



4/19/2020

## “Born Into a Living Hope”

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:3-9; 21; Jeremiah 29:11-13

Second Sunday of Easter

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### 1 Peter 1:3-9

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! **In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, **who through faith are shielded by God's power** until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

Last Sunday we considered some of the results of Christ’s resurrection as we live the Lord’s Prayer in our daily lives.

Today, as we continue in this Season of the Resurrection, we hear these words of faith and good news from the Apostle Peter. He tells us in other ways some of the consequences of Christ’s resurrection. One of those consequences is that **we are born into a living hope**.

We should realize from the introduction to his letter that Peter is writing to those who are living as exiles from their homeland, and perhaps from their own families. But they have come to faith in Jesus the Christ, sent from God to redeem and deliver them.

In the present troubling and challenging time in which we live, we too may experience grief or face hardships and trials. Some have lost loved ones to the Corona Virus or to other natural causes. Some are facing illness and even death on a daily basis through their occupations. Some families are living apart for safety reasons. Others are dealing with loss of jobs or income. Many are facing uncertainty about the future, while some are struggling even now. Most of us are still adapting to the social distancing guidelines and regulations. And some are challenged by the changes to their daily routines and lifestyles at home for family and work.

In all of this, people everywhere are looking for a future with hope. The good news is that God promises that future. As God promised His people in exile through the prophet Jeremiah centuries before the birth of Jesus,

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to*



*harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”*  
(Jeremiah 29:11-13)

God desires that we seek God with all our heart. And, as many of you can witness, we can find God in and through Jesus the Christ. He is the way, the truth and the life. Be born anew by the Holy Spirit. And stay close to Him. And you will have that living hope you long for.

And just as God instructed the exiles living in Jeremiah’s time to adjust to living where they were in new ways with hope for the future, many people now are adjusting their schedules and lifestyles to bring blessings to themselves, their families and many more. Some are providing hope to others by how they are living and what they are doing.

As Peter goes on to proclaim to those early believers, they have been born anew or reborn in Christ Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. That rebirth has given them hope to live.

Along with Peter and those first disciples, we give praise to God because **in God’s great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.**

The Wesley Study Bible says, “In mercy God has fathered us with the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. ‘Living hope’ Wesley wrote in his *Notes* (1:3) ‘ . . . implies true spiritual life, which revives the heart, and makes the soul lively and vigorous’. Thus, our hope is undying and our future immune to all that threatens us in this world.” Further, writes Wesley, “This new life occasions joy, even when facing various hardships.” (*Notes 1:9*)

† Because of Christ’s resurrection **we have hope that is alive in our hearts as our faith is alive in our minds.** And both faith and hope bear active witness in our day to day lives.

The bible tells us, as Peter affirms, that through faith we are shielded by God’s power to withstand the hardships and trials, the temptations and deceptions of this world.

The Book of Acts of the Apostles tells us that Peter himself knew the power of faith and the living hope of which he speaks.

In the twelfth chapter (12:1-17) we read of an earlier time in Peter’s ministry to the church: It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. Before the Feast of Dedication preceding Passover, Herod proceeded to seize Peter also, and had him put in prison, intending to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

While Peter was in prison the church was earnestly praying to God for him. The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains,



and sentries stood guard at the entrance. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. “Quick, get up!” he said, and the chains fell off Peter’s wrists.

Then the angel said to him, “Put on your clothes and sandals.” And Peter did so. “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,” the angel told him. Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

Then Peter came to himself and said, “Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me . . .”

Colin Harbach of England shared this witness, as given in The Upper Room last Sunday. He says . . .

“We were in the Easter season. I was planting a new rose bush when I snagged my finger on one of its many thorns. With greater care and watchful of those thorns, I separated the bush’s stems to discover the first swelling buds. For me, this bush was a message about Easter. Looking beyond the thorns, we can fix our eyes on new life and the hope of beauty to come.

“The same is true of our personal experiences of pain and sorrow. We may be pricked by the thorns of questions, doubts, and uncertainties; but we hold on to God’s promises. That’s faith. At the same time, we keep looking for the buds of new life. That’s hope.

“With hope and faith, our pain and suffering will end in new life. That is God’s promise at Easter.”

And affirming the words of Peter found later in the chapter first quoted, ***“Through [Christ] you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.”*** - 1 Peter 1:21 (NIV)

He prays, “Dear Lord, increase in us faith for today and hope for tomorrow. Amen.”

**Friends, whatever you are facing in life right now or in the future, look to Jesus. Trust God to shield, empower and deliver you through faith in the risen Christ. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide you and lead you to make the right decisions and choices.**

Pray, wherever you are. Have faith and believe. Lift up to the Lord all that keeps you from his loving grace. Ask for God’s mercy and strength for all that you face in these times. Ask for his wisdom and guidance. Ask for his peace that passes understanding and strife. “Ask,” Jesus said “and you shall receive.” (John 16:24)

**Rejoice and be glad that Jesus is risen and lives!** And because he lives you also can live – alive in Christ, with faith, hope, and love.