

“All flesh is like grass...” 1 Pet 1:22-25

“Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you.”

Today as this year ends and the next one is about to begin in a few hours, we have for our meditation the Word of God from the first letter of Peter. “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.”

What a fitting text! It reflects well the sentiment of the New Year’s Eve, where one more year has passed away. It’s gone. All flesh is like grass, and the grass withers... However, it is even better when we hear these words in the context of what Peter was writing.

What was he writing? The most wonderful news for all Christians. The Good News in their best. To whom was he writing? The apostle Peter begins his letter identifying his addresses, and you also are among them. Peter writes to those whom God the Father has chosen from before the beginning of the world.

It is a very long time ago, true, but see - your Creator already knew you, for Him it was clear already then, that He will have you with Him, that you will be with Him in eternity.

Peter writes to those who have been born again through the power of the Holy Spirit, when the Spirit called you by the Gospel, enlighten you with His gifts and made you God’s child and heir in your baptism.

Peter writes to those who live their lives empowered by the hope of eternal life, waiting for the day when we will receive our inheritance; imperishable, undefiled and unfading, which is kept for you in heaven and which will be revealed in the last time.

This hope is the work of the Holy Spirit in you. When you read God’s message to you, when you listen to Him speaking to you, the Holy Spirit creates trust in God’s promises, and He fills you with divine joy.

But wait! Who are we to have these wonderful gifts? Who are we to be chosen from the beginning, who are we to be created anew by the Holy Spirit, who are we to be promised the inheritance in God’s Kingdom? Why we?

The truth is, there is nothing special in us, there is nothing that we have done to deserve it. It is not because we are better than others. You know quite well what thoughts and desires dwell into your hearts, how many times you have done wrong. So it is not because we did something good, for there is nothing we could possibly do that will result in such great gains.

It is not because of our doing, it is all because of God's love and mercy and because of what He has done for us in Jesus Christ. It is all His work. Perhaps you remember how Dr Luther explains the second articles of the Apostles' Creed.

"He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned human being. He has purchased and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death." These words actually come from this letter.

He has redeemed you, He has purchased you. This is a picture of captives, of prisoners of war. They can't redeem themselves. They can't help themselves. They are powerless. There is nothing they can do. They can only remain in captivity waiting for someone to redeem them.

And it is actually even worse with us. We don't even know that we are captives of sin and devil and the world, until the eternal Word of God shines on us and reveals our true state. Until that we believe that all is good. No need for redemption.

Redemption. This is what Jesus Christ, the Son of God has done for each of you. He has redeemed you from your captivity. From captivity to sin, death and devil. He has bought you with a price, so that you belong to Him. Not with silver or gold. With something much more precious.

Psalms 49:4 says: "Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life..." However, "you were ransomed ... not with perishable things... but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."

It is the highest price that could be paid for your freedom. The life of the Son of God. This is how valuable you are in His eyes. This was the price the Triune God was ready to pay so that you could be with Him forever. Think about it carefully. How much He loves you... how much He desires to be with you.

Now a little more about our today's reading; we can see how Peter in this letter continually compares two realities. This world and the Kingdom of God. One is flashy and tempting, all around us, but perishable, futile, fading away, and withering like grass.

The other one, the Kingdom of God, is still hidden, yet eternal, imperishable, unshakeable, and it will remain forever. "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like

the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.”

All things in this world come and go, and as Solomon said: “There is nothing new under the sun.” However, so many today have believed this poisonous myth that all new things are better than old ones.

So many have put their trust in ever changing world, that is, in the grass that withers away. This thinking has brought so much devastation, pain and suffering to our culture and also to the Church.

Whatever was done, or believed, or confessed by the Church before our time, so many wise and truthful teachings, so many truly Biblical practices now can be simply dismissed by assuming that ... that was then, in old days, when people were not so smart as we are today. We know better.

Christians used to believe that the Bible is God’s Word. Christians used to believe that pure teaching leads you to Christ, and false teaching can destroy our faith. Christians used to believe that God comes to us in the Divine Service and didn’t despise God’s own invitation.

Christians used to believe that the Holy Communion is Christ’s very presence and we need to treat it accordingly. Christians used to believe that God’s Word gives us wisdom for our lives, in marriage, in work, in society. But today we know better. We have new ideas. Thus we grow in our arrogance, and shrink in God’s wisdom and suffer more and more.

As the result as Paul the apostle wrote, we are “tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, and by human cunning.” (Eph. 4:14) Even many Christians don’t know what they believe anymore, and they don’t know how to live anymore. They are no different than the world around us.

How do people today know what is right and what is wrong? What is new, must be right. Whatever the culture tells us, on TV and in media, must be good. This kind of stupidity can be excused to secular people, but not to Christians.

We can’t, we shouldn’t be that naïve. For we know where to find the truth, where to find God’s wisdom, where to find stability and clarity about what is right and what is wrong, how to live God pleasing and blessed life.

“But the word of the Lord remains forever.” The word of the Lord remains forever! Yes! Let’s reflect a little bit on this. We say so often, the Word of God, the Word of God. How is it that it remains forever? What does this mean?

The Word of God is His design for His creation. It is the order of Creation which the Creator has established. As Paul the apostle wrote: “For by Him all things were

created ... all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

This is God’s world. And His revealed Word in the Bible gives us access to His wisdom, it helps us to understand how this world is supposed to function and what is wrong with it. The Word of God gives us this unshakeable foundation.

Do you know what one of our greatest problems is? We may want to live as God’s chosen people, but so often we don’t know what it means, and don’t recognize that we are much more shaped by the world around us, than by the Word of God.

So often we listen to the world much more than we listen to the Word of God. We live guided by the world, and then we are surprised that God doesn’t bless us. Why would He?

The message from the true God has always been, still is and always will be counter cultural. God’s wisdom, His design for His creation, and His attitude towards us, which He reveals to us in the Bible doesn’t change.

The Word of God has always criticized wrong things in the world and has guided people to God’s wisdom and God’s Word in the flesh, Jesus Christ. The Word of God is above and beyond all cultures and civilization. It is an eternal standard and wisdom by which to measure the whole world. As Peter wrote, even the angels long to look into it.

And you have this enormous and undeserved privilege to know God’s Word. It is given to you. Not only the Bible, but also pastors who help you to understand it better. Use this time of grace! For you don’t know how long this time of grace will last.

Peter encourages us with these words: “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, [for the Word of God] that by it you may grow up into salvation.” Long for Christ, long to hear His Word, this imperishable treasure.

Peter gives us this picture of infants. When they are hungry their whole attention, all their efforts are focused on obtaining the food. Be the same! Do the same! Long for the Word, for the Holy Spirit, search for Him, come to Him.

This is my prayer for you and for my own family, I pray that in years to come we all would be like infants longing for God’s Word, focusing our whole attention and efforts to obtain it, so that we could truly belong to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed New Year to all of you! Be hungry and thirsty for something that remains forever!

Amen.