

3Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By God's great mercy we have been given new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4and an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, 9for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Nathan, please come into the kitchen for dinner. "Why?" Nathan, it's bath night. "Why?" Nathan, don't lay on the dog. "Why?" All day long, day in and day out, it's the same question "Why?" I try to offer him straight forward, simple answers like "You need to come into the kitchen for dinner because the kitchen is where we eat." But still the "whys" persist.

I recently went on a parenting website<sup>1</sup> featuring a well-known child psychotherapist. He responds to a mother's question about her daughter's constant "Why"-ing. "Your daughter is doing nothing wrong –she's being a normal child . . . At this age, children are very curious and they are also acquiring greater facility with language. The two combine to result in many "Why" questions and frequent chatting about trivial, day-to-day realities."

When do the whys stop? I ask not because I want them to—well, at least most of the time I appreciate my son's growing curiosity and appreciation of the world around him. I ask because I wonder when I stopped asking why. At some point, I began to take the answers for granted and expected others to do the same. And while I still wonder to myself about things, I rarely ask why, at least not out loud.

But this morning, and indeed for the next few Sundays, I'm taking Nathan's lead and I'm asking why. For instance, this morning, I'm remembering back to last Sunday and asking the question—Why does the resurrection matter? Why does it matter that the grave is empty and the Lord has risen. We proclaimed it last week—more than once. He is Risen! He is Risen, indeed! Most of you were here, you know we said it. We got dressed up, had fancy meals, celebrated the day. But why? Why does the resurrection matter? I think we'd all agree that it does, but how often do we press ourselves or each other to explain why it matters. Why does this central event in our

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<sup>1</sup> [www.medhelp.org/forums/ChildBehavior/messages/30338.html](http://www.medhelp.org/forums/ChildBehavior/messages/30338.html)

lives, indeed it could be argued that this is the central event in the history of the world as we know it, why does it matter?

According to the author of this morning's pastoral epistle—a letter written by early church founders to help believers understand and articulate the faith—the resurrection matters because “we have been given new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading . . .” Wait, what was that? An inheritance? New birth and living hope—typical church talk. But what's this about an inheritance? Is that why we sign those red books each Sunday? Quick—hand it back, I forgot to note where to send the check.

Obviously the inheritance we're talking about isn't grandma's china, the cottage on the lake, or the balance of a bank account. The inheritance that matters to us because of the resurrection is the inheritance that is ours through God's great mercy. This inheritance is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. It is an inheritance of love and life to last for all time.

This inheritance is imperishable. It is enduring, eternal, never-ending, forever. We've all heard of people in this life who have gone through the money in an inheritance like my dogs go through kibbles in their bowls. It seems like I've just fed them and in less than a minute, all the food is gone. So too with humans who—stunned by the reality of having a fortune, can't help

themselves from spending and within a few years, the money is gone and they find they have less than they did before they received the inheritance in the first place.

That can't happen with the inheritance that is ours through God's mercy. This inheritance is being kept in heaven for us. And while our full inheritance is there—the inheritance of perfect union with God and all creatures—kept in a heavenly bank vault if you will, we are, even now, enjoying some of this inheritance. It's like we can live off part of a trust fund from this inheritance as we face the living of these days.

Indeed, some days I feel like the only thing that is keeping me going is the promise of a heavenly inheritance and the bits and pieces of it I glimpse from day to day. A lot of days I especially need reminders of God's forgiveness, grace, and mercy that are part of that inheritance. There was one such day earlier this month when I made a big mistake. I hate to make mistakes. When I make a big mistake, I stew about it for days. And when the mistake involves hurting someone else's feelings—well then, that just about puts me over the edge. I wonder how I could have been so thoughtless, so stupid, so selfish. I wonder what is wrong with me. I contemplate quitting my job because I think you'd all be better off without me. I think I should just stay home because my friends would be better off without me. I lay awake at night wondering how I could have messed up like that. But then somehow, in the midst of my self-centered and often self-serving despair, the Spirit shows me a bit of my inheritance. Sometimes it comes in the words of a friend, sometimes it comes from scripture, sometimes it comes from the feeling of awe I get as I watch

the evening sky turn from a soft blue to a soaring pink to a regal purple to a blue as dark as night, so dark that the silhouettes of pine trees are barely visible. And in those moments in which the Spirit acts as a trustee of my inheritance from God, doling out little bits of the imperishable inheritance, I am reminded that we all fall short of the glory of God—that I am not the first to mess up nor will I be the last—and that whatever it is that I have done or left undone—God’s already over it, so I can be too. This inheritance is imperishable, enduring, everlasting—and so too is the love of God, the peace of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Thanks be to God.

Along with being imperishable, this inheritance is also undefiled. There is no power in heaven or on earth that can taint, sully, or tarnish it. It is, in a word, perfect. This is so unlike many aspects of our earthly lives that become tainted, sullied, or tarnished. That job we thought would be the perfect job becomes tainted when a boss is unreasonable, the work tedious, or the mission unfulfilling. The relationship we thought would last a lifetime becomes sullied by a cheating spouse. The body we worked so hard to nourish and exercise and moisturize becomes tarnished by breaks, bruises, wrinkles, and illness. So much of this life is defiled by illness, time, greed, violence, poverty. But the resurrection ushered in a new era for us—an era in which the love, life, and freedom that is ours in Jesus Christ cannot be defiled by the powers and principalities of this world.

Along with being imperishable and undefiled, this inheritance is also unfading. When my paternal grand parents died, they left each of the grandchildren an inheritance. I used the majority of mine to help pay for seminary. I did spend some of the money on something special for myself—something that would help me to feel closer to my grandparents. I bought a pair of diamond earrings—after all I reasoned, diamonds last forever and so will my love for my grandparents. When I picked up the earrings they were beautiful and I was excited, but the excitement was short lived when I discovered that the earrings didn't make me feel one bit closer to Grammy and Grampy. Grammy and Grampy hadn't cared about things like diamond earrings. Why did I ever think those earrings—these earrings—would ease the grief I was feeling at the death of two beloved grandparents. What ever joy I had when I first opened that little box with the earrings inside—when I indulged in a bit of an earthly inheritance—that joy quickly faded because diamonds, while they may bring momentary satisfaction, don't bring joy, people do. And while my enthusiasm for these earrings has faded away, the love I share with my grandparents—even though they are dead—has not faded because the love I shared with them is a love that comes from God—that love is unfading. Yes, my memories of the particulars of their earthly bodies, voices, and mannerisms have faded, but not the love—never the love.

And so back to the question of the day, “Why?” Why does Easter matter? Why does the resurrection matter? It matters because the inheritance we now have as a result of an empty tomb and a risen savior is an inheritance of love, life, and mercy that is imperishable—it never goes away, it's undefiled—nothing can ruin it, and it's unfading—the glory of that first Easter morning

will never, never fade. The Apostle Paul articulates the reality of this imperishable, undefiled, and unfading inheritance beautifully in his letter to the church in Rome when he writes . . .

I am convinced that neither death, nor life,  
nor angels, nor rulers,  
nor things present, nor things to come,  
nor powers, nor height, nor depth,  
nor anything else in all creation,  
will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans  
8:38-39

That, my friends is our inheritance—imperishable, undefiled, unfading—thanks be to God!