

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Alleluia. (Psalm 119:105)

Prayer of the Day:

Eternal Father before whom all generations rise and fall, teach us to think earnestly on the brevity of our lives and on the immensity of your goodness. Help us to enter the New Year trusting in the name of your Son and walking in the way of his peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Sermon Text from 1 Peter 1:23-25

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the word that was preached to you. NIV84

Sermon Text:

Our lesson this evening is short. Let's listen once more in its entirety (read lesson).

All men are like grass, and all their glory is the flowers of the field. I'm not a farmer ... not a gardener ... truth be told I can't keep plants alive for very long at all. *Grass withers and flowers fall.* Seems that way doesn't it. A giant circle of life and death. Spring brings bursts of color and life as plants spring up in abundance only to succumb to the cooler climes of fall aptly named for the piles of dead leaves and withered-up plants that litter the landscape. That's what we are like!

Oh, we love to believe differently. We make relatively minuscule moments into mountains of meaning. We spend our energies regaling each other with stories about the good old days when men were men and women were women and life was good and most importantly when we were at our prime but grass withers and flowers fall and we and all our glory, well I wonder how many people would even know who Peter was, let alone any of us?

All men are like grass and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. I wonder if that's what's so unsettling about these "pandemic" days in which we live. We are facing a pretty harsh reality about just how frail and fleeting our lives really are. Maybe that's what's driving the craziness in our world these days, nobody wants to be frail and everyone wants to believe they really mattered. We don't want to be a blip that is here for 70-80 years and then forgotten in a fraction of it.

The grass withers and flowers fall. I read somewhere once that Martin Luther was relatively convinced that he had to be living near the end. Things couldn't get much worse, surely God would come back pretty soon. You think Peter thought the same? What about Isaiah who he quotes in these words we keep thinking about? I think it all the time but I'm beginning to wonder if that's just because everyone thinks so. Crazy Pandemics and the divisions that have come with it ... well which were exacerbated by it let's admit that they were around far before. Nobody seems to talk about it much anymore but before that, violence, shootings, it had everyone on high alert. Before that terrorist attacks as towers fell and life was lost on a massive scale in the rubble beneath. Before that wars Iraq, Vietnam, the big ones that enveloped our world and were waged on global scale. Of course, it's all just a cycle that never ends throughout the pages of history ever since ...

Ah, yes, the source of it all right? Ever since the garden, the serpent, and Adam and Eve. So we come to the real problem. Sin reared its ugly head in the hiss of satan. Imbedded itself in humanity as perfection was lost, handed down like some genetic plague ever since. Oh, we can try to explain it away. We can try to make it seem like our sins aren't really that big of a deal but then the history of humanity, our own lives with their aches and pains ... their problems, well they tell the tale. *All men are like grass,*

and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall. The soul who sins is the one who will die (Ezekiel 18:20). Sin makes us perishable seed.

I suppose if that were all we could say tonight, it would be a pretty dismal world to live in. But Peter, yes, God through Peter has so much more to say. Instead of masking the problem with worldly excess and ease or medicating it with thoughts of glory and grandeur there is an actual solution to all of this.

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. No longer perishable, there is embedded in that knowledge real meaning then. Paul even tells us how this imperishable nature comes to us. Through the living and enduring Word of God. You see, that Word connected to water made a real difference as it was splashed upon your forehead. There, the Holy Spirit worked through Baptism exactly as He had promised to implant faith in your heart. That day death died as you were connected to life. Life we don't earn or deserve but life that is won for us, handed to us in the victory that Christ attains in our place. That's why perfection needed to become flesh untouched by the plague which is passed down from one generation of sinful parents to the next. Though He was perfect, and deserving of far better, Jesus went to the cross and perished for the perishable seed handed down ever since the time of Adam and Eve and in His resurrection, the promise *you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.* This truth is strengthened just like our faith every time we hear, every time we receive it as it is again connected to simple wine and bread, miraculously that body, the very blood which won heaven for us.

Knowing that something transcends the withering grasses and the falling flowers of the world around us, Peter acknowledges that life will be different. The perishable stuff of life will no longer be our goal and aim. It simply will not provide us with purpose and lasting joy. Instead, we will find our rock, our comfort, our hope in God, in His holy Word even as we hold it out in a world that may hate us for it.

Maybe the best way to close this evening as one year bleeds into the next, is simply by listening to all that again as the Word communicates it to us. Hear the words of our Lesson in their slightly larger context tonight.

¹³ *Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.* ¹⁴ *As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.* ¹⁵ *But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;* ¹⁶ *for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."*

¹⁷ *Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.* ¹⁸ *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 forefathers,* ¹⁹ *but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.* ²⁰ *He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.* ²¹ *Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.*

²² *Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.* ²³ *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.* ²⁴ *For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall,* ²⁵ *but the word of the Lord stands forever."* And this is the word that was preached to you.

Oh ... and there it is ... something worth building on in the New Year! Amen!