

1 Peter 1:3-9 - 2nd Sunday of Easter [Quasimodogeniti] 3.4.2016

Praise be to God

³ All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, ⁴ and we have a priceless inheritance – an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. ⁵ And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see. ⁶ So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while. ⁷ These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold – though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honour on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

⁸ You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. ⁹ The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls. [NLT]

Did anybody ever say to you (or perhaps you have said this to your children): “If you aren’t good, you won’t get anything for Christmas” - possibly they even said: “... Father Christmas won’t bring any presents”!

Just imagine if God had said the same: “If you aren’t good the manger in Bethlehem will remain empty!”

Why am I speaking about Christmas? - because if Christmas had not happened, we would not have celebrated Easter last Sunday, and we would not be here today either.

Today we are once again reminded of the happenings of Easter - and of what they mean for our lives. As we remember what God did, we are to join with Peter in calling out:

Praise be to God

Praise God **for our new birth**

What happened on Good Friday and Easter is not just old history which we remember at the appropriate time. Through the happenings of Good Friday

and Easter our history has been changed. We are no longer under the power of Satan. Instead we rejoice that God, **It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.**

We have been born again - this is not just a change of life-style - something on the surface like a change into smarter clothes. Being **born again** we have been made totally new - from the inside out. There is a special reason to be reminded of this new birth, because in the tradition of the early church those who had been baptised on Easter Sunday wore the new robes they were given after Baptism on this Sunday again.

We are to be reminded that this new birth was not due to anything we had done - we had not deserved it, just as we could not deserve it that God would let it be Christmas. Peter says here that it is **by his great mercy** that we are given new birth - it is simply a gift of God to us.

Like all good children - and adults - it is only right to say, ‘Thank you’! To direct our thanks to him, who has given us new birth. That is why we are reminded today to sing our **praise to God**.

As people who have received new birth we may now **live with great expectation**. This was an important reminder for those early Christians. They were a small group who mostly had little political or economic power - in fact, by becoming Christians their prospects did not look very good, as they might even be prevented from selling their goods at the market. [This was due to the fact that people might be expected to sacrifice to the local deity, before selling their goods - something the Christians obviously could not do.]

We too may need this reminder that we may now **live with great expectation**. We may not be excluded from voting or doing business - and yet today also there are things we do not do, and we may feel that our life/ our business is in a dead end street.

Peter reminds us that may **live with great expectation**, because **we have a priceless inheritance**

Often an inheritance can be the cause of great trouble. Some may feel that they should have got more, or that the others got something better than they did. Here is an inheritance, however, which is equal for all - and which we are all to share in.

We are heirs of God - but there is another part: Do you accept your inheritance? Does it feature in how you think, and what you do?

Being heirs of the eternal God - is not only something which will influence our future life, but which is to change how we live here in this world already.

Being heirs, our inheritance is to influence what we do - what we get involved in. Some people attach very strange conditions to the inheritance - e.g. I have heard of a case where people would only inherit if they remained members of a certain congregation. The problem is that this congregation has to all effects been closed, because of a lack of members - so the heirs have to keep a congregation going which is really dead, not to be disinherited.

God does not do anything like that. There are no unreasonable conditions on us - only the condition that we keep on trusting Christ for our new life, and that we keep on receiving what he has given us, which we keep on getting from him. There is the wonderful promise for all heirs, that the one from whom we inherit knows us - knows not only who we are, but is with us every day.

We praise God - **even though you have to endure many trials for a little while.**

Have you not noticed that when things go well for us in our career or business, when we have nothing to worry about, and we are blooming with health - all signs, so we are lead to believe, of being blessed by God - our faith does not seem to be that well off then? When things go well it is easy to forget how we need God, and how it is he, who gives us everything. When we believe that we can ensure that our life is successful, we quickly forget how we are to depend on God. If we have enough of everything - what do we still need to look to God for in everything?!

It is precisely when things do not go well, that we are to learn to depend on

God. It is when we notice that we cannot do everything on our own, that we are to learn to trust in God, and ask him for guidance. When we become aware that we can't do everything on our own, we may see and hear how God invites us to look to him, and to depend on him.

There may be times when we think that we have prayed and asked God to help us in our need - and it seems that he does not give us what we ask for. Such 'empty' times may truly cause us to question whether God still hears us - and we may be greatly tempted in our faith.

It is good at times like that to remember that God does not wait for us to be good before he steps in to help / save us. God did not wait for people to change before he sent his Son, but he sent his Son so that the people could be changed! If he did that for us before we had come to him, how much more may we know now that he will do everything so that we get that **priceless inheritance**. That may even mean not giving us what we so desperately ask for - health, instantaneous help in times of financial trouble, or what we pray for concerning our children.

Praise be to God - he never forgets us. How could he?! He made it become Christmas and Good Friday and Easter just for us - and for all people. We may **live with great expectation**, because his love for us never wavers.

We turn to him now, confessing our faith with the words of the Nicene Creed: