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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
April 16, 2023
1st Sunday after Easter
(Previously preached on April 19, 2020)

Scripture Lessons: Acts 2:14a, 22-32, John 20:19-31
Hymns: 207:1-4; 196; 206:1-5; 51

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 1:3-9

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, ⁴to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

⁶In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, ⁸whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Crucified and Risen Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: As long as there is life there is hope!

I think we all may have heard that line before. It is a line that requires some context to be sure. I imagine that it is heard in a medical context most often, but it is also a very fitting expression for spiritual hope as well. Or is it? One must understand that any spiritual hope must have a basis in truth. There are many religions and philosophies in the world that present only false hopes. Eastern mysticism has been wildly popular in America for decades now, and has received much praise in our society as a source of peace and calm in the face of difficulties, and ultimately a source of hope for the everlasting peace -- of Nirvana. The practice of meditation and yoga is encouraged to help get one's life energies properly aligned. There is so much spiritual gullibility in America that many fail to recognize these practices as aspects of eastern mystic idolatry. It all appeals to our sense of living a good life. Then, with the pursuit of a good and kind life, one may accumulate enough good karma that one will be able to move up closer to that bliss of Nirvana in our next reincarnation.

Now, what I find interesting is that these ideas receive very little ridicule from the world. Perhaps that is because they not only capture people's imagination in their life fantasy, but ultimately bring all praise back to man. Fallen man loves credit for all that might even remotely be thought of as good. This is the vain righteousness of the works of the law, about which we sing in one of our hymns: *"It was a false misleading dream that God His law had given That sinners could themselves redeem And by their works gain heaven. The law is but a mirror bright To bring the inbred sin to light That lurks within our nature."* (The Lutheran Hymnal 377:3)

We have a different hope, a very real and enduring hope. This hope lies at the center of our faith in Christ that we celebrate this Sunday and every Sunday. The Spirit leads us to lay hold of--

THEME: Resurrection Hope.

This is --

I. A Living Hope that Does Not Fade Away.

Consider the wonder of the opening verses of our text. It lays the foundation for true hope.

1 Peter 1:3-5 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.

Unlike the false hopes of this world, this hope comes to us from God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God has given us a living hope in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Jesus lives and with **His** life there **is** hope!

The grace of God in Christ is real! In His abundant mercy God the Father sent His Son into the world that we might **live** through Him. It was Jesus, not us, Jesus lived the perfectly holy and righteous life that fulfilled the law's demands. Yet it was Jesus who willingly bore our sins in His body when He was crucified for us and endured the curse of God against and for all sinners. Jesus died, "*for the wages of sin is death.*" (Romans 6:23) Jesus died and was buried.

But the Scriptures which we read in our New Testament Scripture lesson this morning were fulfilled! The prophecy of the Psalms was fulfilled in Christ. God would not let His Holy One see corruption! Jesus rose again the third day. Jesus rose and reveals the reality of resurrection. Jesus saved us from sin's corruption and His resurrection brings us new life. We already possess that life right now through faith in His name! We have been begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Hope is not found in an endless cycle of lives seeking to attain something better when there is nothing better to be found in the flesh. That false hope ended when God closed the door to Paradise so that fallen man could not eat of the tree of life and live in this corruption of sin forever.

This hope we have in Jesus is real and enduring. So many of our hopes fade as we get on in years. It doesn't take too long before we come to the realization that our hope of being a professional athlete isn't really in the cards. That is a fine example of a fanciful hope, isn't it? We try to replace such fanciful hopes with more realistic hopes. Success in life. A secure home. Maybe a good job brings some glimmer of hope for a better future. But then a pandemic arises, and the job is gone, or one's business is threatened, or one's own health is in peril. In the world that's hope fading away.

Not so with Christ centered hope. This is a hope that cannot fade away because it isn't earthbound, and it certainly isn't fanciful! It is reserved in heaven for you. Yes, your spot in heaven is secure. Your reservation has been confirmed!

Jesus promised on the night before He went to the cross that He was going to prepare a place for you. He promised that He would come again and receive us to Himself so that we would be with Him where He is! His resurrection proves resurrection is real. His promise, repeated so often throughout the gospels, is that He will call us forth from the graves. Our resurrection is as real and certain as Jesus' resurrection. Our hope is built upon Jesus' resurrection, and that is an unchangeable fact.

No matter what comes our way in this life we have --

II. Hope in the Face of Trials.

Again, Peter grounds us in our faith in Christ.

1 Peter 1:6-7 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

For the Christian, hope and joy of heart go together. I'm not saying that life won't have its trying days. Indeed, Peter is saying we will face trials. He is preparing the children of God for enduring

tribulations of life with faith. There are going to be days when there will be tears. There are going to be days when we will be severely tried. What those days prove isn't what the world would have us believe, that God has failed us. What those trials prove is that this sin corrupted world fails us, and **this** life will never be perfect. Christ endures, and so our faith in Christ endures. If we are tried in the fires of tribulation, our faith shall be purified, for we will lean more and more on the Lord, and less and less on the perishable things of this world in this life.

Our faith is more precious than gold! Our faith shall not disappoint. It will be found intact and to the praise of our Savior Jesus when He reveals Himself in glory at the last day.

We are going through some trials in America. Inflation is driving the cost of living up, while investments in the stock market are down. Credit card debt, which was down just a year ago, has reached record highs as people strive to maintain their standard of living. Some people are at the point of desperation. These trials impact our individual lives as well. We each face our own troubles. Health issues increase as we age. Financial distress can enter one's life so suddenly. Pain and sickness, and disappointment, and of course, persecution are all part of each Christian's life.

For the child of God all this shows why it is important that we remain spiritually focused on the reality and the grace of Jesus' resurrection. With the resurrection we are presented with the balm that heals our souls. We absolutely have hope. We have --

III. Hope for What Matters Most - Salvation!

We look for --

1 Peter 1:7c-9 “the revelation of Jesus Christ, ⁸whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls.”

Remember what Luther wrote in the hymn “A mighty Fortress?”
“And take they our life, Goods, fame, child, and wife. Let these all

be gone, they yet have nothing won; The Kingdom ours remaineth.”

(The Lutheran Hymnal 262:4)

These weren't just words that Martin Luther wrote. It was a confession of faith! Luther lived through the black plague. Luther ministered to many people dying of the plague. Luther lost children to death. Luther lived under the ban of the pope. Luther was declared outlaw! Luther lived through times of war, when the Turks were at the borders of German states. None of that dimmed the joy and hope that he had in Christ as his risen Savior! Through all the trials of life we possess the same absolute assurance that comes with knowing that our Redeemer lives! We already know that Christ has brought us the salvation of our souls.

That is what a real and living hope does for us. It isn't simply tranquility, although we do know peace, peace of conscience, because we know we have peace with God. We also know the outcome of our lives. In the face of sadness and even pain we still know the joy of sins forgiven and we rejoice in the hope of eternal life that is ours in Christ Jesus, our crucified, risen and ever-living Lord. And so we sing our “Hallelujahs” with joy in our hearts to the Lord!

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)