

Hope That is Ours

I Peter 1:3-4

What is the greatest thing you have ever inherited?
Or what do you hope to inherit someday?
Here are several unusual inheritances.

A Portuguese aristocrat made an unusual distribution of his money after his death. 70 people were chosen at random from the Lisbon phone directory in front of two witnesses at a registry office 13 years before his death. Following his death they were to be contacted and told he had made them his beneficiaries. For two reasons it was a shock to these 70 beneficiaries. People in Portugal rarely make a will and because they were selected randomly from the phone book they thought it was a scam.

Nina Wang signed over her multi-billion dollar fortune to a previously unknown feng shui master as a promise for eternal life. Wang changed her will in order to leave everything to the feng shui master, voiding a previous will written four years earlier that left the fortune to her family and to charity. With no children of her own, Wang wrote a new will making Chan her sole beneficiary.

New York hotelier and real estate billionaire Leona Helmsley (called the Queen of Mean) left \$12m to her pet dog, Trouble. The pampered pooch received the largest inheritance from Helmsley's will while some human family members fared far less, with two of her four grandchildren cut out of the will entirely. The money for Trouble's upkeep was left in the hands of her brother, who inherited \$10m himself.

Though highly successful in law and investments, Millar is now known primarily for his love of jokes and pranks which played on people's greed and hypocrisy. Millar's greatest and final prank was his will, which said in part: "This Will is necessarily uncommon and capricious because I have no

dependents or near relations and no duty rests upon me to leave any property at my death and what I do leave is proof of my folly in gathering and retaining more than I required in my lifetime." The will was full of playful bequests. But the final bequest of his will was the largest and strangest. In the will's ninth clause, Millar's estate's balance was required to be converted to cash ten years after his death and given to the woman who gave birth to the most children in that time. In the event of a tie, the money would be divided equally. The resulting contest became known as the Great Stork Derby.

A homeless man living on the streets of Santa Cruz, Bolivia fled police who were bringing him news of a \$6-million inheritance. Tomas Martinez apparently thought the police were about to arrest him for his alcohol and drug habits so disappeared without a trace, causing Bolivian newspapers to speak of him as a "new millionaire paradoxically not knowing his fortune". The news came to him from his ex-wife, who inherited the money herself from family members. She evidently did not blame him for leaving her several years ago.

What do you hope to give or get as an inheritance? Mom passed on to me a set of dishes that belonged to my Great-Grandma which she was given as a wedding present. They are just about 100 years old. This old tea-kettle was my Grandma's. It sat on the old stove in the kitchen in winter and was used as a vaporizer. It was one of only a few things that survived a fire that took the house. Grandma used to say she never knew how poor she was till the government told her. They aren't worth much, just sentimental memories.

Our passage in I Peter 1:3-4 talks about an inheritance and how it is that we come to receive it. It's not strange but it is priceless, beyond our comprehension. Our passage first talks about honor given to God, then the hope given through God, and concludes with the heritage given by God.

I. THE HONOR GIVEN TO GOD – v. 3a

The KJV begins this verse with “Blessed be”.

The NIV and ESV begin with “Praise be”.

The NLT begins with “All the honor”.

The Amplified uses all three terms.

It is most appropriate for Peter to begin with a word of praise, honor and blessing to the One who has made possible our great salvation. God deserves it.

There are two different Greek words used in the New Testament that are translated “Blessed”. One word is μακαριοι and is found in Matthew 5 when Jesus gives to us the Beatitudes in what we know as the Sermon on the Mount.

Blessed are the poor in spirit

Blessed are those who mourn

Blessed are the meek

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness

Blessed are the merciful

Blessed are the pure in heart

Blessed are the peacemakers

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness

Blessed are you when people insult you

James 5:11 speaks of those who are blessed who have persevered.

Galatians 4:15 refers to those who are blessed who have received the message of salvation.

And Romans 4:6, 9 indicate that those whose sins are forgiven are blessed.

In these instances and in others where this particular Greek word is used it speaks of the joy or happiness that results because of those experiences.

Why are you happy or joyful? Because your sins are forgiven.

Why are you happy or joyful? Because you have

been saved.

Why are you happy or joyful when poor in spirit? Because you are given the kingdom of heaven.

Why are you happy or joyful when you mourn? Because you will be comforted.

Why are you happy or joyful when you are meek? Because you will inherit the earth.

You get the picture.

But the word Peter chose to use here in this case does not mean happy or joyful, but instead praise, honor, thanksgiving. In the Greek it's the word εὐλογητος from which we get the word eulogy. It's a compound word the first part meaning well or well done and the second part, logos, which means word (John 1:1) or speak. This gives us the understanding of a eulogy which is to speak well of and in this case it is to speak well of God, to praise Him. This word is always used of God in the New Testament.

In this passage, God is the central figure. He is identified for us as God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this passage we praise Him because He is the source of our salvation and inheritance. The intention of this praise directed toward God is so obvious that in the original, the word “be” is omitted so that it would read “Blessed the God and Father”. Peter is inviting us to love God as much as he does. He has learned much since his dialogue on the beach following Jesus' resurrection. His love for Him is without question or exception.

The assumption in what Peter is writing is that it's absolutely necessary for us to praise God. There shouldn't be any question in our mind that God deserves our praise.

John gives us a glimpse of praise in Revelation.

Revelation 4:9-11

Revelation 19:1-6

Praise is ours to give to God.

Praise is His to receive from us.

He is the source of our salvation and inheritance.

And so we sing that little chorus from time to time.
 I sing praises to Your name, O Lord,
 Praises to Your name, O Lord;
 For Your name is great and greatly to be praised.
 I sing praises to Your name, O Lord,
 Praises to Your name, O Lord;
 For Your name is great and greatly to be praised.
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Any day, every day, all day, God deserves praise.

Praise goes to God who is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a distinctly Christian tone. Jews would praise God for being the Creator and Redeemer from Egypt, but refused to recognize and Jesus as the Son of God and give God praise for Him. But only the Christian can give God praise for being the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. It identifies and acknowledges the unique relationship they share. One commentator refers to this as a “concentrated confession.”

Lord speaks of the sovereign rule of Jesus.
 Hebrews 1:8 identifies Him seated on His throne.

Jesus speaks of His being the incarnate Son who is Savior. John 1:1, 14 speaks both to His deity, His equality with God and to His humanity through the incarnation that He became flesh. At the transfiguration (Matthew 17:5) God exhorts the disciples to listen to His Son in whom He is well pleased.

Christ speaks of His being the anointed Messiah-King. In Luke 2:11 the angels announce to the shepherds that the Christ (Messiah) had been born. But He is not just the Son of God, Peter personalizes Him as our Lord Jesus Christ. John MacArthur adds that “The apostle personalizes that magnificent title with the simple inclusion of the pronoun “our”. The divine “Lord” of the universe belongs to all believers, as does the name “Jesus” who lived, died, and rose again for them, and as “Christ”, the Messiah whom God anointed to

be their eternal King who will grant them their glorious inheritance.”

When was the last time you gave honor to God for the salvation you have received from Him by His grace through faith?

Peter speaks of the honor given to God. In the next statement we are given the reason why God should be blessed.

He then speaks of the hope given through God.

II. THE HOPE GIVEN THROUGH GOD – v. 3b

There is a three letter word that is omitted in the NIV that is given to us in the KJV. It’s the word “who”. It connects the first part of the verse to the second part of the verse making it very obvious who Peter is referring to. The who is God.

What is the reason behind our praise? It is God’s great mercy by which He has saved us.

And this salvation is according to His great mercy. We might say it this way: that the salvation God offers is in proportion to His mercy. How much mercy does God have? It is limitless, beyond our ability to comprehend or exhaust.

Now Peter describes the mercy of God as being great. It is not the Greek mega from which we think in terms of size like being huge.

Drive into Fenton and there is the Mega Coney restaurant.

Play the lottery and there is the Mega-millions.

The word great that Peter uses means much or in proportion to. Our salvation is in proportion to His mercy which Peter describes as being great. Psalm 145:3 “Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable.”

If God is great so is His mercy.

Psalm 86:15 “But Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and full of mercy and truth.”

Titus 3:5 “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us...”

It was God’s mercy that the repentant sinner cried out to receive in the Temple.

If God was not great in mercy, then His judgment of us as sinners would be swift. But He has great mercy and therefore deserves our praise.

If you want a good word study sometime, look up mercy in the Old Testament. There is abundant evidence of God’s mercy throughout.

And so we sing that little chorus from Psalm 89:1
 I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever,
 I will sing, I will sing.
 I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever,
 I will sing of the mercies of the Lord.
 With my mouth will I make known
 Thy faithfulness, Thy faithfulness;
 With my mouth will I make known
 Thy faithfulness to all generations.

Mercy is not the same as grace. Mercy has to do with my wretched and deplorable condition caused by sin from which God withholds what we otherwise have coming to us. Grace on the other hand has to do with my guilt which came as a result of that condition and when confessed He gives to us what we don’t deserve.

MacArthur writes “Divine mercy takes the sinner from misery to glory (a change in condition), and divine grace takes him from guilt to acquittal (a change in position). ...Out of His infinite compassion and free, abundant, and limitless mercy, He chose to grant eternal life – it was not because of anything sinners could do or deserve.”

God in His great mercy looked on us in our pitiable condition and withheld the judgment we deserve and God in His great grace bestows on us a favor we don’t deserve granting to us eternal life through faith in His crucified, but resurrected Son.

We have hope through God’s mercy. His great mercy is behind our salvation.

Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest writes about this term that “‘according to [His great mercy]’ is the compelling constraint in the merciful heart of God that made inevitable atonement for sinners.”

I understand that to mean that God’s mercy will never run dry. It is a well-spring of God looking on us in our deplorable condition and choosing to do something about it.

If there is hope in His abundant mercy it is possible because it is a living hope. Now we can take this to mean two things.

On one hand, we could say that hope is always alive. For you football fans cheering for the New England Patriots at the end of the first half it didn’t look very good for your team. Down by the largest deficit in Super Bowl history, there wasn’t much hope. But when you have a seasoned quarterback like Tom Brady who has been in those situations before and had been to the Super Bowl six previous times, hope is always alive when the ball is in his hands and there is still time on the clock.

But hope isn’t just wishful thinking. It isn’t chance. It is instead confidence, anticipation, a firm conviction based on the One who gave a promise. Like faith it is directed toward the future of something that will take place because we know it will.

That is the second way I look at hope and what I believe Peter is conveying. This hope of eternal life is based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead after His crucifixion. Before His crucifixion

and death He told the disciples not to be afraid, it was necessary for Him to leave them. He was going to a place where He would build a place for them to be with Him where He was. Then He made this important statement that in a little while the world wouldn't see Him anymore, but they would because He lived they too would live. (John 14:9)

In a conversation with a disreputable woman at a well Jesus stated in John 11:25 "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Our hope, our assurance of eternal life is based on the resurrection of Christ. Paul said if Jesus hadn't risen from the dead then our faith is vain, it's of no value. We would have nothing to hope in, to look forward to. Again, Peter is writing to a group of believers who were undergoing some level of persecution and they needed to be reminded that this world is just temporary, suffering is just short-term compared to all of eternity. Because Christ rose from the dead we have hope.

We hope in so much that has little evidence of actually coming true.

We hope that it will stop raining
 We hope our team pulls it out and wins
 With a terminal diagnosis we hope we'll get better
 We hope for a big bonus

But in Christ it is not wishful thinking. The moment we draw our last breath is the moment we will be in the presence of the Lord. "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." It is the anticipation of receiving what was promised. The Pharisees believed in a resurrection but denied it when Jesus gave them physical proof of it when He actually rose from the grave.

The hope of our resurrection is in the bodily resurrection of Christ.
 I Corinthians 15:52 tells us that at the trumpet sound the dead will be raised.

I Thessalonians 4:16 gives assurance that when the trumpet sounds, the dead in Christ will rise first.
 Find comfort in His resurrection.
 Find encouragement in His resurrection.
 Find hope in His resurrection.

This hope is for those who have been begotten by God, born again by God, transformed by God because of faith in a risen, living Savior which gives us a living hope.

It is the same root word used by Jesus in the night time rendezvous with Nicodemus when He told him that he must be "born again". (John 3:3)

It is a hope for the person who believes in Him and receives Him in which he is given the power to become a child of God, "born not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:12-13)

It's not through any blood line that I am saved.
 You can't make it happen for me.
 I can't wish it for myself.
 It can only come from God.
 In that is our hope.
 In the resurrected Christ is our hope.

So let me ask you today, what is your hope of eternal life?

There is honor given to God because there is hope given through God and in this hope there is a heritage that is given by God.

III. THE HERITAGE GIVEN BY GOD – v. 4

We began this morning by talking about some pretty odd inheritances. I read this last week that Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft will most likely become the world's first trillionaire. I can't even begin to imagine that kind of money. I'm sure there are a lot of people and organizations who are standing in line for a hand out. You have to wonder what his inheritance will be worth.

Several years ago a story was written about a holocaust survivor by the name of Roman Blum who lived in New York, who died at the age of 97 and left behind \$40 million – to nobody. A genealogist was hired by the State to try and track down a living blood relative. If they can't find anyone the money will go to New York City's Department of Finance, where it will be held for three years. If no one is found in that time period, part of the estate will remain in holding while another part will go into the state's general fund. All of it will be returned if an heir is found. A friend is quoted as saying to the New York Times, "He was a very smart man but he died and idiot."

Let me ask you again the question: what do you hope to give or get as an inheritance?

Stocks

Bonds

An old baseball collection that survived being used as motors on the spokes of a bicycle tire

Grandma's silver

Lakefront property

Peter says that we have been given a priceless inheritance.

I've heard people say that heaven is going to be boring, they aren't sure they want to go. Who wants to sit around on a cloud all day strumming a harp?

Heaven is a place where we will never again face the atrocities of this world – no more death or mourning or crying or pain or disease, everything that has been affected by sin will be absent in heaven. John says in Revelation 21 that there is even going to be a new heaven and a new earth. Even the city of Jerusalem will be made new. Its foundation will be of every kind of precious stone. The city will be of pure gold. Each of the 12 gates will be made from a single pearl. Imagine that.

I'm sure if we went around the room today and

shared the most beautiful places on earth we could make quite a list.

The Grand Canyon

The Rocky Mountains

The Sequoia Forest of California

The Swill Alps

The Hawaiian Islands

Indeed there are some spectacular sites around the world that excite the senses. But even these places in all their beauty groan for the day of redemption and there is coming a day when the Lord will make a new heaven and a new earth. These things will disappear and be replaced by something new and even more beautiful. It is part of the inheritance to come. So to which inheritance are you hoping?

Jim Elliot the martyred missionary to the Auca Indians is credited as saying "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose."

In a parable Jesus asked this question: "What profit is it to gain the whole world and forfeit your own soul?" Matthew 16:26

Now let's keep in mind that this inheritance is a gift from God and Peter gives us a broad description of what it is, not in terms of what awaits the believer that we can taste, touch, see, smell and hear. Instead he defines it in a way that shows its durability.

Notice four descriptors.

First, it will never perish. It's incorruptible. It will never decay.

Matthew 6:19-21

The inheritance waiting for us cannot be destroyed, but will go on forever.

Second, this inheritance won't spoil or become defiled or polluted. The inheritance that awaits us will be perfect, without flaw, will never change.

Third, it won't fade away. The word was used in Greek culture to describe a flower that didn't wither

or die. In the context of our passage the word means that we have an inheritance that will never lose its magnificence.

If your inheritance is tied up in stocks, the market can collapse.

If your inheritance is placed in a bank, it can be robbed.

If your inheritance is stuffed in some mattress it can be burned up.

If your inheritance is built in antique cars it can rust.

The inheritance God offers won't deteriorate, depreciate, disappear, get robbed, or be misplaced.

I include a fourth descriptor in this list. This inheritance is reserved for you. It's guaranteed to you. The word means to watch, guard, or protect. If Scripture says that nothing can pluck you out of God's hand then nothing will touch the inheritance that is reserved for you. Heaven has been described as the safest place in the entire universe.

Walvoord and Zuck in their Bible commentary note that "this inheritance is just as indestructible as God's Word." Why? Because God said it, God promised it.

Again from the pen of Kenneth Wuest who writes: "Heaven is the safe deposit box where God is guarding our inheritance for us under constant surveillance. The participle is in the perfect tense, speaking of a past completed action having present results."

Literally it reads this inheritance "has been laid up and is now kept guarded in safe deposit."

We have an inheritance in heaven that is beyond anything we could ever imagine.

Which inheritance are you looking forward to receiving?

An earthly one which will disappear?

Or an heavenly one that is beyond compare?