

**1 Peter: Living Hope Series**  
**Week 4 1:13-2:2**  
**May 4, 2014**

Welcome/intro stuff

If it's your first or second or third time joining us, thanks so much for being here this morning, been hoping you might come or come back and join us

And if you're just joining us we're a couple weeks into a series called "Living Hope" as we spend these next ten weeks or so looking at the New Testament book or really letter of 1 Peter

And at the very beginning of 1 Peter we get this profound statement

That answers the question asked by philosophers and poets and nine year old boys throughout the centuries: "what's the meaning of life?"

And since these two sentences answer such an important question that all of us need to wrestle with

last week we started something that we're going to work on throughout this series

We're going to memorize together these two sentences that give us the Bible's answer to one of life's biggest and most important questions

Let's put it up here and read it together:

***<sup>3</sup> 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, <sup>4</sup> and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade***

One more time!

Again, you might not be sure you like or agree with the Bible's answer to this question

or you might be on a journey of figuring out what all of this means for you personally and really

But the Bible's answer to the great question "what's the point of living?" in the midst of all the stuff that plagues us here

Is right here in these couple of sentences: a life of joyful praise and thanksgiving as because in God's great mercy

Jesus was raised from the dead and from that event, we are invited into a new birth into a living hope and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade

We're going to memorize these sentences together so that if you're a Jesus-follower you can have what's true ingrained in your brain

And if you're not yet following Jesus but on a journey of trying to understand what all the fuss is about, here it is!

you're engaging with all the full fuss right here!

Jesus's incredible resurrection from the dead has changed everything--and this is Peter's thesis sentence that he's going to be working off of and applying to everything in really practical and specific ways

Last week we started with that first sentence, totally knocked that out, let's try it together with the words in front of us:

***<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!***

One more time! One more time!

Okay, take it off the screen and here we go one more time!

Now, we're just going to add a small addition here, not a big chunk, you ready? Back on the screen, read it together:

***<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy***

One more time! One more time!

We're stopping there because this tells us something vital and that is what is it that motivates and drives God? What is God like? What is his heart?

And here, Peter is getting ready to launch into this amazing answer to one of life's biggest questions

And the answer on the other side of the question what's the point of living STARTS WITH GOD and GOD'S MERCY—what God has done in his mercy is give us a tremendous reason for living

Read it together again: ***<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy***

Take away the words, one more time! One more time! One more time!

Minds like steel traps!

Last week Peter took the first of several swings at a major theme in his writings and that is suffering

And what Peter did last week is something I kind of wished he'd not do  
he talked about how the hope and the inheritance waiting for us with Jesus in heaven and in the next life propels us through suffering and struggle now

And we talked about how many of us don't really know what to do with this whole concept of heaven and it seems a little fairy-tale-ish and far off

But Peter is adamant that the future rightly understood generates lives today rightly lived

And so we talked about heaven last week and one of the things that I suggested from the Scriptures came as a bit of a surprise to some of you

And that is that heaven is not our final home—*this earth*, redeemed and restored and perfected, is our true and final destiny

For some of you, you've been taught that this world is just going to be blown up and not matter in the end

But that's not the picture we get in the Scriptures of the end of all things

It's kind of like this—I've got three kids, age 6,8 and 10. And about five years ago, we were in a painful stage of child development that I refer to as "The Wiggles" stage—there they are

If you have somehow been spared exposure to the Wiggles, then you at least should be certain that there is a God and that he loves you very, very much.

The Wiggles are a group of men from Australia who have approximately 6 songs that they recycle over and over and over again  
and they sing and dance to and do these obnoxious little sketches to

Take every grating song or character you can imagine and put them in a blender and you'd come out with the Wiggles  
and somehow in some evil lab the producers of this show have created with the Wiggles the magic elixir that makes 5-year-olds swoon with joy

They are a global phenomenon--at one point they were Australia's number one export

And at one point, they were my kids number one crush—we would listen to the cd's in the car and at home, we'd watch the videos over and over and over again

I would wake up and all five of their songs would be playing on repeat in my brain—I'd be in the shower involuntarily singing songs about cold spaghetti and mashed bananas

And I don't know exactly how or when it happened, but somehow, slowly, we extricated ourselves from the painful Wiggle stage and moved into a much better stage

In fact, I think at around 7 or 8 my son pretty much arrived because that was when we started reading the Chronicles of Narnia series.

Take a moment to soak that in—to move from the Wiggles to the Chronicles of Narnia is LIGHTYEARS of development that happened in just about 30 months

It's the personal maturity equivalent of moving from eating liquid prunes for dinner to surf and turf.

Now, of course I loved my kids even when they were stuck in the Wiggles stage, but it was a stage that I was relieved to be done with!

And we've moved on to bigger and better and meatier and more meaningful and wonderful things now that we've left the Wiggles behind!

The New Testament describes this world in much the same way  
we're stuck in a stage developmentally where pain, sin and death are the primary markers of this world

And unlike my kids, simply the passing of time will NOT fix this.  
God had to re-introduce his life into this stalled out world stuck in sin and death

That's what we talked about with Easter, how God ripped off the lid of this closed system and entered into our world to redeem and heal it

And what the Scriptures say will happen in the end is that this present age will pass, this present time where the world is corrupted by pain and death and sin

THAT will pass away, thank goodness, like you hope some of the stages of your kids will pass away

But just like you love your kid even when they're in a stage that you'd rather they just pass right through

God loves the world that he created, and so he's going to come and do something new here in this world to end the current awkward and painful age of sin and death

And move this earth on to the full maturity and beauty and goodness and strength that he designed it for

Now if this is all intriguing or new to you, this week I ordered what I think is the best book on the subject, a book called “Surprised by Hope” by NT Wright.

Wright helps us to understand what God actually wants to do here with this world and what difference it makes for how we live here—that’ll be available for sale at the Resource table

And as we continue to read, Peter is going to address this question: if we’re living and are surrounded by a world that’s still stuck developmentally in sin and death

If we’re stuck in a world that can’t get past the Wiggles, and yet we’ve come to see that there’s a bigger, richer, more substantial world that we were made for

Then how do we live out of that reality while still living here in this world today?

Because childhood development folks will tell you that from our earliest days we learn by copying, by mimicking

we learn to talk by copying sounds spoken to us, we learn how to relate to each other in large part by copying what we see all around us

We learn by copying, but the Scriptures are saying that this world as it is right now is not a copy-worthy place

this is not a reliable source of information for how to live life rightly

So Peter is going to call them and us to living a different way than this world—to obedience to God that is totally contrary to the way that we see much of this world living

And that only makes sense and is only good news

if we understand that this world isn’t how we were made to live, it’s not how things were supposed to be or will be again

And if we understand that what Jesus has come to do is usher us into a new kingdom that is actually more true to who we were made to be

That life with him and in his ways is actually ALWAYS better--ALWAYS

because it’s hooked into more eternal and more permanent realities than this world which is passing through a painful phase

that will one day be replaced with the full flowering of maturity and beauty and strength that God designed IT for and US for

Open to 1 Peter 1, if no Bible on the screen, if don't own a Bible, check out the Resource table

***13 Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. 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."***<sup>[a]</sup>

A number of years ago I hit a major set-back in my ministry

I was working as a campus minister at UNC and had launched a major set of initiatives and outreaches that I thought was going to have major impact on campus and the direction of the ministry

But the whole thing flopped miserably. And I was completely undone and I ended up taking a couple month sabbatical to re-group

And during this time I met with a very wise man who was gifted at listening and helping people understand both themselves and the Lord's work in their lives

And I was telling him that this most recent struggle fit a larger pattern in my life: I'd get super-amped up about an idea or a project that I thought was going to change everything

And then it would not be all that it was cracked up to be, sometimes it went okay, sometimes it flopped miserably like that most recent one had

But the core of the ideas and the passion and the desires were actually often really good impulses—it was stuff that I thought God wanted to do and it was actually stuff he DID want to do

and what I kept seeing as I looked back over my work was often the next year we'd dial back the hype and the energy

but we'd move and head in the same direction—a little more carefully, a little more even-keeled

and often we'd see exactly what we wanted to see happen the year before, just often in slightly different ways

He asked me, "How would you describe the difference in your heart and mind between year one and year two?"

I thought a second and said: "I'm soberer year two. I'm less amped, less wrapped up in my own plans and dreams, more humble and more prayerful and centered. Yeah, more sober-minded."

He said, "Great word—because of course the opposite of sober is intoxicated. And of course, the root word in intoxicated is toxic.

You're struggles come from the fact that you're introducing something toxic into your soul that distracts you from the Lord, gets you worked up around the wrong things

And the key work for you as a leader will be to remain sober-minded and centered and fixed on Jesus in the midst of all of your big dreams and plans and visions."

It was one of those conversations where someone just took what to me felt like a big jumbled mess part of my life and with a couple sentences made everything become suddenly clear.

***[13 Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.]***

Peter here starts his call to action to his readers with the charge to have minds alert and sober—a sober-mindedness that is NOT intoxicated or distracted with anything else that would become TOXIC in our lives

In MY life, because I tend to get over-amped about many things, my issue with intoxication is that I crush on something and get overly impassioned about it

And that passion and zeal is intoxicating in that it distracts me from setting my hope on the grace that is to be brought to me when Jesus comes

And for some of you, you're like me

you tend to get intoxicated and distracted from Jesus by something that grabs a hold of your heart and imagination that you're going after—a dream!

A job, a house, a boat, a goal, a dream, a relationship, a financial situation

And most of those things aren't bad things

It's just that chasing after that thing is what keeps you from being alert and sober-minded, with hearts and minds set on the grace to be brought to us when Jesus Christ is revealed

And some of you, like me, have to walk the journey of not getting overly wrapped up in chasing after what could be good things in the wrong ways.

But of course, intoxication can work both ways—it can also mean something that dulls us, or numbs us, that causes us to disengage

And for some of us, the call from Peter here to be alert and fully sober is the call to put away behaviors that numb you, dull you, and lull you to sleep and lethargy

When we're living for or through movies, t.v. shows, Facebook feeds, food or drink, movie stars—

these are all things but out of their right place and given too much centrality in our lives they can intoxicate us,

They can dull us and lull us into thinking that we're really living when in actuality we've exchanged real life for a thin and poor excuse for one.

I want to suggest to us that each of us is tempted to become intoxicated by things here in this world in one of two ways:

If you're a dreamer you're tempted to overly-hook into something ahead that you're chasing after

OR if you're a little more laid back and casual you're tempted to check out in a numbing, dulling kind of way

Peter here calls us to a mental alertness and sober-ness

that for almost all of us demands that we either put something away entirely or in the very least that we do a radical re-organization of our lives

My question for you this morning: what tends to intoxicate you? What are the things that distract you from the grace of Jesus?

And the real question: what are you going to do with that?

Because Peter is going to call you and I out here:

***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."***<sup>[a]</sup>

Don't do what you used to do

AND don't look around you for cues as to how to live  
this world is stuck in arrested development and is not a reliable guide to joy or real meaning or purpose any more.

Look to Jesus and imitate him: that requires putting away the stuff that dulls, numbs or distracts or displaces Jesus in your affections  
in your hearts or minds or imaginations or will

Peter goes on, so let's go with him:

***17 Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.***

I've had great bosses b/c they've been honest and judged my work impartially...

God judges everyone impartially, even those of us who call him Father—our work here and the works of our lives will be judged, it will be exposed for what it is

One of the commentators I read this week said that this is about being disciplined during our lifetimes

Sometimes I've done something wrong and received the consequences of my actions or God's disciplined me because of it

I don't get out of discipline just because God calls me his child, in fact, all the more so do I get disciplined BECAUSE God's my good Father

So we live out our lives in a reverent, holy fear—not an anxious fear like God's going to send down a lightning bolt if I do one mis-step

One old dead guy commenting on this passage says this:

“This is not a cowardly fear but one that elevates the mind for it drowns out all lower fears and begets fortitude and courage”

You know what he means by lower fears, don't you?

Fear of not being safe, fears of bad things happening to people we love  
fears of not being strong enough, not being man or woman enough  
fear of failure  
fear of the future, fear of not getting picked, fear of not being loved,  
fears of not having enough money or time or energy or not getting the things  
that we think we need or want

Many of those are reasonable fears, right? You're not completely making that stuff up—that happens to people! Maybe you've already had it happen to you!

But when THOSE fears reign in our hearts, what do they do to us? They over-run us, don't they?

They either cause us to live cowering, hiding, defensive lives

OR they cause us to be aggressive and anxious and striving, this constant drivenness and vigilance that's just exhausting

But what if there's a greater fear that can quiet all those fears and actually move you from being more stupid and anxious and worried to making you more brave?

What if there's a holy fear of the Lord that rather than making you more timid made you more brave, made you more bold

that silenced all those lesser fears that would un-do you and cause you to mis-fire and act out of the wrong energy

And instead, what if THIS fear actually called forth THE BEST parts of you, the GREATEST, most bold, most generous, most audacious, most patient, most fierce you that God has put there

The Scriptures declare that the righteous are as bold as lions! What if that boldness starts with this ONE GREAT FEAR that drowns out all our lower fears?

***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 ancestors, 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.***

My kids have been studying Thomas Jefferson and that whole era of American history

And recently we listened to a book on cd in the car titled “Mr. Jefferson’s Sons”

It’s a fictional re-telling of what life was like as one of the slave children that Thomas Jefferson had with some of the slave women on Monticello

And some of the most gut-wrenching and heart-wrenching scenes are the parts where family members have been pried apart and sold to different plantations

And the slave family members are trying their best to scrape together enough money to buy back their own children or brothers or sisters

Slavery was an awful, terrible way of life that people were born into and completely destroyed lives and families

And it cost a lot of money to get OUT of the system, to be set free

Peter here moves to slave-trade language and says “You were once stuck IN SLAVERY: an awful, terrible way of life—a slave to pain, sin, and death”

That’s what defines this world as it currently is, stuck in arrested development, and you are a human being that’s been raised up in this system

You were born a slave stuck in that system and you were going to die in that system.

But now, someone has intervened. Someone has paid the ransom price to redeem you and buy your life out of that system

You were bought out of slavery. Not with silver or gold but with someone else’s death and blood.

Peter draws on his Jewish background and the sacrificial system of the Old Testament where people were required to offer up a spotless lamb for the forgiveness of sins

And he says this is the perfect, spotless lamb who died for you—Jesus, the perfect sacrifice who died and was raised back from the dead

In Jesus Christ, we are no longer slaves! We have been REDEEMED, BOUGHT out of that slavery

The gut-wrenching story of children sold off in slavery and separated from their true Parent has been reversed at great cost to God.

We have been bought out of slavery to sin and death by the blood of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. Because of this, we are no longer separated from our true family  
That's the good news of Christianity

But now that we're brought into this new home, which is our true home but one that we've been separated from we need to learn how to live here

And like we said earlier, nothing in this world is going to fit with our true, new home, because this world is stuck in the same system that we've just been bought out of

So Peter goes ahead and tells us how to live here:

***22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth***

[so as his original readers have walked in the new ways of this new family, this new home, they've purified themselves]

***so that you have sincere love for each other***

[that's the goal of coming home, that God might re-order and re-organize our loves, give us new love for God and for each other, sincere love for one another is the sign of true Christianity]

***love one another deeply, from the heart.***[ in other words—keep moving in that loving each other direction, continue to cultivate that, lean into that!]

***23 For you have been born again*** [this is the second time Peter's talked about this re-birth, new birth idea, that's in the verse that we're all memorizing together],

***not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. 24 For,***

***"All people 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 endures forever."***[c]

***And this is the word that was preached to you.***

There's a theme in Peter of what's passing doesn't matter as much as what is permanent.

Throughout the whole book, watch as he compares and contrasts things that are passing to things that are never going to end

We touched on this last week—remember? What was this (pointer finger up)? That's our suffering. When you put your finger up in the air, you're touching something: air!

And it's real, there's air molecules and dust particles in the air, and they're really there, but they're really, really temporary and passing.

THAT, says the Scripture, is what our suffering is, especially compared to this: [stomp] what was that?

That's our inheritance, that's what's waiting for us in Christ, with Christ, the hope and grace that we'll receive

That's more real, more permanent and that's what goes on forever

Just like this floor connects to the sidewalk that connects to the parking lot that connects to a road that connects to a couple of other roads that connects with other roads and other roads

and on and on for billions of miles of road that we could never explore in our lifetimes even if we did nothing else

That's what is lasting, that's what is eternal. That's what matters. That's what's waiting for us in Jesus

This week, when you face struggles, frustrations, hardships of any kind, just point your finger and remind yourself that in the grand scheme of things, this is that struggle, that hardship, that's passing

And then stomp your foot—that's the eternity waiting for you in Christ Jesus, that's the more permanent thing

And here, Peter is saying that not only is our inheritance permanent, but the word of the Lord, the good news of Jesus buying us out of slavery, that's permanent, too

And it plays out in very specific and practical ways in our lives as Peter continues:

***2 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. <sup>2</sup> Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that***

***by it you may grow up in your salvation, <sup>3</sup> now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.***

Meet the final member of the kirk house, Kitty: don't blame us for the name, he was a used cat and he came with the name

I'm going to beg the patience of those of you who heard me use this illustration about 18 months ago, it's just the best way I know how to illustrate this

Two summers ago when we first moved to Chatham County, Chatham decided to give us a nice present: for the first time ever Kitty got fleas

Kitty was at the time a completely indoor cat, we have no idea how he got the fleas, we only know that they were EVERYWHERE

Those fleas didn't belong in our house—maybe if he was a completely outside cat fleas would just be a part of the territory

But he was an inside cat and the fleas didn't belong on him inside our house!

He was miserable, we were miserable, so we declared war v. fleas in our house: baking powder, vacuuming constantly, gave kitty a flea bath, etc.

We were finally rescued by Linda Sands at Dogwood vet clinic who told us that the only way to get rid of fleas for real was to go chemical

So one weekend we were going out of town, we went nuclear on those fleas, declaring chemical warfare v. these out of place fleas.

And we finally had the victory!

What Peter is saying here in this passage is

“YOU WERE once slaves to the things of this world BUT NOW you are in the family of God AND WHAT THAT MEANS IS you've got to get rid of these fleas.”

They belonged to your old way of life, maybe when you were stuck in slavery to sin and death, maybe then those things were just a part of the territory

BUT YOU have been REDEEMED, bought out of that old way of life, out of the ways of a world whose development has become completely arrested and stuck in shadow

AND NOW you live in your true Father's household, you've been reunited with him, and the old ways of life just have to go!

And Peter helps us by naming the fleas: ***malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander***

These are all relationally damaging behaviors—this is the opposite of loving one another with a pure heart, which he just told us to do earlier

First flea to get rid of: MALICE: I just hate you. You think that there's any hatred left in our world today?

This week, the owner of the Los Angeles Clippers named Donald Sterling made disturbingly racist statements that were recorded and then made public.

The NBA basically banned him from every participating in the NBA ever again. He had his MALICE exposed publicly and he got publicly and appropriately disciplined for it

But let me ask you—as right as it was that he got banned from the NBA for life for what he said, does that change a racist heart?

Donald Sterling needs someone or something from outside of his heart to come into his heart to change his heart and free him from malice, racial malice, just like you and I do.

Next flea to get rid of DECEIT

Deceit is creating and propagating darkness for personal advantage instead of being agents and creators of light

Anyone deceive anyone this week for your own advantage?

Anyone exaggerate a story, cover something up, not be 100% truthful on taxes or in a report or conversation with someone to protect yourself, further yourself, make you look better or sound better than you actually are?

Peter here calls us to walk in the light in our dealings with all people, to push back the dark with the light of being a truthful people

Next flea to get rid of: HYPOCRISY

I say I believe or am about one thing but then go and live a completely different life

The word hypocrisy originally comes from the theater where people put on a mask and pretended to be something or someone different on stage

One of the biggest complaints we get about the church is that church people are hypocrites

And all I can say is "GUILTY AS CHARGED!" I do not live a 100% consistent life.

There is a gap between who I say that I am and what I say I believe and how I behave in many areas of my life

And this is a major issue for us in the church, in any church, but I think the reality is that this isn't just a church problem is it?

Does anyone know **anyone** who lives 100% consistently with what they say they believe?

Of course, that doesn't excuse the behavior, Peter here is telling Jesus people: "you've got to kill this flea!" This flea does not belong in the household of God.

ENVY: I once heard someone say that holding a grudge and unforgiveness is in essence saying "YOU OWE ME"

You hurt me, and I won't forgive you until you make it up to me somehow—YOU OWE ME

ENVY, on the other hand, is saying "God owes me."

Why do they get that car?

Why do they have perfect kids?

why do they have that size house?

why does the boss like them more than me?

Why did they get all the talent or good looks or opportunities?

Why did they make it into that social circle that I didn't make it into?

Do those voices every crop up into your head from time to time or is it just me?

Here's a question: Who are we complaining to?

Very rarely do we go up to someone who has something that we want and say "YOU OWE ME that thing"

You might HATE that person, now we're back up to that whole malice thing, but seldom do we feel like that person owes us something

So who are we complaining to? Even if you don't believe in God, to be envious is to complain to God that someone else has gotten something that you want or think you deserve

ENVY: God owes me. Fortunately or unfortunately for you and me, there's no such language anywhere in the Scriptures

If anyone was owed anything by God, it was Jesus, the only perfect human being who ever lived

And you know kind of amenities and accessories and props he had? Nothing.

This flea is the result of the illusion of self-righteousness that we bring with us into God's family that needs to be done away with

It doesn't belong in this house

SLANDER: slander is using words to destroy someone else in order to make me look good

Slander is taking the great, great gift of words and leveraging them for strictly personal gain by destroying someone else's reputation or shredding their character

That flea doesn't belong in God's house

All these fleas must go, Peter says, because we've been bought OUT of slavery, bought out of this world stuck in permanent developmental stagnation around sin and death

This might have made sense in that old world, but you're in your new home now, and these things don't belong here any more!

And in all of this it's critical to remember that we're not talking about entrance requirements.

These people are ALREADY CHRISTIANS!

It doesn't say you WILL BE redeemed AFTER you get rid of these things, it doesn't say IF you get rid of these behaviors THEN you'll be bought out of slavery

The Scriptures tell us the good news that we don't have to clean ourselves up before God can love us—he already loves us, even with our fleas!

He loves us no matter what you've done to whomever you've done it to or with—he loves you and invites you to come home regardless

God does not wait for us to get our acts together to love us—God does not wait for you to get YOUR act together to love YOU

HE LOVES YOU, PERIOD! When you and I were flea-infested, sin-loving people, the Father sends His Son Jesus to die to buy us out from death and slavery

Jesus goes through death and hell to buy you back, he pursues you and pursues and pursues you every moment of every day of your life to bring you home

And once he's finally gotten you back home to the family where you belong, once you're safely home and within the loving and safe and rich and gracious home of your good Father

THEN he says: I love you too much to let these fleas keep having their way with you; they don't belong on you to begin with and they definitely don't belong here in my home, in my kingdom, with my people

It's time to kill these fleas.

I'm going to give you a minute here to do some business with the Lord

This morning we've taken communion and celebrated the gift of grace and mercy that has REDEEMED us and BOUGHT US out of slavery

And reunited us with our long-lost Father who went to great lengths to buy us back from sin and death

And for some of you, that's the part of the story that you're still getting your mind around.

You just need to talk with God about what he's done for you in Jesus and decide if he's telling you the truth and if you're going to take him up on his offer to come home

Others of us, we're already home, but we've got some fleas to deal with. So I'm going to give you a minute to simply confess your sins to the Lord and ask him to pluck off whatever sin comes to mind as we're talking about this

And then we're going to pray a prayer of confession together out loud  
praying something together helps those of us who haven't yet developed fluency in knowing how to pray in this kind of way

And it can be helpful for those of us who have been at this a long time and who need some fresh insights into how to pray.

So I want to read this to you now, so that when we pray it together you can have engaged with it before hand and know what it is you're saying—it might even help you during the minute of silence I'm going to give you:

Heavenly Father.

we praise you for adopting us as your children  
and making us heirs of eternal life  
in your Son Jesus Christ,  
who has freed us from our sins by his blood.

Yet we still fail to love you with all our heart,  
or serve you as we ought.

We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed; by what we have done and what we have left undone.

Forgive our offences, we pray,  
and make us clean,

give us power over all our sin  
that we may continue to live as redeemed members of Christ,  
in whom alone is forgiveness and salvation. **Amen.**