

## Sermon followed by Service – October 20, 2024 – 1 Peter 1:1-9

Helene. Milton. Did you see what those hurricanes did? They didn't just gray the sky and pour down rain, did they? They tore trees and houses apart, tossed cars, washed away roads, left towns and cities and countless lives in ruins. Now what? So many need more than a new car, more than a new house. So many need a whole New Start.

Peter wrote to people who needed a New Start. Not in the same way. Peter's people hadn't lost their homes and jobs, their way of life; they hadn't lost most everything they had to torrents and floods of water. Instead they were in danger of losing their hearts and souls to floods of distraction and spiritual depression. The distraction and depression that can come from always feeling out of place, always feeling outnumbered and alone. The distraction and depression that can come from always being on the wrong side of fair, the wrong side of being treated right. The distraction and depression that can come from always feeling on edge - "Now what? What's going to happen next?" When a heart and soul is feeling out of place, outnumbered, alone, it can be so tempting to want to fit in, no matter how wrong fitting in would be. When a heart is feeling mistreated, wronged, it can be so tempting to want to do wrong to those who did us wrong. When a soul is feeling hopeless and pointless, it can be so easy to give up.

As Christians, Peter's people were outnumbered; because they lived as Christians, they were strangers to the world around them, and treated that way. In so many ways, it seemed the world was against them. And so it was tempting, tempting to fit in with the world, tempting to put God off to the side, tempting to be distracted from

who they were and why they were. Tempting and tiring. Peter's people needed a New Start.

Sound familiar? As a Christian in an unChristian world, as a Christian in a world that doesn't think like Christ, as a Christian in a world with a whole different set of priorities than Jesus Christ, do you ever feel outnumbered and out-of-place? Like a stranger who doesn't fit in? It's tiring, isn't it? Tiring to be different. Tiring to have to constantly fight not to get sucked in and sucked down into living the life of the world. Tiring and dangerously distracting. I see it in our St. John family - FOMO - the Fear Of Missing Out on what the world has. So I see in our St. John family a destructive distraction at work. Hearts and souls distracted by the world, more and more living the life of the world. Hearts and souls distracted by their hurt, more and more cocooning apart from Jesus, more and more wrapping themselves up in themselves. I see it more and more in our St. John family - hearts and souls distracted from our purpose as God's people, more and more of us thinking our purpose in life is to live the life of the world, to live to satisfy self. It wasn't just Peter's people who could use a New Start, we could use a New Start.

*Where do you see this true in your life?*

*In what ways do you need a New Start with God?*

*In what ways do you see St. John needing a New Start with God?*

What is Peter's way ... what is God's way to give us his New Start? God could give us a new start like he gave Jerusalem a new start with Nebuchadnezzar - God could use the world we love to crush us into starting new. Or God could give us a new start like he did with Noah and the flood - God could wipe out and wipe away every

distraction around us. Or God could do like he has done so many times before - I think of Israel wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, an entire generation dropping dead in the desert, never making it to the Promised Land; I think of the northern Ten Tribes of Israel sent away by God never to return - God could just simply say: "I've given you so many new starts, and what do you do? You keep on going back to your old ways. No more."

With the way that I waste and squander the New Starts God offers, I've given God so many reasons to send me away, so many reasons to let me just drift away into the world. As a congregation, with what we've done with the New Starts God has given us, what? We've given God good reason to let us just drift off. With the ways we - one by one and together - have wasted and squandered God's New Starts, we deserve to have God send us off, to have God let us drift off to live the life that ends in hell.

But God didn't write Peter's people off, and I pray he hasn't written us off. He didn't give Peter's people a New Start the hard shake way - "You better start new or else" - and I pray that we don't need a hard shake. Instead Jesus offers our tired and distracted hearts a New Start - how? With a promise - **"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, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you..."**

Instead of writing us off, God is giving us a New Start - a new birth into a living hope. We get to start new and live new! Instead of living as strangers and outsiders, out of place and put off by the world, we get to live chosen and called by God to be his with him. Instead of living the FOMO life, with our eye always on the world, always

wanting what the world has, living in fear of missing out on what the world has, we get to live like we have something far better. Instead of living with our hearts and minds stuck on the life of the world, we get to live with our hearts and minds looking beyond this world. We have an inheritance in heaven - an inheritance far better than anything our neighbors are chasing.

What does that mean for us? We don't have to live distracted wanting what the world has. We don't have to live depressed because we don't have what the world has. We don't have to live like we're missing out. We have an inheritance that won't ever perish, spoil, or fade, an inheritance that won't ever fall apart, get hurricaned, or spent away. We get to look forward to a life in paradise, a life where the streets are paved with gold, a life where our bodies will feel alive and new every morning and night, where our hearts will never hurt, a forever life of "wow!" and "ah!" And that's the way we get to live - like we have been chosen by God for heaven.

There's something I need to make clear here. I'm not just singing sunshine on a rainy day. I'm not just re-framing cracked eggs into an omelet, or lemons into lemonade. Our new birth isn't just a new and positive way of thinking. Our living hope isn't just a feeling that something better is coming our way. No, our new birth into a living hope is through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Our new birth comes with Easter power and Easter promise.

What does Easter mean for us? Think of the cross and the empty tomb. Why was Jesus on that cross? The easy answer is to point to the evil out there in the world - "it's their fault." Here's the hard answer. It was God's will, the Father's will to have Jesus on that cross and to crush him there. Why? To have someone pay - because someone had to pay - for the way we have squandered our new starts.

Instead of making us pay, God put Jesus in our place, and he made Jesus pay. That's Good Friday; so what about Easter? When God raised Jesus back to life, God was making it clear - his judgment is done! That must mean our guilt is done! Our forgiveness is won! Now, instead of living a life of judgment and fear, we get to Start New with hope.

But the devil doesn't want us starting new; the world doesn't want us living new with Jesus. So what? Look to Easter! The devil couldn't stop Jesus from his New Start; the world couldn't stop Jesus from living his New Life. And we don't have to let the devil or the world stop us from our New Start. With our Easter Jesus, it's not the devil that gets his way; it's not the world that gets its way. No, with Easter, Jesus gets his way, and his way means life, life made right for you.

But. But what about all the troubles we have here in this world? We could let our troubles distract us; we could let our troubles depress us. But we don't have to let our troubles distract us or depress us. Your troubles, my troubles, our troubles, that's the stage where God is working to show his love, his power, his way to glory. That means, your troubles, my troubles, our troubles - that's the stage where we get to show - not distraction or depression - but we get to show the love, the power, the victory that God is working for us.

Like Daniel did. Daniel could have been distracted by living the high life, he could have been depressed by his troubles. Daniel could have been distracted and depressed by the lions - who here wouldn't be? Instead, Daniel used his time in the lions' den to show off the awesome greatness of God.

That's not my natural instinct. My natural instinct is be distracted. My natural instinct is to feel downed. My natural instinct is to cut myself off. So Peter reminds us of something we already know - we love Jesus; we believe in Jesus; and we are receiving what Jesus has for us - the salvation of our souls.

Don't you love the way Peter says that? In our distractedness, Peter doesn't command us into loving and believing Jesus. He doesn't try to squeeze more loving and believing out of us. In our distractedness, Peter reminds us of what we already know and love - We love Jesus! We believe in Jesus! And we are receiving the goal of our faith, the salvation of our souls. That's the new life, the New Start we get to live. Instead of living beaten down, instead of living distracted, we get to live - we love Jesus, we believe in Jesus, and we are receiving the goal of our faith, the salvation of our souls! Let's live that New Life, that New Start together. Amen.

*In what ways will you be living your New Start with God?*

## THE SERVICE

**IN OUR WORLD TODAY ...** we see Christ's church struggling, struggling to focus in a world of distractions, struggling to be bold in a world of opposition, struggling to love in a world set on self, struggling for strength in a world that exhausts, struggling in so many more ways.

**IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ...** we see that in spite of all its struggles, Christ's church gets to live a new life of hope - a new life, a new start we get to live every day as children of God; a new life, a new start we get to live as a congregation in Christ!

### OPENING HYMN

*Psalm 98E*



1 Sing a new song to the LORD, he to whom won-ders be-  
2 Now to the ends of the earth, see, his sal - va - tion is  
3 Sing a new song and re - joice! Pub - lish his prais - es a -  
4 Join with the hills and the sea thun - ders of praise to pro-



long! Re - joice \_\_\_\_\_ in his tri - umph and tell \_\_\_\_\_ of his  
shown, and still \_\_\_\_\_ he re - mem - bers his mer - cy and \_  
broad! Let voic - es in \_\_\_\_\_ cho - rus, with trum - pet and \_  
long! In judg - ment and \_\_\_\_\_ jus - tice he comes \_\_\_\_\_ to the



pow'r! O sing to the LORD a new song!  
truth, un - chang - ing in love to his own.  
horn, re - sound for the joy of the LORD!  
earth. O sing to the LORD a new song!

### INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

CW 188

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

**If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just  
and will forgive us our sins  
and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

**Holy God, gracious Father,**

**I am sinful by nature**

**and have sinned against you in my thoughts, words, and actions.**

**I have not loved you with my whole heart;**

**I have not loved others as I should.**

**I deserve your punishment both now and forever.**

**But Jesus, my Savior, paid for my sins**

**with his innocent suffering and death.**

**Trusting in him, I pray: God, have mercy on me, a sinner.**

*Silence for meditation and reflection*

Our gracious Father in heaven has been merciful to us. He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

LORD, HAVE MERCY - CHOIR

CW 190

*In peace let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy.*

*For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy.*

*For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy.*



*For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy.*

*Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord. Amen. Amen.*

## **GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST - CHOIR**

**CW 191**

***Refrain:** Glory to God in the highest, glory to God, and peace to his people on earth, and peace to his people on earth.*

*Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.*

*Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. You are seated at the right hand of the Father; receive our prayer.*

*For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen.*

***Refrain***

## **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Almighty and merciful God, it is only by your gift of grace that we come into your presence and offer true and faithful service. Grant that our worship on earth may always be pleasing to you, and in the life to come give us the fulfillment of what you have promised; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## **FIRST READING**

**1 Peter 1:3–9**

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, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, 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. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 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, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

CREATE IN ME

*Psalm 51*

Cre - ate in me a  
 pure heart, O God, and re - new a right spir - it with -  
 in me. Do not cast me a - way from your  
 pres - ence or take your Ho - ly Spir - it from  
 me. Re - store to me the joy of your sal - va - tion, and up -  
 hold, up - hold me with your free Spir - it.

**SECOND READING**

*Titus 3:4–7*

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**CHOIR**

*“Didn’t My Lord Deliver Daniel”*

*Refrain:*

*Didn’t my Lord deliver Daniel, deliver Daniel, deliver Daniel.*

*Didn’t my Lord deliver Daniel, then why not every man?*

*Refrain*

*He delivered Daniel from the lion’s den, Jonah from the belly of the whale, and the Hebrew children from the fiery furnace, then why not every man?*

*Refrain 2x*

*I set my foot on the Gospel ship, and the ship began to sail;  
it landed me over on Canaan’s shore, and I’ll never come back no more.*

*repeat Refrain 2x*

*Didn’t my Lord deliver Daniel!*

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

*Isaiah 40:31*

Alleluia! Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint. Alleluia!

**GOSPEL**

*Matthew 5:1–12*

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.

He said:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

HYMN OF THE DAY

*“Blest Are They”*  
Hymn 690

Blest are they, the poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of God.  
Blest are they, full of sorrow, they shall be consoled.

*Refrain*

Rejoice and be glad! Blessed are you, holy are you!  
Rejoice and be glad! Yours is the kingdom of God!

Blest are they, the lowly ones, they shall inherit the earth.  
Blest are they who hunger and thirst, they shall have their fill. *Refrain*

Blest are they who show mercy, mercy shall be theirs.  
Blest are they, the pure of heart, they shall see God! *Refrain*

Blest are they who seek peace, they are the children of God.  
Blest are they who suffer in faith, the glory of God is theirs. *Refrain*

Blest are you who suffer hate all because of me.  
Rejoice and be glad, yours is the kingdom; shine for all to see. *Refrain*

SERMON

*1 Peter 1:3-9*

NICENE CREED

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures.**

**He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

#### **OFFERING**

*If you prefer to give online, the code at the right will take you to our Online Giving page. We invite our online givers to join in our offering with an "I Give Online" card in the pew racks.*



#### **PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

**M:** May this be a time, O Lord, for confession and repentance. Forgive us for the apathy that harms our faith and hinders our works. Forgive us for boasting of our past achievements and for blaming others for our present problems. Rid us of indifference to public worship and Bible study. Destroy the distrust that plagues us, and shatter every thought and word that harms the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

**C: Create in us pure hearts, O God, and renew steadfast spirits within us.**

**M:** Let this be a time, O Lord, when you renew us again by Word and sacrament, when you reform our hearts and minds, and when you restore to us the joy of fellowship and service. Grant to us in this age and in this place the courage of the apostles, the steadfastness of the reformers, and the dedication of those who have gone before us.

**C: Create in us pure hearts, O God, and renew steadfast spirits within us.**

**M:** Let this be a time, O Lord, when we recommit and reconsecrate ourselves to the ministry of the gospel.

Let us find joy in our unity, zeal for our work, and success in our labor.

**C: Create in us pure hearts, O God, and renew steadfast spirits within us.**

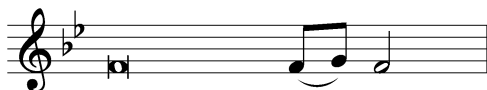
### LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

### THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Gluten-free wafers are available; ask Pastor.)



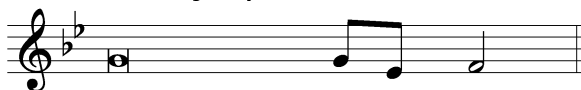
The Lord be with you.



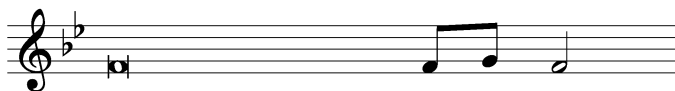
**And al - so with you.**



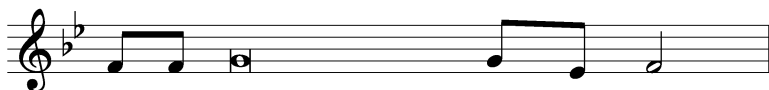
Lift up your hearts.



**We lift them up to the Lord.**



Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.



**It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who promised that wherever two or three come together in his name, there he is with them to shepherd his flock until he comes again in glory. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

### **HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (SUNG)**

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power, God of might.

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest!

### **WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my  $\text{T}$  body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my  $\text{T}$  blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **Amen.**

### **JESUS, LAMB OF GOD (SUNG)**

Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; grant us your peace.



DISTRIBUTION HYMN

*“Awake, O Sleeper, Rise and See”*

Hymn 691

Awake, O sleeper, rise and see this great and glorious mystery,  
this shining promise, ever new: the hope of glory—Christ in you.

Although life’s heartaches, trials, and sin  
combine to grieve your hope within,  
rejoice! Your Savior’s grace is great, made perfect in your weakened state.

Come, share that life formed by his cross  
and for Christ’s sake, come suffer loss;  
his Spirit works your life to fill with all good things to do his will.

For you no longer live, but he who washed you clean and set you free;  
baptized in Christ, you now are saved, forever on his palms engraved.

Christ offers you, with nail-scarred hand, true manna for this desert land:  
his body and his blood divine beneath the sacred bread and wine.

Our Savior never leaves his own as orphans, hungry and alone;  
he promises with certainty: “I am in you and you in me.”

Such precious gifts do not disdain; do not receive God’s grace in vain,  
but cherish, as his children true, the hope of glory—Christ in you.

CLOSING PRAYER

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
**his mercy endures forever.**

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,  
**we proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.**

We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet you  
have given us in this Sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith,  
nourished our hope, and strengthened our love.

By your Spirit, help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  
**Amen.**

## BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

## CLOSING HYMN

*“Lord, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing”*

**Hymn 927**

Lord, dismiss us with your blessing; fill our hearts with joy and peace.

Let us each, your love possessing, triumph in redeeming grace.

O refresh us, O refresh us, trav’ling through this wilderness.

Thanks we give and adoration for the gospel’s joyful sound;  
may the fruits of your salvation in our hearts and lives abound!  
Ever faithful, ever faithful to your truth may we be found.

So whene’er the signal’s given us from earth to call away,  
borne on angels’ wings to heaven, glad the summons to obey,  
may we ever, may we ever reign with Christ in endless day.

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