

Empire Church of the Brethren  
Sunday Service Sermons

22 February 2026

Things Most Precious

Text: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

*1 Peter 1:3-5*

An American minister visiting Paris wanted to attend church, so seeing a large cathedral on one of the main avenues, he went inside.

He was late and the cathedral was packed, so he had to stand against the back wall with the other latecomers.

As the choir sang the anthem for the morning, the preacher noticed a shabbily dressed elderly man standing near.

His clothes were tattered and worn, his hair was disheveled, and he held an old hat that looked as though it had been reclaimed from a trash barrel.

As the choir came to the closing refrain of the anthem, the preacher spoke: “O Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy on us, have mercy on us.”

The American’s worship reverie was broken by the audible whisper of the old man.

With a pained look on his face, the man sobbed aloud, “O God, what a dream, what a dream! If only he could! If only he could!”

Then he turned around and rushed from the sanctuary.

Are the blessings we have in Jesus Christ only a dream?

Are they real or are they only the figments of a warped imagination?

These are some of the questions Peter’s readers were asking.

Suffering for their faith, they were wondering if serving Jesus was worth the cost.

But Peter wrote to assure them that their blessings in Christ were most precious.

It would be worth it all when they met Jesus.

We have new birth.

Our new birth is declared in *verse 3*: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

Peter is talking about the new birth.

This joyful concept that a person can begin life again was hinted at by the Old Testament prophets, but it was only clearly revealed in the earthly ministry of Jesus.

Peter is also writing out of his own experience.

Remembering the day when he first met Jesus, Peter calls his readers to their initial encounter with Jesus, the time when they were born again.

The new birth is provided by God’s abundant mercy.

It does not come from our goodness or our obedience to the law or our adherence to church rituals.

Rather, as Peter says it comes to us “according to his abundant mercy.”

The new birth is an experience.

Peter says that he “Has begotten us again,” and the tense of the verb shows that it is a definite experience that takes place at a definite time in our lives.

We have a new hope.

Verse three speaks of being born to a “lively hope by the resurrection.”

When Jesus was crucified, the world collapsed on the apostles.

They cowered behind bolted windows and locked doors in their upper room in Jerusalem.

But Easter morning changed everything for them.

What changed them and gave them new courage?

Peter declares that it was “the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

Seeing their resurrected, living Lord so transformed the apostles that by AD 65 there may have been as many as 20,000 believing Jews in Jerusalem.

We have a new heritage.

Our new heritage is made clear in *verse 4*: “To an

inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you.”

Peter is discussing our heavenly home, our holy inheritance.

It is incorruptible.

It will not perish.

Jesus warned about gold and silver and earthly possessions that will perish.

It is undefiled.

There is not blemish on it.

It is perfect.

It will never fade.

A beautiful rose will fade.

The face of the most beautiful woman will wrinkle.

But our heavenly inheritance will endure.

It is reserved in heaven.

The Greek word translated “reserved” means “kept.”

Our heavenly reward is safely guarded by our heavenly Father.

Edinburgh physician Sir James Simpson found in 1847 that chloroform was a good substitute for ether in relieving the pain of childbirth.

Simpson’s theory was proved true when Queen Victoria gave birth to Prince Leopold under chloroform.

The great importance of this discovery is obvious.

Yet when asked what he considered to be his greatest discovery, Simpson replied, “That Jesus has saved me, a poor sinner!”

And, we can add: has invited us all to his great banquet.

Unlike the parable of the great supper where the invited guests were too busy to come to the feast.

In Jesus the Kingdom of God was at hand, among the people and available to those who would accept him and his kingdom.

There is a free offer to come.

Jesus is the one paying the price for us to come.

Then there is the indifferent response, too busy to bother to come.

Then there is the compassionate invitation to the have nots.

Many scholars believe that this is about the refusal of the Jews to accept Jesus and the have nots are the Gentiles.

Of course Jesus is the banquet.

He and his kingdom.

God is offering free grace, a salvation that does not have to be “worked for,” so people find it hard to accept.

The invitation has no strings attached except to accept and come.

Come for everything is ready.

God’s kingdom is ready right now for all who accept his invitation to come and enter it.

There is no waiting until after death to enter and enjoy this kingdom.

It is like a hospital whose doors are never closed.

The sick or injured can come anytime to find the healing that they need.

Why the indifferent response?

People are too busy with possessions, work, or human affection, he can't leave his new wife. But when the invitation was extended to the poor and needy they quickly accepted and came for their need was great.

The host wanted even more so they went out again inviting all that they found.

The outcast were willing to come.

The outcast being us.

The valued people see this invitation as an interference with their lifestyle.

There is an element of faith involved in this.

Those invited had to believe that there was indeed a feast prepared for them and all that they had to do was accept the invitation.

They could not see the feast until they took the step of faith and entered the banquet hall.

So it is when one accepts God's offer of salvation.

The host was eager to fill the banquet hall.

He was willing to use any means at his disposal to get the people in.

But he did shut out those who refused the first invitation.

The host displayed a humility that attracted the poor and the humble; yet at the same time, he had a lordliness about him that resisted the haughty and self-satisfied.

The wonderful word of hope, of eternal encouragement, is this: "And yet there is room!"

Until Jesus comes and declares that the opportunity to be saved is ended, there is room at the Master's table.

There is a place set for you, and me.

Have you accepted the invitation?

We are beginning our journey to the cross and will most likely sing, There is room at the cross for you.

Will you come to the cross and allow Jesus to make you whole?