his Gospel.

“But,” you might be thinking, “is that true? Can we really live fully confident that our sins are completely forgiven in Christ and that heaven is our home? If so, what will prevent a person from skipping worship and Bible Study or living in sin under the excuse that, since Jesus already forgave my sin, I can live however I want?”

Reverence for God and the price he paid for our salvation – that’s what will prevent such behaviour! With St. Peter as our guide, let us consider how the Gospel not only frees us from hell but motivates us to **Live in reverence towards God**, learning both 1) what it means to live in reverence and 2) our reason for living in reverence.

### Part One: What it means to live in reverence towards God.

Today’s sermon follows the beautiful encouragement we received in last Sunday’s sermon text, where the apostle Peter directed our attention to the hope of eternal life God has guaranteed us through Christ’s resurrection. This hope sustains us through every trial in life. It will be proved genuine when Jesus comes again on the last day.

In view of the amazing, saving hope we have in Christ, Peter encourages us to respond by living as the LORD's obedient children on this earth – reminding us of God's command: "*Be holy, because I am holy.*"<sup>i</sup>

He goes on to say: <sup>17</sup>*If you call on the Father who judges impartially, according to the work of each person, conduct yourselves during the time of your pilgrimage in reverence.*

In other words, God didn't forgive your sins and save you from an eternity in hell so that you could go on serving the sinful passions of your heart. The LORD has not changed: he still hates sin and condemns it.

You, on the other hand, have changed. Through Holy Baptism, the Lord washed you clean from all sin, created faith in your heart, and adopted you into his family. Therefore, God wants you to live in reverence towards him as his dearly loved child – understanding that your life on this earth is a mere pilgrimage. Your home, to which you are headed, is with him in heaven.

"But what if I choose not to do this?" someone might ask. Well, then, you show yourself to be an unbeliever who rejects the salvation Jesus won for you. Why do I say that? Because God didn't save you from the consequences of your sin so you could go on living however you want. No, he saved you to be his holy child. In other words, if you refuse to be the holy child God saved you to be, then you are, in fact, refusing to accept the salvation Jesus won for you because that is what Jesus saved you to be.

Think of it this way: imagine your son is in college and racks up an unpayable debt through wild living and foolish spending. Out of love, you offer to pay the debt so that your son can have a fresh start. What if he says in all seriousness, "Thanks Mom and Dad: now I can go back to throwing wild parties for all my friends," and then precedes to do so? Would his response show respect towards you and gratitude for your gift? No, instead, it shows that your child doesn't care about you; he only cares about himself.

Similarly, if you use the Lord's gift of salvation other than how he intended it to be used, you show that you neither care about Jesus nor about his gift; all you care about is yourself. The Bible warns: *Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*<sup>ii</sup> In other words, if a person wants to keep living in sin apart from God, then that person will have to face the consequences of his sin without God's salvation.<sup>iii</sup>

That is why Peter encourages you to live in reverence towards God – considering who he is and who you are in relation to him. He is your heavenly Father to whom you owe all love, respect, and obedience. Love Him as such - understanding that your life on this earth is merely a pilgrimage, not the final destination.

What do I mean by that? So often, we live as if the things we experience on this earth are the end-all and be-all of our existence. We are tempted to covet stuff like houses, cars, fashion, leisure, and technology – living in full pursuit of them, all the while forgetting the greater glory awaiting

us in heaven. We try to find value in what we have and experience instead of in the God who saved us.

But the LORD says that *the way of life that belongs to this world is passing away.*<sup>iv</sup> All the things, experiences, and relationships you value outside of Christ are temporary. They will all pass away. However, *the one who does the will of God remains forever.*<sup>v</sup>

Live, therefore, in reverence towards God by learning and keeping his commands. Understand that he is your Father who loves you dearly. Respect him as such. Remember that you are merely a pilgrim in this world; heaven is your home. Keep yourself from becoming engrossed by the things of this world. Why?

### Part Two: Our reason for living in reverence.

...<sup>18</sup>*because you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, not with things that pass away, such as silver or gold,*<sup>19</sup>*but with the precious blood of Christ, like a lamb without blemish or spot.*

The word “redeem” means to “buy back.” In ancient times people who couldn’t pay off debt were sold into slavery. If that person was redeemed, it means he was bought back from his slavery.

The LORD has redeemed you from *your empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers.* In other words, the LORD paid for the debt that all your sinful pursuits had earned. He bought you back - not that you can continue living a meaningless life like the rest of the world, chasing after things that will not last. No, he freed you for himself – to be his child and experience his Fatherly goodness for all eternity.

And what price did the LORD pay to redeem you? Something far more precious than all the gold and silver in the universe: *the precious blood of Christ, like a lamb without blemish or spot.*

Have you ever considered why Jesus’ blood is called precious? Is it because all human life is dear – and should never be wasted? Is it because Jesus is unique – the only sinless person to have ever walked this earth? Perhaps it’s because only Jesus’ blood could pay for our sins. While all these reasons are valid (especially the last two), we should consider one more reason: Jesus’ blood is precious because he is the only begotten Son of God, whom the Father loves more than anything else.

Think about that for a moment: would you ever consider asking the person you love most dearly (be they a spouse, parent, or child) to suffer immense pain for someone else? If you ever did, that “someone else” must genuinely mean something to you. You, dear Christian, mean a lot to God – so much so that he asked his Son, whom he loves more than anything else, to suffer and die for your sins. He didn’t do this for the angels when they sinned, but He did it for you: that is what you are worth to God!

And Jesus' sacrifice was not some last-minute decision God the Father made in reaction to humanity's fall. No, <sup>20</sup>*He was chosen before the foundation of the world but revealed in these last times for your sake.*

Think of what this means: Even before our triune God created one speck of matter in this universe, he foresaw your sin and planned your salvation through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. God has revealed this incredible love for you in the Gospel of Jesus so you might belong to him. It is, therefore <sup>21</sup>*Through him you are believers in God*; that is to say that Jesus not only paid for your forgiveness but made sure that you would receive the benefits of his sacrifice by creating faith in your hearts through the preaching of His Gospel. Just think: he took every step necessary – leaving nothing to chance – so you would be saved.

And how can you know for certain that Jesus accomplished all these things for you? Peter tells us that the proof is found in the fact that *God raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*

Yes, Jesus' resurrection from the dead proves that he truly is the Messiah and that your sins have been paid for in full. Because Jesus rose from the grave, you can be confident that you, too, will rise from the dead on the last day – just as the Bible promises. Your sins are forgiven. You are reconciled to God.

Now, when you consider everything God has done to save you: how he planned your salvation from before the creation of the world, accomplished it through his Son's sacrifice on the cross, and made sure that you would receive the benefits of this sacrifice by creating faith in your heart through the Gospel . . . how can you not respond to the Lord in love? How can you not want to live in total reverence to God – gladly obeying what he commands for your good?

Sadly, we all have a sinful nature that desires the things of this world. It wants to rebel against God and his Word, and we will never be rid of it until we leave this sin-cursed earth. Because this is the case, we need God's law to keep our sinful nature in check and to guide us in the way that pleases Him. On the other hand, focusing on God's law alone will never lead us to live in reverence toward him. No, only the Gospel can accomplish that with its bold and incredible promises that make us certain of God's amazing, saving love for us in Christ.

Your sins are forgiven. You are at peace with God. You will go to heaven when you die. Why? Because God loves you. These statements are facts for everyone who believes in Jesus. Let these facts be the foundation of your life, ever moving you to revere God in response to the great love He shows you in Jesus. Amen

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<sup>i</sup> 1 Peter 1:16 EHV

<sup>ii</sup> Galatians 6:7-8 EHV

<sup>iii</sup> Cf. Hebrews 10:26-27

<sup>iv</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:31 EHV

<sup>v</sup> 1 John 2:17 EHV