

Thanksgiving Sunday
Final Week for Fall Focus
Horton Hatches the Egg

Let's begin by hearing our text, 1 Peter 1:3-5, 13-25 (NRSV & New Living)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

So think clearly and exercise self-control. Look forward to the special blessings that will come to you at the return of Jesus Christ. Obey God because you are his children. Don't slip back into your old ways of doing evil; you didn't know any better then. But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God – who chose you to be his children – is holy.

For God, godself has said, "You must be holy because I am holy." And remember that the heavenly Father to whom you pray has no favorites when he judges. He will judge or reward you according to what you do. So you must live in reverent fear of him during your time as foreigners here on earth. For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver. He paid for you with the precious lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.

God chose him for this purpose long before the world began, but now in these final days, he was sent to the earth for all to see. And he did this for you. Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And because God raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory, your faith and hope can be placed confidently in God.

Now you can have sincere love for each other as brothers and sisters because you were cleansed from your sins when you accepted the truth of the Good News. So see to it that you really do love each other intensely with all your hearts. For you have been born again. Your new life did not come from your earthly parents because the life they gave you will end in death. But this new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God.

As the prophet says, "People are like grass that dies away; their beauty fades as quickly as the beauty of wildflowers. The grass withers, and the flowers fall away. But the word of the Lord will last forever." And that word is the Good News that was preached to you.

This text reminds us that, in God, we have received new life. This life comes from the Jesus Christ who was chosen before time to bring us a way of freedom and healing that eventually leads us to live radically different lives.

This life to which we are called won't fade at death, but rather is eternal, and as it is our inheritance, it waits for us to be fully revealed.

Knowing this, we are to think clearly and exercise self-control in this life. For it is in our living that we make real our heritage as God's children. Doing things the old way

just won't work anymore. Instead, we need to step up to the plate, embrace our identity in Christ, and make choices that embrace life.

The text closes with these words:

"People are like the grass that dies away; their beauty fades as quickly as the beauty of wildflowers. The grass withers, and flowers fall away. But the word of the Lord will last forever." And that word is the good news that was preached to you. (1 Peter 1:24)

This good news of God in Christ has been our focus each year in the fall.

Today, we finish up our yearly Fall Focus. For eight weeks, we gathered to look at our faith once more. But what makes the Fall Focus different from the rest of the year is that it is almost as if we had put on a pair of glasses that enable us to see things through a new perspective.

I wanted to start this Fall Focus idea with you in a way that was intriguing enough to get you here, and also in a way that was intergenerational. Like my husband, who is a family physician, I see myself as a family pastor, enjoying people of all ages.

I also thought it would be good to have some fun together—with all the change and transitions, it is good to enjoy as we learn and grow, so we looked at a wide range of Dr. Seuss stories and used them as a jumping off place to talk about our faith.

This year's Fall Focus topics were wide-ranging and thought provoking. We

- ✓ talked about taking risks and getting out of our comfort zones with the story, *On Beyond Zebra*,
- ✓ looked at the stumbling block of pride with *The Zax*,
- ✓ meditated on Christ's work on the cross as we read, *The Cat in the Hat Comes Back*,
- ✓ studied the foundational call of each Christian to care for those in need with *Horton Hears A Who*,
- ✓ looked at the place of imagination, vision and faith with *Green Eggs and Ham*,
- ✓ remembered the saints and our need to build a strong foundation in this life with *Yertle the Turtle*,
- ✓ talked about our response to prejudice and differences with *The Sneetches*

Each year, I like the Fall Focus to have three components.

Worship starts the theme, which is built on by both a take-home sheet for reading and activities and an intergenerational Bible study.

It was a highlight of the study for me to do it in this intergenerational way. Each of the four Sundays, we had between 35 and 50 people gather to explore the story and the scriptures, and, of course, to eat.

Today we finish up by hearing from several among us who will share a bit about the impact of the Fall Focus for them. I'd like to invite:

9AM:

There is one last Dr. Seuss story. It is another story about Horton, our friendly elephant. Let me tell you a bit about it.

Horton Hatches the Egg is a story about a kindhearted elephant named Horton, who warms the nest of a lazy bird named Mayzie. Mayzie, needing a break, talks Horton into watching—and sitting on—her egg. She says she will only be gone a short time, but ends up taking a long vacation, leaving Horton egg sitting.

Through the changing of the seasons, weather, humiliation from friends, poachers who want to kill him, and even through a stint at the circus, Horton keeps his word to sit faithfully on the egg. He even has a rhythm for it, saying:

I meant what I said,

And I said what I meant.

An elephant's faithful

One hundred percent.

Fifty-odd weeks later, Mayzie returns and wants her egg back. In the middle of the conflict, the egg hatches, revealing an elephant with wings. Horton, it seems, is rewarded for his faithfulness.

These eight weeks have been a time of incubating. Some of us have found our faith deepened, others have found a new friend from the study group, and still others had a chance to talk around the table with the weekly activity sheet. Depending on where you were and how able you were to join in, there was an opportunity to become more fully who God has called us to be.

And regardless of our own faithfulness, we can rejoice, on this Thanksgiving Sunday, that God is always faithful to us—luring, calling, inviting us forward to sit on our own “faith egg” and see what hatches.

I hope you have enjoyed these weeks, I have and I am already thinking about what we might do next year!