

Second Sunday of Easter

“Your living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead!”

(1 Peter 1:3-5)

April 16, 2023

By Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this Second Sunday of Easter Sunday is from 1 Peter 1:3.

“3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Here ends our text.

It's been three years since the first cases of the corona virus were first seen. Church worship gatherings were interrupted. There was no vaccine for this virus which was more deadly than its later mutated forms. Businesses, schools and church doors were closed as we remember but the Word of God was continued to go out through phone conversations and the internet. Doors were closed but the Good News of the open and empty tomb continued to be proclaimed. And how much more did people need to hear the Word of hope – living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!

The message of Easter and our message today is the same. Death has been conquered by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the whole world! Jesus has triumphed over death! He's alive. That's why Christian hope is a living hope!

It is the only hope for all the world! Last week we heard this Bible verse from Romans 4:25

Romans 4:25 “who (Jesus) was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.”

Jesus endured our offenses, our sins and not just ours but the entire world's offenses on Good Friday. He paid for them all and told the world that “It is finished”. Paid in full. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...

Good Friday is good news for the entire world. All transgressions have been paid for! And Easter is good news for the entire world for Jesus was raised because of our justification! What does justification mean again! “Just as if I’d never sinned”. God declares to the world that all people are righteous in His sight! The resurrection of Jesus is the moment that God can and did declare that this is true! Jesus had to rise again or we would still be in our sins Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15.

But, because Jesus is alive! And Paul declares:

“20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”

Jesus was the first to rise again. His empty tomb is ground zero! Life, not death began at the empty tomb and spread and spread and spread to the world. So that as this Good News reached each new heart and was believed, a new birth was given. New life was born or begotten again as our text says. The soul that was dead springs to life through the Gospel of Jesus victory over death. Yes, Jesus rose for all people for their justification! And that declaration of righteousness has to be personally given and received to be of any benefit. God works faith through His means of Word and Sacrament!

There is still debate on how and exactly where the Covid virus began. It’s pretty clear that it began in Asia in Wuhan. There was a laboratory there where scientists were researching viruses and engineering viruses to try to predict pandemics. How was this virus leaked from this lab remains the question to be answered.

“From the very start, the Chinese Communist Party has engaged in an active campaign of deflection, denial and obstruction. And that has really hindered our ability to determine what happened and probably hindered our ability to rapidly respond as well.

And so, here we are three years later. We don’t know how SARS-CoV-2 emerged to cause the worst pandemic in over 100 years, and that’s too bad.” So, Texas A&M biosecurity expert Dr. Gerald Parker.

We may never know how Covid exactly began, but we know that death in general is the result of sin. But more importantly, we know the exact origin of life. For life starts at ground zero of the empty tomb. There all death was conquered in all its forms whether it be by old age, a heart attack, cancer, Covid or any other illness. Jesus brought forth life to the world...and life to you this day!

It all began with the words that the women heard from the angels.

“Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” (Matthew 28:5-6)

Then the Good News spread to the disciples behind locked doors as we heard in today's Gospel reading. It spread to the disciples walking to Emmaus, to doubting Thomas, and to over 500 as we heard in the Easter Sunrise epistle from 1 Corinthians 15.

How is the living hope of Jesus' resurrection spread? Through His living Word. Listen to Luke's account of Jesus' visit to the disciples in Luke 24.

40 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. 41 But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, “Have you any food here?” 42 So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. 43 And He took it and ate in their presence.

44 Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

46 Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And you are witnesses of these things.”

And they went forth and continued to spread the Good news of the living hope of the resurrection.

From today's first reading from Acts 5, we have the disciples teaching and proclaiming God's Word in Jerusalem. The people came from neighboring cities with their sick so that even if the shadow of the apostles fell on a sick person as they walked by he or she was healed. They taught and proclaimed the resurrection from Solomon's porch, the East side of the temple. Many heard and believed and the high priest and the Sadducees were indignant. Of course, the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection that's why they are so sad, you see?

What was the result? They were put into the public prison. You'd think that the Jewish leaders would have learned that it's not possible to stop God works with a prison and

guards. For an angel of the Lord opened the prison and told the apostles to go back to Solomon's porch. **"20 "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."**

The words of the resurrection and life in Jesus. The hope of life!

And when the Jewish leaders went to the prison to check on them they didn't find them. The prison was securely shut and the guards were standing outside, but no prisoners. Where are they? Back at the temple! So they rounded them up again and told them to stop preaching about Jesus.

What was Peter's answer?

"We ought to obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. 31 Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins."

Gamaliel, one of the Pharisees, basically said that if their message is not true, it will die on its own. But if it is true, you can't go against God. So what did they do?

"40 And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ."

And the hope of life in Jesus continued to spread. It spread to Asia Minor, little Asia, the western most tip of Asia which is modern day Turkey, Bulgaria and Greece. Paul planted the churches there and Peter wrote today's epistle to them. For they were being persecuted for their faith. Peter told them to take heart in the Good News of the resurrection.

It's an inheritance that is **"incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."**

For you! The same message comes to you and me today. The Good news of the resurrection has spread to you also. You who have not seen Jesus with visible eyes just like those who Peter was writing to, have believed with eyes of faith through His powerful Word.

“8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.”

As Jesus said to Thomas,

“Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

Life in His name! The sure hope of life is what you and I have. We are born anew by water and the Spirit in our baptism into this new life. And today, we are strengthened by the very body and blood of Jesus that is given and shed for your forgiveness of sins. Yes, your hope is sure and your inheritance is reserved for you in heaven!

Today’s Lutheran Hour sermon was written by Pastor Ken Klauss who was called to his eternal inheritance this past month. In our monthly calendar, I included a portion of one of his sermons and I end with a beautiful excerpt from another.

“If this resurrection Sunday you don't know how your world was changed, if this day of redemption you need to be reminded and reassured, if this festival day you wish to hear once again, the great story of God's grace, let me tell you what Christ has done. Because Christ has risen, no longer is death our ultimate end. Death has been swallowed up by God's victory. Those of you who mourn a loved one who has died in Jesus, those of you who know that the days of your life are numbered and know you will not see another resurrection Sunday here on earth have the solid, sure knowledge that when you shut your eyes and breathe your last, because of faith in Christ's sacrifice, you will awaken in heaven. Because Christ has risen, those of you who are troubled, who are in pain, who are alone and lonely, who feel lost and unloved have a Divine Redeemer, a Heavenly Brother who has promised to be with you, to help you carry your burdens, to listen to your prayers, to be your Friend forever. Because Christ has risen, you can begin each day and end each day in the knowledge that your sins are forgiven. Because Christ has risen, this sick, sad, sinful, sorry world will no longer have the last laugh. Because Christ has risen, you have a God who cares. Because Christ has risen, you are given a new purpose, a higher purpose, a better purpose. Because Christ has risen, our tomorrows have hope; our eternity has heaven. Because Christ has risen, our world is changed.”

From ground zero of the empty tomb to you! The message of the resurrection of Jesus continues to spread by the power of the Holy Spirit through His Word! “Come and see” the angel said to the women. And then, “Go and tell”. Pastor Klaus went and told. This week the children at Immanuel were told of the Good news of the resurrection daily and especially in chapel. Their parents heard it too!

This week the children and parents who are practicing on Immanuel’s ball field heard the Easter Good News. We prayed together and the kids received a children’s Bible. Yesterday in Immanuel’s social hall there was a birthday party for one of ours who has been baptized. Little 1 year old Matthew celebrated his birthday. Minnie mouse led the festivities, but the families received the Good News of who is real and alive – Jesus Christ!

How is the Lord spreading the Good News through you who have come and seen? Go and tell that others may have the life of hope in the resurrection of Jesus!

Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)