

## Easter Hope: Be Filled With It ~ 1 Peter 1:17-21

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ May 4, 2014

**<sup>17</sup> Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. <sup>18</sup> For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. <sup>20</sup> He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. <sup>21</sup> Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God**



This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

It's one of those questions that have kept people up at night trying to figure out the right answer. It's a question that is right up there with the "What came first? The chicken or the egg?" This is the question: Is the glass half-full or half-empty? The poster on the wall over there actually has a third option: Is the glass twice as large as it needs to be? There would be some who would say the glass is half-empty, and there would be others who would say the glass is half-full. And according to psychologists, this helps to determine if you are a pessimist (half-empty) or an optimist (half-full).

There are times that I see myself as both an optimist and a pessimist. But instead of having to decide whether a glass is half full or half empty, I think we would generally agree that having more, a full glass, is better than having less, an empty glass. It means having more water, juice, soda, and alcohol to drink than less. It's better to have something, than nothing. And there is a something that Jesus wants us to have – he wants us to have hope, Easter Hope.

Earlier in the book of 1 Peter we heard about the certainty of this Easter hope. And now today we see that God, speaking through the apostle Peter, doesn't just want our glass to be half-full/empty of hope, he wants it to be completely full, in fact he wants it to be overflowing. But does this mean that we just go around all day with smiles on our faces, or is there something more? Peter tells us there's something more in his letter, and he describes about a full Easter hope, and he tells us to BE FILLED WITH EASTER HOPE.

1. Empty of the old way of life
2. Filled with Hope in Christ

(1)

As we continue on in our 4-week journey through the book of 1 Peter, we remember that Peter likely wrote this from Rome to many of the congregations Paul established in Asia Minor, now modern day Turkey. These were Christians who were a mix of Jews and Gentiles, and they had begun to discover that being a Christian meant being a little bit different from the rest of the world. And as these differences began to show between a Christian and a non-Christian, the Christians became excluded.

Consider the worship life for example. Many of the religions around them demanded certain sacrifices to be brought, demanded certain immoral rituals be performed. These religions had been imbedded in the culture, so when a Christian declined to offer a sacrifice or take part in a ritual, they were seen as someone different.

Certainly there would have been some of these early Christians who perhaps wondered if it was even worth it, so they began to abandon the living hope they had as Christians, they began to take part in these other religions, thinking it wasn't such a big deal. But Peter in his letter is reminding the Christians that any way of life apart from Christ is an empty way of life. Instead, he's telling them to BE FILLED WITH EASTER HOPE. He told them without apology that being a Christian is going to be different, and different in this case is a very good thing.

Peter wants us to BE FILLED WITH EASTER HOPE. He starts out by saying, **"Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear."** There's a lot packed into that one sentence. Peter brings up two important points: 1) We are foreigners and 2) Live in reverent fear. Just as they were important to Peter's first listeners, these points are important as we live as Christians today.

We are foreigners. Now many if not all of us here are American citizens, we don't know what it's like to live as foreigners here. But go across the border into Mexico, or hop over the Atlantic or Pacific ocean and you get an idea of what being a foreigner is like. I was a foreigner when I grew up in Africa. Even though I was born there, even though I was raised there, I was still a foreigner. As a foreigner, I know this country is not my home. As a Christian I am a foreigner in this world, this world is not my home. Jesus himself says, **"Be in the world, but not of the world."** Sounds simple enough, right? Then why is it that we worry so much? Why is it that we hold on so tightly to our meager worldly possessions as if they're actually valuable? Why do we seek the approval of others? It certainly is a temptation for us to make a comfy home for ourselves here, as if this is our spiritual home.

As a foreigner, this makes us different as well, it makes us act differently, it makes us look differently. One of the ways this happens is how we live our life, **"in reverent fear"** of God. This is different than anything else. We show reverent fear to our God and Father who judges each person's work impartially. As Christians, our sinful nature needs to hear the stinging message of the Law. That God is serious about sin, he is serious about punishment, and every time we sin we deserve to be punished. As Christians, our new man, created by the Holy Spirit also lives in a fear and awe of the majesty and grace of God and his commandments.

The reason why we do this, the reason why we are different, is because God has made us different. Listen to these words, **"For you know...that you were redeemed, from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors."** We had to be redeemed, we had to be bought back from our empty way of life. That is why Christ came down, to save us from the old empty way of life. The empty way of life that can offer no lasting satisfaction, only fleeting pleasure. The empty way of life that attributes our existence to chance. The empty way of life that is a nicely packaged present with nothing inside. Our cup was completely empty. And we liked it that way.

But then our cup is filled up. The purchase price for filling up our glass is not with the usual money or credit cards, but something far more valuable. The price of blood. But not just any blood. The

blood of a perfect sacrifice. This is something God's people knew very well – there is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood – that's why they had all those sacrifices, to remind them of this truth. And so the perfect lamb of God shed his blood for us to fill our cup up with EASTER HOPE.

How wondrous and how glorious this is, BEING FILLED WITH EASTER HOPE, one would wonder why we would not want to have a full cup. And yet Christians do place their hand over the cup before it's full. Some place their hand over when it's only a little full. I don't need too much God in my life, just enough to get me through the next week, not too much so my friends think I'm weird. Some place their hand over the cup when it's half full (or half empty). They will believe in God, enjoy what he says, until it conflicts with something – maybe something they can't understand, like the Trinity, or it conflicts with a pet sin, so they cling to the empty way of life before them. Or perhaps well-meaning Christians will stop God pouring when it gets close to the top, because we don't want to spill. We are pretty full of Easter hope – strengthened through the Word in worship and private devotions, we're not ashamed of our church or God, and yet we still want a little bit of me time, a bit of time to myself. That's the small bit of emptiness in our cup.

But God doesn't want our glass to be any of these. He doesn't just want a partially full glass, he wants an entirely full glass, in fact he wants a glass that is overflowing. He will keep pouring until he is done, until his hope fills you up. He keeps pouring because he wants you to have a full life, a full life that can only be achieved if we let him work through us. We can't take credit for the full life that God is pouring into us, but we can take credit for the empty glass. We can and have put our hand over the glass and leave our glass empty. When we live an empty life, life contrary to God's plan for salvation, we are rejecting the life he chose for us, the life he bought us to, bought with Christ's own blood. He wants us to be empty of our old way of life, and be filled with new life in Christ

(2)

This new life in Christ was purchased for us. It was not purchased with gold or silver, it was not purchased with money, but with something far more valuable, it was purchased with blood. And not just any blood, but Jesus' perfect and innocent blood. One drop of Jesus' perfect and innocent blood would have been enough to tip the scales in our favor, change our eternal destiny from death to life, but Jesus poured out more than just one drop. He poured out all his blood, a sign of his generous grace unto you. It is for this cost that he paid for you to have a full and new life in Christ.

One tradition that made Africa different than America was a dowry price a man had to pay for his wife. In Africa, the dowry was paid to the woman's father, and the price was usually in cows. An average gal would garner 3-4 cows. An extremely beautiful and talented gal would garner 10 cows. There's a tale about a young and wise African man. When he came to selecting his wife, he chose a woman who was not all that beautiful, not all that talented, by everyone's standards, a one-cow wife. But instead of one cow, he offered the father ten cows! Everybody thought he was nuts. But a year later a friend came over to his house for dinner. Dinner is served by this beautiful and talented woman. The friend says, "So you finally got rid of your one cow wife and traded her in for a new one?" The wise, young African man said "No, this is the same woman I married." You see the woman grew into her role as a ten-cow wife.

It's kind of like that as Christians. We were despicable, ugly, useless one-cow women, in fact nobody in their right mind would even have paid one hoof of one cow for us, and deep down, we knew it,

and so we try to cover it up. But Jesus came along and offered ten cows, he paid far more than we were even worth. And yet he did. And as Christians we grow into that ten-cow wife as the bride of Christ. We are that valuable, and we start acting that valuable also.

We start realizing our life is more than just satisfying our own desires, it's more than just about the way I think things should be, it's about more than just going through the motions of what God wants us to be and do. It's being unapologetic for being different. It's a genuine living for the one who purchased us. It's removing the hand from over our glass and allowing God to pour in the fullness of life he has prepared for us.

Easter hope means more than just remembering Jesus died for your sins. It's living a full life filled with the hope he gives you. So we don't have to worry about the paradoxical question of whether the glass is half full or empty with God. God fills our lives up with hope, hope until it is overflowing, and pouring into the hearts and lives of people around us. This is how we can BE FILLED WITH EASTER HOPE. Amen.