

Third Sunday of Easter
“How precious is your redemption!”
(1 Peter 1:18-21
April 13, 2023
By Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this Third Sunday of Easter is from 1 Peter 1:18-21.

“knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. 20 He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you 21 who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.”

Here ends our text.

Recycle day was celebrated on Friday in Immanuel’s school. Kids had to come up with a project recycling some household good that would normally be thrown out. They did this to participate in the celebration of Earth Day which is recognized worldwide on April 22nd – yesterday. What started in 1970 by a few organizers on a college campus to be more conscious of the impact of pollution from the industrial age and oil spills in the oceans has grown to a worldwide movement.

The goal of Earth Day is to restore the beauty of the earth. Whether you are a climate activist or not, being a good steward of God’s creation is what we are all called to do. Some people religiously recycle their plastics and aluminum cans. In Mexico, there’s a value placed on the soda bottle that is redeemed for money when it is returned so that it can be used again. Although some people believe that the world can be restored if enough effort is put into fighting global warming and pollution, God’s Word tells us in Romans 8:

“21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.”

Jesus’ death and resurrection not only delivered all mankind from bondage of corruption, but the world itself. The past two Sundays I’ve quoted this passage from Romans 4:25 and I’ll do it one more time because repetition helps us remember.

“25 who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.”

Jesus was delivered up on the cross for our offenses, that is the whole world’s offenses and raised for our justification, that is, the whole world’s justification. At Jesus’ resurrection the Father declares to the whole world, all mankind and all creation, that it has been redeemed!!

Redeemed means bought back. What was lost because of man’s sin was now purchased and made holy, that is justified, by the rightful Owner, God Himself! And we see the cost to restore all creation and all humanity to its pre-fallen state – the precious blood of Jesus!

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There was a special on ESPN that aired yesterday called “Peace of Mind”. It looked at the lives of several retired professional athletes who are dealing with physical and mental pain and depression. These athletes went to Jamaica and participated in meditation retreat using a psychedelic called psilocybin, found in magic mushrooms. They sought peace of mind with the help of this drug and therapy. Is it possible to find peace of mind and redemption through magic mushrooms? corruptible things? Costly retreats in Jamaica?

Can you be redeemed, restored, recycled, made whole again by gold and silver and what gold and silver can buy?

Famous comedian Howie Mandel, America’s Got Talent Judge, got candid this week with Joe Rogan and discussed his depression. Joe said:

“You seem happy when you’re around people. That’s why it’s confusing.”

“That’s the scariest thing. Yeah. Nobody’s more confused than me. And right now, as I talk to you, I’m incredibly medicated,” Mandel said while refusing to discuss the exact medication he’s been taking. He described himself as a mess, with an expletive before “mess”. Comedians portray happiness, but have they found peace of mind?

The Emmaus disciples were certainly depressed. They spoke with sadness about the crucifixion of Jesus to the very One who had been hanging on the cross a few days earlier, but their eyes were restrained from knowing Him.

“But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.” They said, but it’s been three days and Jesus’ body is missing, and the women said that they saw vision of angels that He was alive...

What cure, what medication would this stranger offer to Cleopas and the other disciple for their depression? Magic mushrooms?

Well, indeed the very crucifixion of which they spoke about was their cure, their redemption! But they didn’t understand that yet. It wasn’t precious to them. It was a source of sadness. How did Jesus give them peace of mind?

Did Jesus dazzle them with His glory that He was alive? No, the cure is the same cure that we have with us today. God’s Word. As we heard Jesus say to Thomas last Sunday in John 20.

“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

What was the cure for the disciples travelling to Emmaus is our cure also? God’s Word!

“25 Then He said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” 27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

Foolishness is thinking that there is any other cure in this world for sin, sadness and death outside of God’s Word. Jesus spoke to them the precious prophecies of the Old Testament which concerned Himself. They were fulfilled in Himself!

This gift is so precious that Peter tells us that it was prepared even before the foundations of the world. Before the world was made and before it fell into sin and needed a cure, God had already prepared the precious gift of His Son the spotless Lamb of God to be slain for the sins of the world!

Listen to our epistle from 1 Peter 1, the words which Peter says immediately after our text:

“20 He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you”.

Would you not agree that something that was foreordained before the foundation of the world is very precious? And the good news is God elected you before the foundation of the world and carried out your redemption through His Son Jesus! Yes! Jesus was manifest in these last times for you! God kept His promise! The Son of God was born to Mary and the Word became flesh. And Jesus, True Man and True God suffered and died for all people. Three days later He rose victorious! This is what God manifested to the eyewitnesses of the resurrection, and especially to you now through His most precious Word!

Who is the “you” to whom God is manifesting this precious good news? Anyone who hears God’s Word and believes through the power of the Holy Spirit.

For, the Holy Spirit creates faith and gives life in His name, joy, an incorruptible inheritance and peace of mind!! The Holy Spirit tells us that this was all God’s doing! God saved the planet! God saved the Earth! God saved all mankind by foreordaining the sending of His Son, Jesus and carrying out His plan of redemption!

Is that not precious to you? The hearts of the Emmaus disciples began to burn with joy. And when Jesus revealed Himself to them as they ate, they had to hurry all the way back to Jerusalem and tell the other disciples what precious gift they had received! Their redemption!

And when they arrived, as they were speaking these things, Jesus Himself appeared and showed them His hands, side and feet. So continues the our Gospel reading from Luke 24. And said “Peace be with you”. Here is your peace of mind that I have conquered death for you. Jesus the Word made flesh showed them the very hands and side through which His precious blood flowed! This is what paid for your redemption. Not gold or silver but My precious blood!

And then what did Jesus do again? Taught them His precious Scriptures!

44 Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

All people, retired pro athletes, famous comedians and you and I are dealing with the same struggles of the corruption of this world and our very being. We are like grass that withers and the flower that falls away. But God in His great mercy, knowing that we would be lost forever, provided the only cure, His most precious Son who shed His most precious blood for you! And gives it to you through His Word that endures forever.

Listen again to how Peter closes chapter 1.

“23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, 24 because “All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, 25 But the word of the Lord endures forever.”

As this good news of rebirth, of restoration and redemption was preached by Peter, many repented as our first reading from Acts 2 tells us. The people men, women, and children heard the Word of God, repented and were baptized for the forgiveness of sins. And where there is forgiveness of sins, there is true peace of mind and joy.

We read that the people found so much joy in what was most precious to them, their redemption, that sold and shared their possession among themselves for what is corruptible is inconsequential unnecessary to hoard. For what is incorruptible are the riches of heaven that cannot be destroyed and are reserved for you in heaven Peter said in verse 4 of today’s epistle.

What is precious is what is enduring – the Word of God. And the early Christians went to the temple to hear it regularly and also received communion in their homes – the breaking of bread. So Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:

“The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? 17 For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.”

That’s what’s most precious for you and me and all who would hear His Word, that Jesus would give His very body and blood in the Lord’s Supper for your forgiveness and your peace. No magic mushrooms. The very precious blood shed for you and Jesus’ holy body broken for your redemption! Through God’s precious Word and Sacraments – He adds to the church’s number those who are being saved! (Acts 2:47) To God be the glory. Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)