

Devotion for March 30, 2018 – Good Friday

1 Peter 1:18b-19 (EHV)

How much is a person worth? In the ancient world, the cost of a person – a slave - could be compared to “new” car prices today – all depending on a person’s age and skill set. Buying a slave was not cheap. Neither was buying your freedom if you were a slave.

Why am I talking about slavery and how much a person is worth on Good Friday? Because today commemorates the day the LORD bought our freedom. With the apostle Peter as our guide, let us consider the price he paid and what it means for us, under the theme: **You were redeemed.**

The letter of 1 Peter starts off with an encouragement for Christians to lead holy, god-pleasing lives. Why? Our sermon text tells us:

*You were redeemed from your empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, not with things that pass away, such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like a lamb without blemish or spot.*

The word “redeemed” is a very special word in the Bible. It means “to buy back.” The idea of redemption played a huge role in ancient Judaism – as God gave laws concerning how land, people and certain animals could be bought back by their original owners and/or their relatives. More importantly, however, was the imagery God placed in the Old Testament’s sacrificial system – teaching us that sin is so serious, that we can’t “buy” our way from out under the hell deserve because of our sins. The Scriptures say: <sup>7</sup> *No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him--* <sup>8</sup> *the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough--* <sup>9</sup> *that he should live on forever and not see decay.*<sup>i</sup>

Yes, ever since the fall into sin, every human has been under a curse – separated from God and enslaved to the devil. Selfishness fills our thoughts and pride controls our hearts. Even the good that people attempt to do outside of Christ is like a filthy rag in God’s sight. Why? Because of the self-righteousness that motivates them. The Bible makes it clear: *“without faith it is impossible to please God.”*

Addiction to sinful pleasure and the idea that we are generally good before God (that we can, in some way, earn our own salvation) – this was the “empty way of life” into which we were born. Because of this, damnation to hell was our lot. We were spiritual slaves – unable to buy our freedom. We needed a redeemer.

Our gracious LORD promised to provide that Redeemer. He set up the Old Testament sacrificial system to point to it. On Israel’s altar, perfect lambs (the kind that would probably win 4H ribbons today) had their throats cut, blood poured out and were burned up. Why? So that the people of Israel would have a living picture of God’s promised Savior and the perfect sacrifice he would offer to the Lord in our place to redeem us from our sin.

Jesus is that perfect Savior sent by God that all the lambs sacrificed on Israel's altar represent. He lived the perfect life of obedience to God's law that we all failed to live – thereby winning the righteousness we need to stand before God. And, carrying that righteousness for us, Jesus was able to pay the redemption price needed to release us from our slavery to sin, death and the power of the devil.

What was the price he paid: \$10k/person? \$100k/person? \$1m/person? No, far more than that. He paid with his blood, pouring out his life for us on the cross. That was the redemption price God set for our freedom. That was the price Jesus paid.

Did you ever hear the story about the horrible sinner who asked Jesus how much he loved him? Spreading out his arms, Jesus said, "So much," and then he died. This is how much Jesus loves you too, for we are all the horrible sinner in the story. He loves you so much that he paid the rarest, most precious price in the universe to save you: the sinless blood of history's only sinless man (who also happened to be true God). This is what you are worth to the LORD.

There is one more topic I would like to discuss before I end this devotion. Did you notice what Jesus redeemed you from? Our text says that *you were redeemed from your empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers*. In other words, Jesus didn't just save us from hell for heaven, he also saved us from a meaningless, fruitless existence on this earth.

Because of Christ, our life has far more meaning than just trying to retire well with a nice house, a lot of toys, and memories of awesome vacations. Those things, while they may seem important now, are all truly meaningless. They will all be left behind and forgotten at our death. No, the only thing that truly matters is our relationship with Christ. All that truly matters is that his kingdom (Christ's reign in people's hearts through the Gospel) comes to us and others; and that we use our talents and vocation in his service to help further his kingdom. And how do we do that? By keeping his commands and faithfully fulfilling the calling he has given us individually to the glory of his name.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: throughout this service you have seen the great price Jesus paid to redeem you. Rejoice in the fact that you are worth so much to God – not because you are so great and loveable, but because the LORD is so merciful. Let the love Christ showed you move you to love him back. How? By serving him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness – ever mindful of what Jesus redeemed you from, what he redeemed you for, and the price he paid. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 49:7-9 NIV84