

Focus: the hope given through Jesus' resurrection: It is because Christ rose that...  
Function: Proclaim Peter's hope, the hope which we share in Christ's resurrection

Grace, mercy and peace be yours in the name of Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and King.  
Amen. The title for today's sermon is “A living hope” and is from the Epistle reading, 1 Peter 1.  
Let us pray... Amen.

I found it interesting this past week, while going through today's readings, to recognize the people speaking or writing in all three readings were present in the upper room the first Easter evening. We hear Peter's words to the council in the First reading, we read Peter's letter in the Epistle, and read from the hand of the disciple John in the Gospel. Peter and John were two of Jesus' closest disciples throughout His earthly ministry and, interestingly, the only two disciples on record to show up at the empty tomb after Jesus' resurrection.

These two disciples were leaders of the disciples and they virtually saw everything Jesus did during His earthly ministry including witness the physical death of their teacher and Lord. They were with Jesus from the very beginning, they were the first disciples called by Jesus, they heard almost everything Jesus said, saw every miracle and healing, walked with Him, talked with Him, hoped in Him, but they also deserted Him, denied Him, and watched Him be humiliated, suffer, and die without so much as lifting a finger to do anything to save Him.

For these two disciples, along with the rest of Jesus' followers, Jesus' death on Good Friday, crushed their hopes and destroyed their dreams. Despite Jesus having told them and explained to them in detail exactly what would happen to Him when they arrived in Jerusalem, the disciples did not fully understand Jesus' words. Even after seeing the empty tomb on Easter morning, there were only more questions, rather than any answers.

Now, we sometimes look back and shake our heads at the disciples and their actions. We ask ourselves, How couldn't they see who Jesus was? How could they have been so blind? How could they have lost all hope when Jesus told them what to expect? Why were they cowering and hiding, even after hearing the good news from the angel and seeing the empty tomb? Why were they not telling everyone that Easter morning the good news of Christ's resurrection? Yet, but the same standard, why don't I, why don't you share this good news with everyone you meet and come across on a daily basis?

For the disciples, they had many questions, concerns, and deep problems because their teacher, mentor, and rabbi was dead and buried. John and the Marys were at the foot of the cross and watched Him die. By all worldly standards, Jesus' death destroyed their peace, shattered their confidence, and stole all their hope. Their world was darkened, physically, for three hours on Good Friday(Luke 23:44) during Jesus' execution but it continued in their minds over the following days. Their light snuffed out. Their darkness did not begin to lift until the Easter evening when there in their presence, in the upper room, and behind securely locked doors, Jesus appeared to them and gave them, and us, peace and real hope. Jesus' resurrection shattered the

darkness. Chaos and turmoil were no more because Jesus restored and gives His peace and a living hope.

Jesus' resurrection, the Easter anniversary we celebrated again last Sunday and the one we celebrate every single Lord's day is the source of our living hope. Still, we don't just celebrate Jesus' resurrection because He rose, we celebrate it because of WHY He rose. On the cross the victory was won, our sins were paid for in full, and the power of the devil defeated; yet Jesus rose for our sake to clearly proclaim and demonstrate His victory and give us real hope. Jesus' physical resurrection, the fact that Jesus body is not still in the ground somewhere but is risen, glorified, and ascended, is the foundation of our living hope, faith, and trust in God and for our eternal salvation. Because He rose we also have life and a living hope in His name!

This is the living hope Peter talks about in today's Epistle. Peter thanks God the Father for Jesus because it is through Jesus' resurrection we have this living hope. Our living hope is based on more than just the fact that Jesus rose, our hope is based on the fact Jesus rose for each of us. Peter clearly expresses our hope in the first couple of verses of the reading; **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”**(1 Peter 1:3-5)

Because Jesus died and rose for you, you have real, objective, and tangible hope. Because Jesus died and rose for you, you have a real eternal inheritance which cannot be taken or stolen from you. God Himself guards your inheritance for which you hold so long as you have faith in Christ. Paul told Titus, and tells us, exactly how this inheritance was established: **“But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”**(Titus 3:4-7)

Jesus brings His death and His resurrection to you in your Baptism. The living hope you share through Christ's resurrection is given in Baptism—by the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit—so it is **“by grace that you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works,”**(Ephesians 2:8-9) that you are justified by God and made an heir of eternal life in Christ.

Yet baptism is not where faith in Christ, or our Christian vocations ends; rather it is the beginning of our Christian life here in this life. It is on account of God's promise of forgiveness given in Baptism, the promise we daily return to, that we have the strength to face this world of sin and valley of tears.

You see, Christ did not save you from something you could have saved yourself from. Christ saved you from perpetual darkness, everlasting death, and the eternal pain and suffering you deserve for your sins. You are a sinner (Romans 3:23). You were conceived in sin and born (Psalm 51:5) a filthy rotten sinner (Isaiah 64:6) in need of a Saviour, just like the rest of us. Yet, **“while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly”**, for you, me, and all people. For **“God showed his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**<sup>10</sup> **For while we were enemies of God we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son**”(Romans 5:6,8,10). In the waters of Baptism Christ breathed His life giving breath into your spiritually dead body and gave you eternal life (Ephesians 2:5). You are saved only by the grace of God on account of Christ’s death and resurrection in your place.

So, as baptized children of God we have a living hope and peace. Yet baptism is not just something that was done, but it is where we live, breathe, and share in God’s peace. It is also from where we are able to share God’s peace with others. Martin Luther once wrote, “We have no other reason for living on earth than to be of help to others. If this were not the case, it would be best for God to kill us and let us die as soon as we are baptized and have begun to believe. But He permits us to live here in order that we may bring others to faith, just as He brought us. But as long as we are on earth, we must live in hope. For although we are sure that we have all the blessings of God through faith—for faith is surely accompanied for you by the new birth... and the inheritance—we do not yet see this. It is still something to be hoped for and still somewhat remote. We cannot see it with our eyes. St. Peter calls this the hope of life. We speak of a living hope, that is, a hope in which we may hope with certainty and be sure of eternal life. But this is still concealed. It is still covered with a cloth. One does not see it. At present it can be grasped only with the heart and through faith, as St. John says (in 1 John 3:2): **“Beloved, we are God’s children; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.”** For this life and the life to come are mutually exclusive and cannot exist together in such a way that we eat, drink, sleep, wake, and do other natural things of this life and are in heaven at the same time. We cannot enter into eternal life unless we have died and this life passes away. Therefore we must be in hope while we are here and until God wants us to see the blessings we have.”(LW30; 1Peter 1:3)

This blessing is you are saved in Christ and have this living hope. The devil, the world, and even your sinful flesh are God’s enemies and yours. The devil rightly feels you deserve the same eternal punishment he is sentenced to receive; your own sinful flesh—your old Adam—wants nothing to do with God as it is an enemy of God; and the world hates God and anyone who is in Him; as Jesus told the disciples how, **“they would be delivered up to tribulation and put to death, and would be hated by all nations for His name’s sake.”**(Matthew 24:9) Jesus did not sugar coat the reality that His followers would have problems in the world. It seems not much has changed in our world, even in North America. Just ask Brendan Eich, the former CEO of Mozilla who was recently forced to resign primarily over his support for traditional marriage.

The reality is as a Christian you will have troubles in this life, but you also have a real living hope in Christ.

Peter expressed this hope and reality as he wrote, **“In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,<sup>7</sup> so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”**(1 Peter 6-7) “In this way Peter sums up faith, hope, and the holy cross; for one follows from the other. If you are a Christian and look forward to the inheritance or salvation, you must cling only to this goal, and despise everything on earth” (Matthew 10:37). Jesus tells you to **“not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”**(Matthew 10:28) “The world will not be able to tolerate this. Therefore you must be prepared to be condemned and persecuted. As a Christian you must be prepared to pick up your cross and follow Jesus (Matthew 10:38).

So Peter gives consolation when you suffer and are persecuted. He says your mourning will last for a short time. Then you will rejoice, for salvation is already prepared for you. Therefore be patient in your suffering. This is true Christian consolation. It does not comfort as the world teachings try which only seeks to find help for external misfortune. Instead Peter says: I am not speaking of physical comfort. The fact that you must have outward misfortune does no harm. Go ahead boldly, and stand firm. Do not think that you will be rid of problems, but instead stand firm in the hope which says: ‘My inheritance is already prepared and at hand. These suffering will last but a short while. Then they will cease.’ Thus one must lay the temporal consolation aside and oppose to it the eternal comfort which we have in God.”(LW30; 1 Peter 1:6-8)

You have real hope because Christ really lives. You have peace because Jesus physically rose from the dead. You have eternal life because not even death could hold Jesus in whom you have a living hope and eternal life. On the last day, when Christ returns your eternal life will be fully revealed. In the mean time face your trials joyfully, trusting in Christ. I will conclude with Peter’s words; **“Though you have not seen *Christ*, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,<sup>9</sup> obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”**(1 Peter 1:8-9) Rejoice in the Good News; Christ is risen and in Him is a living hope. Amen.

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