

August 14, 2022 His Great and Precious Promises 2 Peter
1:1-11

We emphasize in our tradition the need on our part to be faithful. When we become members of the church we attend, we make promises. Promises to the Church. Promises to one another. Promises to God. We promise to be faithful. We promise to keep the faith. We promise to be faithful. And as I wrestle with my own lot in life, my age and my increasing limitations, the problem of pain. The problem of dealing with and coping with change. I am as it were rediscovering that God has made promises. The Lord Jesus made promises. The Holy Spirit keeps promises. Made to us. You and I. And what is more, in terms of timing, the Lord made promises to us before we ever made promises to HIM.

This reality is part of what Peter celebrates in the 4th verse, of the 1st chapter of his second letter. Peter tells us “that we have been given everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us, by his own glory and goodness. Through these”: (that is through his glory and goodness) “he has given us great and precious promises.” And this morning I am going to remind you, because I have been reminded just how great and how precious those promises are. I am only going to deal with a few of them. If I were to try and deal with all the promises God has made, and that were made to us by Jesus during HIS time on earth....well lets just say....we would be here for many hours.

In Genesis chapter 17:8 God says, “The whole land where you are now as an alien I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you, and I will be their God.” HE makes this promise to Abraham. That He will give Abraham and his family a homeland. But even more importantly, HE chooses them as a people, to be their God for eternity. And no, we are not Jewish, and no this land is not Israel, but God has made a choice before ever we thought of making a choice. And HE has chosen to be our Lord and God.

Jesus taught us in John chapter 10 that HE is the good shepherd. HE said, “I know my sheep, and my sheep know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father, and I lay my down my life for the sheep.” In saying these words Jesus promised to save us by means of His dying on the cross and rising the 3rd day. At the time people were divided. Some said he was possessed of a demon, raving mad. And yet the fact is according to the Scriptures history has revealed clearly, that that is precisely what Jesus did. The promise was fulfilled and you and I and all who trust in the name of Jesus are in fact children of the promise. Saved from sin, saved for eternity, and saved by the grace of God. I keep coming back to the simply fact that before ever we chose to be disciples of Jesus, followers of the way of God, God made a choice to be our God...and offered us out of HIS love to redeem us, and keep us. It is indeed a great and precious promise.

In Psalm 103 verse 8 we find these words: “The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and

abounding in love.” The KJV says it this way... “slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.” Slow to anger. Plenteous in mercy. How often have we been afraid of what awaits us in the future? How often have we feared that when we faced God in eternity, we would find HIM angry with us and ready to judge us rather than forgive us? The word in this Psalm promises us mercy. It begins (Psalm 103) with those wonderful words, “Praise the Lord O my soul, O my soul: all my inmost being praise his holy name.” Is that in fact not the very reason we gather in this place week by week? Do we not come together to Praise the Lord and worship HIM? We began the service lifting our voices in praise. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and HIS righteousness!” We sang together, “Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices.” Are we not seeking more than anything else to practice the presence of the Lord when we worship? We came here to sing HIS praises. We came here to pray to HIM as the ONE and ONLY. We came here and we are delving into HIS word that we might school ourselves in the nature of the Lord and submit ourselves to HIS high and holy will for us. We keep the Lord’s day. We prioritize worship. We know we could all be elsewhere and doing something else. We choose to be here and seeking the fellowship of Jesus, in the joy of the Spirit. We ask for the forgiveness of our sins. Because we recognize our nature and our deeds. What did Jesus say?

He said, “The reason my Father loves me, is that I lay down my life....only to take it up again. No one takes it from me (Pilate thought he could), but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and authority to take it up again.

This command I received of my Father.” (John 10:17-18. Why did Jesus lay down HIS life? That the plenteous mercy of the Father might be yours. Praise the Lord O my soul! The Lord is compassionate, gracious, loving us with plentiful mercy. What a marvelous promise...a promise kept and fulfilled. A promise whose blessing we receive and cherish, returning praise to the ONE who made it, and gave it. Praise the Lord O my soul! O my soul!

We need to recognize something. We do have a soul. Or even more accurately we are souls. We have heard a joyful song. Jesus saves. Jesus saves. And by the grace of God our nature is that we have responded to that very set of chords and verses. It is part of our chosen lifestyle. We can look around us and at the nature of our world. Where we live it is increasingly apparent a lot of people do not care about these things. The promises of God. You do. We do. That is why we are here, and doing what we are doing. It is why the volunteers volunteer. It is why the servants of God serve. It is why the choristers sing “Love lifted me...when nothing else could help, love lifted me. And I like the phrase we men got to sing: “Even me!” Love lifted even me. That little phrase is important. Why? Because it recognizes the grace of God and underlines it. It is not that we deserve to be saved and loved to this extent. We recognize the plentiful grace of God. Jesus saves. Jesus saved. I say it again...”Praise the Lord O my soul. O my soul! The great and precious promise of God.

One more promise because we are living in the very times we are living in. “Surely HE (that is the Lord who is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust) He will save you from the fowler’s snare, and from the deadly pestilence.” It is a wonderful promise of God. Great and precious. The fowler’s snare, is the instrument of the trap. Circumstances that erupt and appear to have the power to not only upset us, trap us, but destroy us. Temptation in all its forms. God will intervene. He will save us through Jesus Christ and the cross, and the resurrection. And from the deadly pestilence.

I said when we re-opened the church to in person worship, that one of the lessons we had learned was that we were and are a safe group to be around and in which to gather. Surely one of the reasons for that is that we have been as wise and faithful as we could be. When there was no vaccine we isolated. We masked. We washed our hands. We used hand sanitizer. When we did gather we spaced ourselves 6 feet away from each other. That was hard but we did it. We did not hug one another for the longest time. And when there was a vaccine we got our shots. And when we could we got our boosters. If they recommend another in the Fall we will go for that too.

How I rejoice, that we have seen a relative safety in a time of deadly pestilence. I used the word plague, because at the beginning there was no medicine that was available and effective to give relief from symptoms or even save lives. We

have been taught in the Scriptures to obey those in authority over us. We did. And here we are. We are not free to be careless. But God is faithful and as Peter teaches us, we have been blessed by the great and precious promises of God.

Let us pray;

We are come together to praise YOU our Lord, our God and our Redeemer. It is not our ambition to proclaim our righteousness. Rather we give thanks for your saving grace, poured out upon the whole of the earth through Jesus Christ who died and rose again on the 3rd day. Lord continue to bless your church. Lead us in the ways of faithfulness that we might be pleasing in your sight, and of use to your will. Help us to assist our neighbours and to be good assets to our community. Grant that we may persevere that your will might be done in us and through us, and we seek to give the glory to Jesus precious name. Amen