

## The Second Sunday of Easter

### Scripture Lessons

**Psalm 148:1-14 (NIV)** <sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD from the heavens, praise him in the heights above. <sup>2</sup>Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts. <sup>3</sup>Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars. <sup>4</sup>Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. <sup>5</sup>Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created. <sup>6</sup>He set them in place for ever and ever; he gave a decree that will never pass away. <sup>7</sup>Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, <sup>8</sup>lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, <sup>9</sup>you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, <sup>10</sup>wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds, <sup>11</sup>kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth, <sup>12</sup>young men and maidens, old men and children. <sup>13</sup>Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens. <sup>14</sup>He has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his saints, of Israel, the people close to his heart. Praise the LORD.

**Acts 5:29-42 (NIV)** <sup>29</sup>Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men! <sup>30</sup>The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead—whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. <sup>31</sup>God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. <sup>32</sup>We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." <sup>33</sup>When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. <sup>34</sup>But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. <sup>35</sup>Then he addressed them: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. <sup>36</sup>Some time ago Theudas appeared,

claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. <sup>37</sup>After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. <sup>38</sup>Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. <sup>39</sup>But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God." <sup>40</sup>His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. <sup>41</sup>The apostles left the Sanhedrin, **rejoicing** because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. <sup>42</sup>Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

**John 20:19-31 (NIV)** <sup>19</sup>On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" <sup>20</sup>After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were **overjoyed** when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." <sup>22</sup>And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." <sup>24</sup>Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup>So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it." <sup>26</sup>A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" <sup>27</sup>Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your

hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." <sup>28</sup>Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup>Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." <sup>30</sup>Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup>But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

**1 Peter 1:3-9 (NIV)** <sup>3</sup>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, <sup>4</sup>and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, <sup>9</sup>for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

## **Inexpressible Joy!**

1 Peter 1:3-9

- ❑ **Joy is the distinctive mark of the Christian life.**  
(verse 8; Matthew 28:8; John 15:11; 20:20)
  
- ❑ **We have an inexpressible joy because through the resurrection of Jesus . . .**
  1. We are born again to a living hope  
(verse 3; 2 Corinthians 5:17)
  
  2. We have an inheritance in heaven reserved for us (verses 4-5; Matthew 6:19-21; 13:44)
  
  3. Our trials and suffering will result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus is revealed (verses 6-7, 9; Romans 5:2-5; Acts 5:41; 1 Peter 4:13; Psalm 16:11)

## **Inexpressible Joy!**

1 Peter 1:3-9

As we discovered last week, **joy** filled those who heard the good news of the resurrection and encountered Jesus risen from the dead.

*Matt 28:8* So the women hurried away from the tomb . . . **filled with joy**

In our gospel lesson this morning we heard in John 20:20: *After [Jesus] said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were **overjoyed** when they saw the Lord.*

☐ **Joy is the distinctive mark of the Christian life.**  
(verse 8; Matthew 28:8; John 15:11; 16:20; 20:20)

Jesus said in John 15:11 *I have told you this so that **my joy** may be in you and that **your joy** may be complete.* (NIV)

We may think we are at a disadvantage because we have not encountered the risen savior in his physical, glorified body as the disciples of Jesus did.

But our gospel lesson makes plain that Jesus gives a blessing to “*those who have not seen and yet have believed.*” (John 20:29)

*<sup>29</sup>Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*

The title of this message is **Inexpressible Joy** and comes from 1 Peter 1:8: *Though you have **not seen him**, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with **an inexpressible and glorious joy!***

First of all, **we have this inexpressible joy because through the resurrection of Jesus . . .**

1. We are born again to a living hope (verse 3)

Now I need to be clear here. The apostle Peter is writing this letter to Christians:

1 Peter 1:1-2 <sup>1</sup>Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, *To God's elect . . . <sup>2</sup>who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood . . .* (NIV)

Jesus resurrection does not mean everyone is saved, but only those who have heard the gospel—the good news of Jesus—and have placed their faith in the *blood* of Jesus, *through the sanctifying work of the Spirit.*

I don't have time to unpack that this morning, but suffice it to say that the promise of *inexpressible joy* is given only to believers.

To be **born again**, means to begin a whole new life.

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!* (NIV)

It is a life of forgiveness through the shed blood of Christ (verse 2), and it is a holy life, *through the sanctifying work of the Spirit.* And it is a life of *obedience to Jesus Christ.*

1 Peter 1:14-15 <sup>14</sup>As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. <sup>15</sup>But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do. (NIV)

**To be born again is to be given a whole new life, and it means we are to live in a whole new way.**

**It is also a life of hope.** Because our future is secure, we can live today without fear and with an *inexpressible joy.* Next week I'll focus more on this *living hope.*

Second, **we have this inexpressible joy because through the resurrection of Jesus . . .**

2. We have an inheritance in heaven reserved for us (verses 4-5; Matthew 6:19-21; 13:44)

*4. . . an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept [reserved] in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>In this **you greatly rejoice** . . .*

As many of you have heard me say, I have a greater appreciation of the inheritance I have in heaven since my great uncle in Switzerland died nearly 8 years ago, at the age of 101. He was the world's oldest billionaire. Most of his \$4.3 billion estate was inherited by his two children—my mother's first cousins—who are both my age.

Now, I could be envious of such vast wealth. But those riches don't benefit anyone beyond the grave. In Jesus, I have *an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade*. An inheritance that is far more valuable than a few measly billions in this world.

Jesus said, <sup>19</sup>*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup>But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* (Matthew 6:19-21 NIV)

Jesus said in Matthew 13:44 that *"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his **joy** went and sold all he had and bought that field.* (NIV)

The treasure that gives true joy, and is worth giving up everything, is to love Jesus and enjoy him forever.

We not only rejoice because of our inheritance in heaven, but also, and this is our final point, and indeed is the theme of the whole book of 1 Peter:

We have this ***inexpressible joy*** because through the resurrection of Jesus . . .

3. Our trials and suffering will result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus is revealed (verses 6-7, 9)

*<sup>6</sup>In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup>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.*

The apostle Paul also emphasized this important truth in Romans 5:2b-3a . . . *we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also **rejoice in our sufferings** . . .* (NIV)

Now that may seem paradoxical. And yet it was the experience of the first disciples. In our lesson this morning from Acts: 5:41 we heard:

*The apostles left the Sanhedrin, **rejoicing** because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name [of Jesus].*

Some of the greatest joys in this life come through suffering. Jesus said in John 16:21:

*A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born, she forgets the anguish, because of her **joy** that a child is born into the world.* (NIV)

I can attest, that even though I did not endure the suffering, but did go through it with my wife, that among my greatest joys was in hearing the first cry of our newborn children.

The apostle Paul gives us the reason why we can rejoice in our sufferings:

*Romans 5:3* **we also rejoice in our sufferings**, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup>perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup>And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his **love** into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

We can rejoice in suffering, because God has poured out his love **into our hearts** through the Holy Spirit. And since God has poured His love into our hearts Peter asserts in verse 8: *Though you have not seen him, you **love** him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,*

I came across this blog post on my news feed this week. It is by Erika Medelinskaitė. She writes:

“I want an easy kind of love, a summer kind of love, a laughter kind of love. Scuba diving. Shining lights. Cuddles. Summer nights. And never have to say forever. Just you, me, and this magical moment.

That is it. Easy.

For the first time in my life, I am choosing that one guy who simply makes me laugh and I easily don't ask eternity from him.

For the first time in my life, I want everything to be easy.”

That caught my attention because it is the exact opposite of the love Jesus has for us, and the love we are to have for Him.

Jesus did not choose an easy love, but the love that brought him to the cross—with all its suffering and all of its shame.

And Jesus does not call us to an easy love:

1 Peter 4:13 *But **rejoice** that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be **overjoyed** when his glory is revealed.* (NIV)

And Jesus did not come to give us a *temporary* love, a love that is just a “magical moment.” He loves us with a forever love . . . and calls us into a love relationship that is for “eternity.”

And that is Peter's final reason for having **joy in suffering**. Verse nine tells us:

*for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

We are heading for heaven, and the joy we experience now, with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, will be magnified beyond measure when we enter the presence of God.

We are promised that in Psalm 16:11:

*You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with **joy** in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.* (Psalm 16:11 NIV)

We know how the story ends (or rather, according to C.S. Lewis, how it really begins . . .)

C.S. Lewis ends his seven-book series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, with this word picture:

“this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: **in which every chapter is better than the one before.**”

That is why we have been born again; that is our inheritance in heaven; and that is why we rejoice even in our sufferings.

*<sup>s</sup>Though you have **not seen** [Jesus], you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with **an inexpressible and glorious joy***

Let us pray . . .

**Benediction:**

Colossians 1:11-12 *May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from [God's] glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while **joyfully** giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. (NRSV)*