

Our eternal inheritance * 1 Peter 1:3-7 * Good Friday
April 10, 2020 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

These are uncertain times we're living in, aren't they? Every time we talk together, it seems like something new has changed. First it was 'don't worry about masks' and now they're saying 'you know what, you better wear a mask.' I know that some of you have friends and co-workers with a cough and a fever. I know that some of you have even lost loved ones due to COVID-19. This is tough stuff. And the worst part is not knowing who's going to get sick or what's going to happen next.

We could all use some certainty, couldn't we?

Well, as it happens, what we've just read is a reason for certainty.

Peter certainly thought so. He was there and saw it all unfold with his own eyes. I'm sure he replayed those events over and over in his head. And in the end, he came to the conclusion that what he had seen was a firm foundation to build his life upon. An unshakeable reason for hope.

As he opens his first letter, 1 Peter 1, verse 3, he says -

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you,

Because of what Jesus did on the Cross, we have a LIVING hope – not a theoretical hope but a living hope that is actively preserving us an eternal inheritance that nothing can keep us from receiving. Not cancer, not COVID-19, not car crashes – even death – Jesus' resurrection proves that! - Nothing can keep us from the eternal inheritance that Christ has secured for us when He died on the Cross.

Because look at what it says – this inheritance will not perish, or spoil or fade. It is not like the bread on your counter that's a crumbly and dry but you think, 'well, I'd better eat it because I don't know when I'll be out again.' No – our eternal inheritance can never perish, spoil or fade – it's kept in heaven for you and not only that, according to verse 5 – when you believe, God *Himself* KEEPS YOU and carries you along by His own power until the time when eternity begins.

5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Jesus said 'I go to prepare a place for you' – and that place is secure. And as you trust in Jesus, you are shielded by God's power until the day you finally arrive. We have an eternal inheritance which nothing can keep us from. That's a certainty for an uncertain time.

And lest you think that this is pie in the sky optimism, look at what Peter says in the very next verse -

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

7 These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Peter is not unaware of the realities of life. He didn't know COVID-19, but he knew what it was to go hungry and lack resources and live in uncertainty.

And what does he say? In the midst of all of this chaos, our eternal inheritance is reason to rejoice. We have an unshakeable hope because these trials cannot keep us from our God; in God's sovereign care these trials actually refine our faith and make us ever more ready to receive the gift of eternal life from our God. Nothing can separate us from the eternal love of God and so we stand firm with hope knowing that these trials only make us better, little by little, every day.

And it's the events that we read about today that made this all possible. We were separated from God because we've all treated God like He wasn't worth much, but Jesus' death on the Cross paid for that offense and brought us back to God and now we can receive this gift of life and forgiveness by faith in Him. This IS after all a gift. Notice - It has nothing to do with how good we are. "In HIS GREAT MERCY" God has done this for us. Receive it by faith, confess your sin and trust in Him day by day.

So what does Good Friday mean in the time of COVID-19? It means that we have an unshakeable hope and an eternal inheritance that we are GOING to receive. We have hope because nothing can keep us from the eternal life that God is keeping for us.