

"Escape"

Text: 2 Peter 1:2-11

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours in Christ Jesus, our Savior, and may you never know a moment's doubt that the debt of your sins has already been paid in full, and that through faith in Jesus you have been rescued from an eternity of unspeakable torment. Amen.

Dear Fellow Servants of Jesus Christ:

"Escape" is admittedly a rather vague sermon title. The word itself can be a noun or a verb. It can be used as a command or in reference to a vacation. It is most often used to describe something good, as in some sort of release from captivity or danger.

This morning I'd like you to think of *escape* first in this context: In 1968 a 20 year old student at Emory College, Barbara Mackle, was kidnapped from her dorm room, carried to an abandoned, overgrown homestead northeast of Atlanta, GA and buried alive in a coffin-sized plywood box, several feet underground. The small light she had been given failed almost immediately, so she spent the next four days and three nights in utter darkness, unable to fully extend her legs and with the ceiling of her tomb just a few inches above her face. Her only connection to the world above her tomb was a small air tube.

This is the sort of escape – or *need for escape* - that we are talking about. The connection and application to our text for this morning will become more apparent as we hear of another harrowing, life and death need for escape – our own. That part of God's Word that will instruct us this morning is the inspired Word of God recorded in 2 Peter, the First Chapter:

ESV 2 Peter 1:2-11 *May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. ³ ¶ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. ⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness*

with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. ¹⁰ Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. ¹¹ For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This is God's Word. That we might not simply hear these words and forget them, but rather be strengthened, comforted, and grow through their study, so we pray: **"Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth."** Amen.

One of the greatest obstacles that prevents a greater appreciation for the gospel of Jesus Christ is our dismal lack of appreciation for the predicament in which we found ourselves, and the escape that was necessary if we were to avoid an eternity of unspeakable torment in hell. This, therefore, has to be our starting point this morning. My prayer is that no one will leave this service this morning without a greater understanding of, and appreciation for, both the horror of our imprisonment and the absolutely incredible, miraculous escape in which you and I have participated.

Obviously we can draw certain comparisons and contrasts between that poor woman buried in a plywood box and our own terrifying predicament. While she was held by human captors, we were held by Satan himself. Where she was powerless to overpower her captors; we had no will or strength even to resist, let alone to escape on our own. In fact where most prisoners can find something to do to work toward their own escape, we could do absolutely nothing to work toward our own release – there was simply nothing available for us even to try.

Stop for a moment and contemplate the true horror of your own dilemma, your own incarceration or imprisonment. You absolutely had to escape, and yet you were absolutely powerless to take even the simplest steps to secure your freedom. In fact the harder you tried, the more impossibly tangled you became in your own sinfulness.

Hopefully we are beginning to get a much better picture of the helplessness and sheer terror of our captivity in unbelief. But it gets even worse. Not only were we buried and utterly helpless in our own box of unbelief, we had absolutely no sense or idea of the danger we were in. None whatsoever. Satan is a master at that – at convincing his captives that what they really have is freedom, at imagining that all is well.

Can you imagine any scenario, any situation in which that woman buried in that box would actually *want to be there*? Any situation where when rescuers came to free her she would wave them off with an *"I'm fine, thanks anyway."* That, however, is unbelief. That was you. Those who live in true freedom through faith in Jesus Christ could recognize the terror of your situation; you could not.

Understand that it is absolutely necessary that you and I come to terms with our former situation, because it is really not until you come to terms with such horror, helplessness, apathy and impending calamity that you can begin to appreciate the impact of the words of our text that describe your release, your escape: ***"His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire."***

Savor these words. Study them. Wrap yourself in them. Meditate on them until the full force of their message envelops your very soul. What is it that brought about our escape? Peter tells us that it was through ***"his precious and very great promises"*** that we have been released from the prison of our own unbelief. This is purest, sweetest gospel. While our God certainly delights in obedience, we were powerless to supply the sort of obedience that was demanded for our release - our escape from the prison of our own sinfulness. The Law demanded *perfect* obedience in every way and at all times. Since we could never supply such perfection, we needed someone else to provide us with an escape. But by what means? Our text teaches us that it was by ***"precious and very great promises."*** The ***promises*** mentioned here stand in stark contrast to the "do it yourself" mentality of work righteousness. All but the Christian religion are based on an "earn your own way into eternity" mindset. All but true Christianity teach that *you* must provide your own escape through your own efforts. Christianity alone teaches that our only means of escape is through faith in the

promise that a Savior has done for us what we could not and would not do for ourselves. By keeping the law perfectly in our place, Jesus carried us to freedom by earning the forgiveness for our sins through his death on the cross. Your escape has been accomplished by Jesus Christ. His perfect life and innocent death dug you out of your tomb of unbelief and set you free. Jesus Christ was our only hope, and he did for us what no one else could ever do.

While this is certainly reason enough to thrill to the message of our text, don't miss the other incredible proclamations found here. Here we also learn that not only has Jesus made a way of escape for every single prisoner, by ***"his own glory and excellence"*** he has also made us ***"partakers of the divine nature."***

I'm not sure we can come up with a parallel to this truth in the secular world. Nothing on earth can even begin to compare to the change that has already taken place in every single Christian in connection with our great escape. Through faith in the promise of the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ, we not only escape eternal damnation, we are made ***"partakers of the divine nature."*** That means that we have been made brothers and co-heirs together with the One who rescued us. It refers not only to the new man that has been created in us, but also to the fact that we will one day share in the glory of heaven. God now lives *in us*. Having been rescued from the box of our own unbelief, we are now different people than when we were in that box.

Simply put, these words assure every single Christian that not only have we been lifted above the filth and perversion of this world, we will also reign with Christ Jesus in all eternity. What powerful, comforting, invigorating and uplifting facts are here revealed to us. Thanks be to God, who gives us such a victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is where we are now, but what about the future? Could you imagine anyone, having been rescued from the unspeakable horror of being buried alive, ever wanting to be returned to that dreadful place and condition? I could – on Judgment Day. Compared to hell, being buried alive would look pretty good. That's exactly what Jesus was talking about when he said that on Judgment Day the godless would be begging the mountains to fall on them, and for the hills to cover them. No one would ask for such a thing unless the alternative, the only other option, was unspeakably worse.

Peter is well aware that, as ridiculous as it may sound, Christians are nonetheless very capable of foolishness on an even greater scale. Having been freed from the devil's dungeons, Christians down through history have inexplicably returned to the very pit of despair from which they had been rescued. How could such a thing happen?

In most cases, the faith that was created in their hearts – the very thing that brought about their escape – that same faith was abused and starved, literally to death. Such things don't tend to happen all at once; they occur gradually – almost imperceptibly. It usually begins with a sense of apathy and complacency in the heart of a child of God. Sin is tolerated and allowed to eat away at our souls. Church attendance becomes sporadic, and then ends altogether. The tender plant that is a new Christian faith is never watered with the Word of God. The Christian does not grow in his knowledge and understanding of God's Word, and he begins to wither and fade. Before he knows it, he finds himself right back in the box – and is inexplicably fine with that.

There is no doubt that we are saved by faith; yet the point that the Holy Spirit drives home to us in the second half of our text is the terrible fact that Christians can surrender again to Satan. They then find themselves entombed all over again in that place of utter despair and hopelessness. In fact there is no greater tragedy than when a human soul, once rescued by the Holy Spirit through saving faith, is recaptured by the devil because of the Christian's spiritual negligence and apathy. Clearly the Holy Spirit does not want such a thing to ever happen, let alone happen regularly. He therefore gave us these amazing words of wisdom in our text: ***"Make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."*** We are then given an astonishing promise that you and I don't want to miss: ***"Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall."*** This is actually a spectacular promise from our God. In effect he is telling us: *"You want to keep from ever becoming entombed again? Here's how you access the power that guarantees that you will never lose the freedom you now have."*

It is certainly no secret to anyone here that we are not saved by what we do, but by faith alone in Jesus Christ. So also our text assures us: ***"For***

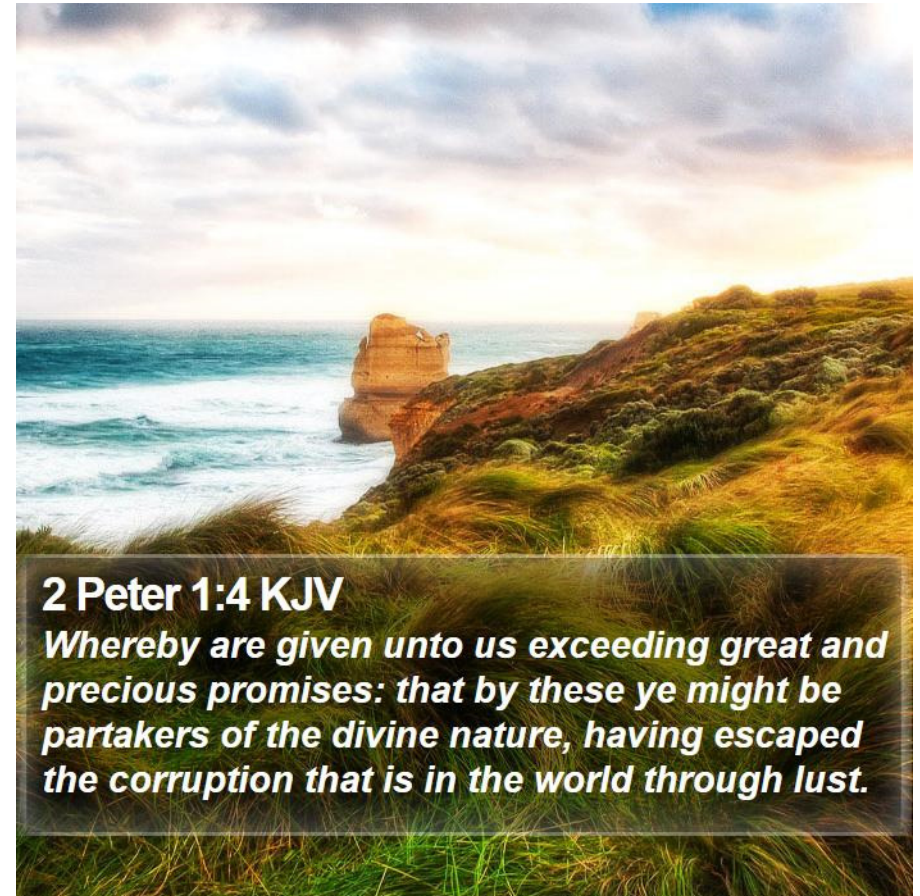
in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Our salvation is a gift from our God, yet how foolish to reject the wisdom and encouragement of our God regarding the care and maintenance of the saving faith that he has created in us. How foolish to risk recapture and entombment by abusing the means of grace that have been provided for us by our Savior God.

God grant to each of us this morning a full and complete understanding of the horror of the captivity that was once ours, the grace to thrill to the escape that has been provided for every single one of us by God's undeserved love through faith in Jesus Christ alone, astonishment at the change that has been worked in us, and the humble wisdom to make use of the power he has placed at our disposal to preserve us in the freedom we now have. Amen.

ESV (**Exodus 14:13-14, 21-28**) And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. ¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent." ²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. ²² And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. ²³ The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. ²⁴ And in the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, ²⁵ clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians." ²⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen." ²⁷ So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. ²⁸ The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained.

ESV (**Acts 16:22-31**) The crowd joined in attacking (Paul and Silas), and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. ²³ And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. ²⁴ Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. ²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, ²⁶ and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. ²⁷ When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." ²⁹ And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

ESV (**2 Peter 1:2-11**) May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. ³ ¶ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. ⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. ¹⁰ Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. ¹¹ For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



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Michael Roehl, Pastor

The 14th Sunday after Pentecost – August 25, 2024

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 777 (*Brown Hymnal*)
"Amazing Grace"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (*Brown Hymnal*)

The Scripture Lessons: (*Printed on the back page of this bulletin*)

The First Lesson: (*Exodus 14:13-14, 21-28*) The general theme for our readings this morning is "escape." Our first reading tells not only of a spectacular, miraculous escape from certain death but of the need to trust our God, not our eyes or reason. In the eyes of the Children of Israel, there was no possible escape from death at the hands of the pursuing Egyptian army. They failed to consider their God – with whom nothing is impossible. Never underestimate either the power or the divine love of the God who sacrificed his Son to rescue us.

Psalm 30 (Supplement page 34) (*Brown Hymnal*) (*Read responsively*)

The Second Lesson: (*Acts 16:22-31*) To prevent rampant corruption, Roman law directed that jailers had to suffer the punishment of any prisoner that escaped from their custody. Though God had provided another miraculous escape for Paul and Silas, they remained in the jail out of concern for the jailer. They realized that physical imprisonment was as nothing compared to the spiritual imprisonment of the unbelieving jailer, to whom they offered true freedom through their gospel witness.

The Confession of Faith -

Nicene Creed – (*Projected on Screens*)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 778 (*Brown Hymnal*)
"Grace has a Thrilling Sound"

The Sermon – Text: 2 Peter 1:2-11 (*Printed on the back page of this bulletin*)
"Escape"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Prayer followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Communion Hymn – 784 (*Brown Hymnal*)
"Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me"

The Preparation for Holy Communion (*Brown Hymnal page 17*)

The Distribution

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn -783 (*Brown Hymnal*)
"Jesus, Shepherd of the Sheep"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors worshipping with us this morning and invite you to join us each Sunday at this time. We are glad you are here!
To our Visitors seeking Holy Communion – In obedience to God's Word, we practice "Close Communion." This practice stresses both our concern for others, not wanting anyone to receive the sacrament to their harm (1 Cor. 11:27-30) and the importance of unity in confession and faith (1 Cor. 10:16-17). For this reason we ask that anyone who has not established this unity through membership in a CLC congregation please meet with the pastor to discuss this Scriptural doctrine before communing. This is a practice that we follow out of love and concern for you, and out of obedience to God's Word, not in judgment of anyone's Christian faith.

Attendance – Sunday (19) Average (42)

This Week at St. Paul:

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| Today | -10:00 a.m. | – Worship Service w/Holy Communion |
| | -11:15 a.m. | – Fellowship Hour |
| | -3:00 p.m. | – Opening Service at ILC |
| Next Sunday | -10:00 a.m. | – Worship Service |
| | -11:00 a.m. | – Fellowship Hour |

CLC News – Pastor Sam Rodebaugh is considering the call to St. John's of Okabena, MN. Grace of Sleepy Eye has called Pastor Zachary Sippert. The opening service at Immanuel Lutheran High School and College is scheduled for this afternoon at 3:00 p.m. in the fieldhouse.

Church Council Notes – Five Council members, plus the Pastor, were present for the meeting on August 21st. Treasurer Mantz reported that July offerings were \$1,500 short of budgeted needs and are now \$4,076 short of budgeted needs YTD. The General Fund is now -\$540 and money is being borrowed from other funds to pay operating expenses. Sunday school teachers are needed for the coming school year. Trustee Coordinator Johnson updated the church work list. An upgrade is needed for both the office computer and the projection laptop. Outreach shirts have been ordered. Since the quota for women has not been reached, men are also now invited on the Women's Retreat riverboat dinner cruise (cost is \$20). The next Council meeting is scheduled for September 15th.

Sunday School Teachers Needed – We are again looking for volunteers to teach Sunday school. This year we plan to offer two Sunday school levels plus a Bible History class for confirmation-age students. Please see Pastor Roehl if you would be willing and able to serve in this way.