

*3Blessed 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, 4and into 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, 7so 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. 8Although 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.*

I remember days of spring, grass greening, the ground underneath not yet firm. “Dad, will you throw me some pop-ups?” I asked.

If the day had not been too long, if the work left to be done was not too great, sometimes he would.

We'd start off slow, tossing the baseball back and forth. He'd throw me some grounders, I'd pretend to be a great second baseman.

Then would come the pop-ups. Not so very high at first. These I would handle with ease. But then Dad would toss them as high as he could, so high I'd feel dizzy looking up, waiting - trying to be in just the right place. Excited, afraid I'd stick out my glove, and if the fear did not win out, the ball would strike the webbing and stick.

Dad was proud, and I was happy, and in all the world there was just we two, and everything was perfect.

I could have played catch with my father forever. But he was soon busy, or weary or distracted and the magic moment was over.

I think if my father could have known what it meant to me, how loved I felt in his taking time for me, we might have had more time together. But that would have meant less time for my sisters to have with my father, less time for my brother, less time for my mother.

I want to be loved. In my heart is a longing to be loved. Though I can't see into your heart, I think that same need is in you: To be loved...and to love.

God is love.

When we will be with God face to face, we will be loved as we have never been loved before. All the love of God will flow to us, all the love of God will be received by us and all our love will flow to God, be received by God.

No being too busy, too tired - God's loving me will not be limited by God's loving you. Our love for God will not be diminished by our loving one another.

Some weeks ago in a confirmation class, the word salvation came up. None of the students knew what it was. Salvation.

I was surprised at first. Then I wasn't. For I realized that we talk about eternal life, going to heaven, living forever, being raised from the dead - but seldom of salvation.

Salvation is all of those things, but more. What God has planned for God's children is not simply an extension of life, but a new life of love and being loved: Perfectly loved and perfectly loving.

Our second lesson today says of Jesus: "You never saw him, but you love him. You do not see him now, but you believe in him. And a joy, unspeakable, and wonderful fills you with delight, because you receive by faith what you are looking for, namely the salvation of your souls."

Jesus is our first taste of the love of God. In him you are perfectly loved. Fully known and fully received and fully forgiven. In Jesus God wants nothing more than to love you forever. Jesus is the beginning of that love for you. Jesus will be the end of that love of God for you. Alpha and Omega he is called. First and last, beginning and end.

Knowing what your salvation is, being perfectly loved and perfectly loving, hear these words from first Peter: "Let us praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who by raising Jesus Christ from the dead has in His great mercy given us a new birth. Now we have a living hope, which awaits an inheritance that cannot be destroyed or defiled and never fades away, reserved for you in heaven. And through faith you are protected by God's power until you come to the salvation that is ready to be revealed at the end of time. This brings you great joy, even though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials."

We have joy because we know what awaits us. We have joy and live in a living hope because we know the risen Jesus Christ will bring us to the love of God. Even in the disappointments of life we are protected because we have this faith that all of God's love will one day be ours.

All of God's love will one day be yours. Believe that with all your heart and your whole life will be a new birth, a new you every day, because at the end of your road is God and God's love.

A young boy plays catch with his father, loves and is loved.

We know the love we need and desire. In Jesus resurrection we witness the love that God has prepared. Now we live in joy, as we trust God's perfect love.