

SERMON FOR APRIL 16, 2023

TEXT: I PETER 1: 3-9

THEME: A LIVING HOPE

3 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, **4** to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, **5** who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. **6** In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, **7** 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. **8** Though you have not seen him, 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, **9** obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

In the name of Jesus:

Milton Carpenter was the former treasurer of the state of Missouri. He later served as treasurer of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. He had this advice for retired persons: Have someone to love, keep busy, and have something to look forward to. This advice not only applies to senior citizens, it applies to all of us, young and old alike. Martin Luther once said that everything that is done in the world is done by hope.

Hope springs eternal, especially this time of year. School children are looking forward to a summer without school, and families begin to plan their

vacations. Adults with cabin fever because of the recent winter now thumb through the seed catalogs and begin planning to plant a garden. There is hope in the air this time of year.

There is hope for each of us as well! It is a Living Hope that is rooted in and based upon the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a Living Hope that the Apostles had when they learned that Jesus rose from the grave, and it is a hope that is yours today.

This hope is unlike any hope that we see in our world today. Hope springs eternal is a catch phrase that states the belief that things are always about to get better. But are they? In spite of our best efforts at trying to create a more perfect society, it seems as if things have gotten worse!

When we turn on the news and see the images of war, we hope that peace will come to the war torn countries. When we see yet another mass shooting, we hope that the violence and bloodshed will stop. When we turn on the news and see yet another catastrophe, we hope everyone and everything will be okay. Sometimes it just feels as if one bad thing will happen after another, and all we are doing is waiting for the other shoe to drop. Day by day our hope diminishes as another tornado, hurricane, flood, or breaking news story causes us heartache and concern. And all of this illustrates a universal truth, that the world that we live in is horribly broken, and no

amount of human effort or ideas can help fix the problems to give people a hope that lasts forever.

The sad state of affairs we find ourselves in is that life will end in death. Death is a universal problem that no one on earth has solved. People can deny it, try to postpone it, and try to ignore it but death has spread to all people. No one seemingly has an answer to death. And so many live without hope. But God has an answer to death, and His answer is found in the death and resurrection of His only Son Jesus Christ.

Just listen to what the Apostle Peter says: “ 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, **4** to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. You have a living hope, not a dead hope, not a wishful hope, not a pie in the sky hope, but you have a living hope in heaven.

Your Living Hope is Jesus, God’s only Son raised from the grave. As Christians we certainly believe that Jesus is the Son of God, but I think what we fail to realize or comprehend is that Jesus is still a man. A man who died, but a man who also was raised from the dead.

This is the hard cold truth of Easter, that Jesus, who died on the cross, rose physically from the grave. There are many who doubt that this occurred. Thomas doubted. He remarked that he would only believe if he could place his

hands in the nail imprints of Jesus' hands and place his hands where the spear pierced Jesus' side. Thomas saw the physical evidence that Jesus in fact did rise from the grave. As did many others, all told 300 people saw the physical reality that Jesus rose from the grave. They saw with their own eyes and believed.

We have their eyewitness accounts in the Word. The Holy Spirit has planted that Word and has given you a saving faith in Jesus. Now you believe in Jesus, and you are born again, in the waters of your Baptism, and given a new life in Christ. A life given here and now as Christ has forgiven you all of your sins, and a life in the future, an eternal life, what Peter calls, an imperishable inheritance waiting for you in heaven.

This imperishable inheritance, to be clear, is not just dying and going to heaven. So many Christians think that this is what happens, and what only will happen, when a Christian dies. Yes, when you die you will be with the Lord. But because of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, He offers oh so much more. What Jesus promises, and what the Scriptures teach time and again, is that there will be a physical resurrection from the grave on the Last Day. Everyone, and I mean everyone, will rise from the grave. Those who do not believe in Jesus will rise to eternal judgment, yet those who believe in Christ will rise to eternal blessedness and eternal life with Christ.

This living hope is for you now and is yours forever! Baptized in the name of Christ, you have become a new creation. As God's new creation in Christ, Christ is for you and will never leave nor forsake you. He is now and will remain your ever present help in times of trouble. Christ lives for you, He lives and guards the salvation given to you, and He promises to raise you from the grave on the Last Day, so that you will live, physically, with the Lord and with all who loved and Lord and served the Lord in their earthly lives.

That is why we can and do live in hope. We trust in Jesus to forgive, to renew, and to strengthen us now and in the days ahead as we await this inheritance stored up for us. It is an inheritance, given freely by God's grace, not gained by our own good works. The Lord Himself continues to guide and lead us until we reach the place that He has prepared for us.

In the meantime, as we live out our faith in Christ, we are daily met by all sorts of trials, temptations, and tribulations which seek to lead us away from Him. In all of this, we have a joyous hope in the Lord. God never promised that we would always be happy. Happiness is a day to day thing, some days we are happy, and yet other days are met with grief and pain, and these things will cause us to be emotionally sad.

But as the Apostle Peter states, in all of this we are still joyful in Christ. Joyful because we know Jesus forgives us. Joyful because we know Jesus is at

work, working all things out to our good and His glory. Joyful because we know that we will be with the Lord when our life here on earth has ended. And joyful knowing that eternal life in a glorified body awaits us at our resurrection. And nothing in all of creation will be able to separate us from what Christ has given and stored up for us.

Jesus' resurrection is the Living Hope for all who believe! So even though trials and griefs may come your way, God has given to you the victory in Jesus. Your eternal inheritance has been secured in Christ. You have Jesus and with Jesus you always have A LIVING HOPE.

Amen