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1 John 5: 9-13

Hampton Baptist

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Certainly Certain

John 10:10

A 3 year old boy went with his dad to see a litter of kittens. On returning home, he was very excited and told his mom, "There were 2 boy kittens and 3 girl kittens." "How did you know?" the mom asked. "Daddy picked them up and looked underneath," he replied, "I think it is printed on the bottom."

Another 3 year old put his shoes on himself. His mother noticed the left shoe was on the right foot. She said, "Son, your shoes are on the wrong feet." He looked up at her and said, "Stop kidding mom, they're the only feet I've got."

A mom was fixing pancakes for her two sons, Kevin, 5 and Ryan 3. The boys were fighting over who would get the first pancake. The mom saw this as a teachable moment and said, "Boys, if Jesus was here he would say, 'Let my brother have the first pancake. I can wait.'" Kevin turned to his younger brother with a sweet look on his face and said, "Ryan, you be Jesus."

I love children's time up here, when questions are asked as parents we cringe. There is a real good chance our kid is going to embarrass the socks off of us. When the questions are asked, all bets are off we can't be for certain what is going to be said.

After the church service a little boy told the pastor, "When I grow up, I'm gonna give you some money." "Well thank you," the pastor said, "but why?" "Because my daddy says you're the poorest preacher we've ever had."

You just can't be certain what's gonna come out of their mouth!

Ben Franklin wrote, "Nothing is certain but death and taxes." He wrote those words way back in 1789 and in 217 years it seems that nothing has changed. In the world in which we live there are very few things that we can be sure of, that we can count on. Material possessions wear out, our own bodies falter and betray us, promises are broken, and life deals blows that overwhelm us. So the question stands, "What can I rely on? Is there something to be absolutely sure of in this life?"

I am happy stand here today and tell you "YES," there is not just something but someone you can absolutely be sure of and totally rely on. We can confidently place the full weight of our over-loaded, over-whelmed, over-tired, and over-stressed lives in the hands of a loving God and KNOW that He will take care of us.

- God's Word is full of promises that sustain us and gives us hope when hope seems impossible.
- We know from God's Word that God loves us, and there is nothing that we could ever do to go beyond the reach of God's grace.

- We know from God's Word that there is a place called heaven and a place called hell. We also know that we will spend eternity in one of these two places depending on what we believe about Jesus.

In our Epistle reading this morning we are told that, "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son does not have life."

Of all the promises in scripture the promise of eternal life is the most amazing and glorious. It is a promise that goes beyond what our 3 and a half pound brain can comprehend. Because of our experience here on earth with all its joys, happiness, hurts, disappointments, and despair it is hard to wrap our minds around the idea of a time and place where all pain, ailments, handicaps, emotional scars, all the negatives this life offers will not exist. Now think of the happiest moment of your life, it might have been a graduation, wedding, holding your child or grandchild for the first time, a promotion, your child getting a job and moving out of the house whatever it is it will be completely and totally eclipsed by the joy of being in the physical presence of our Lord in eternity.

John helps us to understand that this promise and assurance of eternal life is given to us not because of anything we have done, but because of God's grace and mercy. You see we are powerless, we cannot help ourselves. It is by the very action of God through His Son Jesus that eternal life is possible.

- A little boy was walking down the beach with his father and they came upon several starfish that had been stranded by the tide on the beach. They were doomed because they were out of the water and the sun was getting hot and had no way to return to the safety of the water. The little boy realized this and started picking up the starfish and throwing them back into the water. His father asked, "Son, what are you doing?" The son replied, "They can't save themselves so I thought I would give them some help."

That is exactly what God did for us through Jesus. The unattainable is within our grasp, the unbelievable is possible, all because of the love, mercy and grace of our loving God.

I can hear your question, "But Chris, this promise of eternal life seems so far away what does it do for me now in my everyday life?" Good question, I'm glad you asked! Back in the Gospel of John, John records these words of Jesus, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." I really like the way the Amplified Bible put it, "I have come that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance, to the full, till it overflows." Doesn't that sound great? Jesus isn't talking about down the road, He isn't talking about beyond this life, He is talking about the here and now, the present. Jesus wants His children, while they live here on earth, to have a full, abundant, and overflowing life.

Now let me define full, abundant, and overflowing. Jesus talked about an abundant life in John 10, but 6 chapters later He told His disciples, "In this world you will have troubles." We want to say, "Come on Jesus make up your mind, which is it full and abundant or full of trouble?"

- Do you remember Abbott & Costello and the old bit when Lou Abbott would ask Bud Costello, "Who's on First?" and Bud would answer, "Yes."

That is how God would answer our question of, “Which is it Lord a life full and abundant or a life full of trouble?” He would simple answer, “Yes.”

- In truth pain, disappointment, and joy and happiness are all-inclusive in a full, abundant, overwhelming life.

For the Christian the question is where we choose to dwell. We can choose to dwell on and live in the hurt, pain, disappointment that comes in this life. Always looking and waiting for the next heartache to come into our lives. To use a good ol’ Kentuckyism, we can choose to waller in our misery.

Or we can choose to look for God’s blessings and joys that are a part of our lives. Rejoice in the miracle of each day and know that whatever hardship does come along with it is only for a season. Even in the times of hardship the presence of Christ is with us to comfort, guide and sustain us.

If I could boil it down to the simplest of terms I would say it this way. As Christians we can choose to live a life that is abundantly full of misery with a sprinkling of joy here and there. But I want encourage us to live a life abundantly full of joy and only lightly seasoned with hurt and disappointment.

I am not trying to be flippant or make the pain and heartaches of this world sound trivial. I myself have dwelled or wallered in hopelessness and pain myself.

- About 6 years ago I lost just about everything that was important to me; my family, my home, my job and I was devastated. That Easter I didn’t get out of bed the entire day. I was wallering in my misery, my life was abundant, abundantly full of misery.
- The next year I did get up and go to church but it reminded me of everything that I had lost so I went home and climbed back into bed. I was still wallering in my disappointment.
- Between that Easter and the next one I made a choice to live an abundant life of hope and joy. I sought counseling and began to serve as a volunteer in a church. I stopped telling God what I wanted and needed and started asking God, “What can I do for you Lord?”
- As a result of my choice it wasn’t 6 months that I was interviewing for the position of Director of Christian Education at Calvary UMC. Later that year I had moved and started a new life in Frederick, Maryland and God brought Jamie & Natalie into my life and as they say the rest is history.

Where are you dwelling, where have you pitched your tent? Are you dwelling in hurt and disappointment? If you are God doesn’t want you to stay there. The good thing about a tent is that it can be moved. He has a new neighborhood for us to try. But you see the choice is ours, only we can pull up our stakes and make that move.

You might be here and feel that way and want to make that move but not know how. You have people right here in this very room and in this church that can help you; we have a pastoral staff that can help.

We need to claim and stand boldly and confidently on the promises that God has made to us .

In the early days of our country a weary traveler came to the banks of the Mississippi River for the first time. There was no bridge. It was early winter, and the river was covered with ice. Could he dare cross over, was the ice thick enough to support his weight? After much hesitation the man got down on his hands and knees and cautiously began to creep across the river.

About half way across the river he began to hear the sound of singing behind him. Out of the dusk came a man driving a horse drawn wagon load full of coal. The man without a care or concern for the depth of the ice confidently traveled easily across the river.

Friends we do not need to creep along cautiously on the promises of God. We can live lives confident that God is able to provide all that we need in this world. When the time comes for us to pass from this life into the next we have His assurance that He has prepared a place for us that is beyond anything we can imagine. May we choose to live a life of victory and hope each and every day.

While this world is good at making us feel that there isn't much we can count for certain; as Christians we have the promises of God in which we can be certainly certain.

Amen