

Title: A Living Hope  
Text: 1 Peter 1.3-9  
Theme: Our hope is based on the resurrection of Christ  
Occasion: Resurrection Day 2020  
Prop Stmtnt: Our hope lives because it is in Christ and not in ourselves.

We are not going to miss Resurrection Day and we are not going to miss celebrating this day the way it ought to be celebrated. Our first Sunday back, whenever that is is going to be Resurrection Day. Besides, it should be obvious, that it doesn't matter how big the stone is, or how many guards you post. You cannot stop the resurrection of Jesus.

Our text for this morning is 1 Peter 1.3-9 (read)

Have you ever met someone who was just a little too happy? Either nothing seemed to phase them, or they seemed oblivious to what was going on around them. Their attitude and outlook does not seem to match the circumstances. We might be tempted to accuse Peter of being a little on the oblivious side. He is writing this letter during the reign of Nero. Nero is the guy who wanted to do some urban renewal in the city of Rome, so he burned it down and blamed it on the Christians. This is also the same guy, who so hated Christians, that he would impale them on stakes, then light their bodies on fire and use them to illuminate his garden parties. Not only that, but Peter is writing this letter to Christians whom he identifies in v.1 as exiles. These are believers who had to run for their lives because they were singled out for persecution due to their faith in Christ. We've been quarantined to our homes, they were exiled from theirs (Israel) and were now all spread out throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia (sounds like a beverage at Starbucks right?), Asia and Bithynia. These are all regions of what we identify today as the country of Turkey. So, all of these people have had their lives completely upended. The government is a looming threat. For them almost nothing is the same as it used to be. They really do not know what is going to happen or what is going to happen to them. So, why is the tone of this letter so encouraging, hopeful and dare I say, upbeat? Is Peter oblivious to reality? Or, with a not so veiled reference to Inigo and Westley (Princess Bride) does he know something that we don't know? Here is what I want you to see. Our reality (our life, our experience, our existence) is not properly understood until we see the greater reality. The greater reality helps us define and comprehend what actually matters in our reality. I want you to see that and I want you to see how the resurrection of Christ helps shape and define the greater reality. That is what the Holy Spirit through Peter is saying to these believers and to us. After the greeting (verses 1-2) he begins the letter to these exiled and displaced believers, now living in a land not their own, with a doxology.

### 1. **Doxology** (3a)

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!”*

When you really understand what Peter is saying here, you realize that he is not giving a sentimental pep talk. Peter is not making light of the circumstances. He is not ignorant of the cost that these believers have already had to pay, the griefs they are experiencing and the sorrows that await them. He knows it well. In chapter 1 he talks about being sober-minded. In chapter 2 he speaks of the emperor and the governors and in chapters 3 and 4 he talks very plainly about

suffering. In fact, he gives a lot of attention in this letter to suffering. So, if that is the case, why does he begin this letter with expressing praise to God? Is he mocking them? No. Is he acting as if he is living on a different planet than they are? (You know, sort of the like the celebrities instagramming photos of their quarantine from their tropical islands). No, not at all. This doxology, this expression of praise, this opening song and adoration is not an out of place, mindlessly repeated religious expression. To be blessed has various nuances to it, and one of those is being happy. Now, happy is certainly not all that being blessed means, but it is definitely not less than that. Do you remember how Jesus began his first publicly recorded sermon in Matthew 5? Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and those who are persecuted for righteousness sake. Jesus is describing the qualities of truly happy people because he is describing the qualities of people who follow him, BECAUSE he is describing himself. Jesus is the ultimate blessed man.

Jesus is blessed. Jesus is happy, satisfied, content, full of joy, warm, embracing, merciful, empathetic, pure, humble, and reconciling because his Father is like that. That is what Peter is saying. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! We ascribe and acknowledge joy, happiness, and blessing to God because that really is Who he is. But there is more. Our doxology, our blessing God is not ritualistic. There are reasons why we bless God and those reasons are wonderful theological truths that Peter points out in verses 3-5.

## 2. **Theology** (or why we bless God) (3b-5)

Have you listened to how some people try to express their care and concern, or how they try to counsel others through this pandemic? It is like trying to say something meaningful at a wedding ceremony without mentioning God. Without God, there is no meaning, there is no substance, there is nothing to sink the teeth of your heart into. And in this pandemic, without God, there is really nothing to ground your hope in. The Prime Minister of England goes into the ICU this week, and the world says, “You are in our thoughts.” And I’m the guy screaming at the TV saying, “Is that all you’ve got to say? Is that all of the comfort you can offer?” Boris, you are in our thoughts, like that is going to do anything for Boris. Imagine his doctor walking by his room and saying, “you are in my thoughts.”

Again, some people mean well when they say that you should not panic. I think this is actually a good time for some people to panic. Now, I don’t mean panic in terms of buying 500 rolls of toilet paper and ...by the way, who bought all of the bread flour and popcorn? I don’t mean panic like that, but it is a good time to panic about your life and the after life if you aren’t ready. After all, your body panics when you can’t breathe because if you can’t breathe, you are going to die and if you are not prepared to die, then your soul has every reason to be terrified. Joanne Cacciatore, a research professor at Arizona State University and author of a book on the heartbreaking path of grief recently said, “I don’t think I’ve ever seen this sort of public attention on mortality.” I agree, but I don’t want you to just think of the public attention to mortality, I want you to consider your personal and private attention to mortality. When you consider the possibility (and for some, the probability) of your death, what do you come up with? Panic? Despair? Complete loss for answers? Or, comfort, even praise? How can we praise God in the midst of this uncertain life? Why do we bless God?

### **A. Because of who he is - (3b) he is merciful**

Look at the middle of v.3. “According to his great mercy, he has caused us...” What God does is based on who he is. “He has caused us” is an action of God. “He has caused us” is something that God has done. Every action of God is based on who God is and God is merciful. God acts in accordance with who he is. The actions of God all stem from the character of God and the attribute that God loves to be known for is his mercy. God not only claims to be merciful, but God does incredibly merciful things. Our text lays out 3 amazingly merciful things that God has done. Two of them are things that he has done for us right now and one is what he has in store for us in the future.

### **B. Because of what he has done for us.(3b)**

#### 1) He has regenerated us - he has caused us to be born again

What did you do to arrange for your conception? Did you pick out your mom, then pick out your dad, then uploaded their names and personal info into a dating site so that the algorithms would pick them for each other? Did you convince some friends to introduce them to one another so they would date, fall in love, get married and have you? You did not cause your conception. Neither are you the cause of your salvation. This is how merciful God is. He caused you to be born again. He is so merciful that he did not leave your salvation to chance. In fact, he is so merciful, that he didn't leave your salvation ultimately up to you. He caused it! Why do you believe in Jesus? You believe in Jesus because he gave you the faith to believe in Jesus. And when you believe in Jesus you are given a living hope.

#### 2) He has given us a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ

Over and over, medical people are saying that this Covid-19 thing is unlike anything they have ever seen. One local doctor from Beaumont-Trenton wrote an article for the Detroit News this week and he said that you can throw out about everything that you know about viruses. These doctors and nurses have been incredible, but they can't guarantee that everyone will be okay. But, look at what God has done for us through Christ. God has given us a living hope.

Now, there are two kinds of hope. Most of the time when we use the word hope we are talking about the possibility of a positive outcome. And if the possibility of a positive outcome is slim, we will say that we have a sliver of hope, or that one can always hope. But, the possibility of a positive outcome is just that, a possibility. And a realist may analyze that and say, “don't get your hopes up.” But, when the NT speaks of our hope in Christ, or in this case, our hope through Christ, this hope is not the possibility of a positive outcome, but the guarantee of a positive outcome. And Peter says that it is a “living hope.” It is a hope that is a live and will never die. It is a hope that is guaranteed because it is through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Let me explain why that is. The Bible is like a mirror that is held up in front of us that reveals our sin and our rebellion against God. And what the Bible reveals is that our sin is so offensive to God that it demands the penalty of death. It also reveals the fact that we cannot make it up to

God. Our good is not good enough. The debt that we owe is too great. No matter what we pay, or what we do, it will never buy God off. We need a payment that we cannot afford. We need a forgiveness that comes from outside of us. This is why Peter expresses such praise to God. Because according to his great mercy he has provided this payment, this redemption, this salvation in Christ. Christ came to this earth and he lived a life that pleased and delighted the Father because it was a perfect life. Now, let's stop here for a second. When I say he lived a perfect life, I don't mean a charmed life. Far from it. He lived on this earth and experienced loneliness, misunderstanding, pain, grief and every sorrow and fear that you do expect without sin. He was raised in Nazareth. If they had tracks in those days, Nazareth would have been on the other side of them. (Know what I mean?) His life was lived in our place, not only as a substitute, but as an experience. It is comforting to know as 2 Cor. 1 points out, that there are people who have experienced similar struggles as you. Jesus did, but he did it perfectly. But, his life is more than an experiential touchpoint. It's not less than that, but is more than that.

His perfect life made him the perfect sacrifice that would pay in full for the sins of every single person who would ever trust him. The sentence for sin is the death penalty. He offered up himself as that sacrifice, as that offering as that penalty payment when he died on the cross. But his death was not the end of his life or the end of the story. He rose again from the dead. What a great come back, right? It is SO much more than that. Remember, his death was the payment for our sin. His resurrection was the proof that the payment for sin had been made in full and accepted. I've told you before that the death of Christ was like the signing of the check that paid for our sin. His resurrection was the proof that the check cleared the bank. Death was the consequential curse of sin and with the wages of sin being paid for by the death of Christ, death not only lost its hold on Christ, but death cannot keep its hold on you if you are in Christ. You see, when you come to faith in Christ, you get forgiveness. You get redemption. You get salvation. You get adoption. You are declared righteous. You get eternal life, but all of these are because you get Christ. When you trust in Christ, you get Christ. You are united to Christ which means that his life is now your life, his death is your death and his resurrection is your resurrection. Your hope is a living hope that has been bought and paid for by Jesus. That is why it can never be taken from you. If you are a follower of Christ, you have this living hope, not because you are holding on, but because he won't let go. If you are not, trust Christ, right now!

The resurrection of Christ from the dead is the foundation, the grounding, the source of your living hope. This is what we live with now, but there is more. We bless God not only for Who he is and what he has done but...

### **C. Because of what he has secured for us in the future. (4)**

This pandemic is devastating some families. People are dying. People who thought that they still had years ahead of them are now, gone. Jobs are being lost, businesses are suffering. People who have poured their lives into their careers, restaurants, and companies now find themselves having to lay off workers, and trying to find a way to stay open. Right now we are in survival mode, but this is going to affect us for a long time. Don't miss this moment. Life, as you know it, is uncertain. Don't pretend that it is. Don't assume that your plans are going work out. But, here is what you can plan for: If you are in Christ, you get Christ and in getting Christ, you get what Christ gets. Your inheritance is safe. What is in store for you is imperishable. It cannot die. It is

undefiled, it cannot be contaminated, moldy and thrown away. It is unfading, it cannot lose its value and it is kept in heaven for you. No one can steal it or cheat you out of it. Now we see why Peter praises God and calls us to join him. We are reminded of *who God is*, what *he has done for us now*, what he *has secured for us in the future*, and because of what *he is doing for us now*.

#### **D. Because of what he is doing for us now. (5)**

God is guarding us. God is keeping us and he is keeping us through the faith that he provides us. We believe in him and keep on believing in him because he keeps on supplying us with the faith to keep on believing him all of which is preparing us for the end of our salvation, which is life with him - forever. God does not leave your salvation to chance. Therefore, what is our response to this? Again, this text is assuming that you have already come to faith in Christ. If that is true for you, then your response is...

### **3. Response (6-9)**

#### **A. Rejoice (6-8)**

“In this you rejoice.” Knowing what you have forever in Christ (ultimate value, ultimate importance, ultimate worth, infinite joy) helps you face and endure what we have temporarily on earth. “Though now for a little while if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials.” Peter knows what they are enduring, but he knows that the trials will not win. Jesus wins because he has already won. Therefore, though there is grief in the trials, we can still rejoice because what we have in Christ is never threatened even by a trial.

The rejoicing though, is not only because the trial will not last, but the rejoicing is because that even through the trial, God is refining us. I do not like this pandemic, but I love the fact that many of you are praying more than you ever have. I love the fact that many of you are becoming more focused on living for Christ and sharing the gospel. I love the fact that many of you are loving your church family more than ever before. I love the fact that many of you are realizing that your values have been out of whack, or you have been spiritually complacent and God has used this as a wake-up-call. So, yes, we grieve the pandemic, but we know that our merciful God can use even a pandemic to bring about a glorious end. In that, we can and should rejoice.

#### **B. Love Christ (8)**

I love the tenderness and encouragement of verse 8. Think about this. By the time this letter was written, the heart and soul of the church was made up by second generation believers. The 1st generation Christians, the ones who had seen Jesus with their own eyes, who had actual memories of what he looked like and sounded like, were dying off. Now, comes the next generation who believed, but did not see Jesus. That is like us. We love him even though we have not seen him. And whatever you can imagine that it will be like when you see Jesus, it will be better. It will be way better. You cannot love him too much. You cannot esteem him, treasure him, trust in him too much. So, beloved, rejoice in Christ, love Christ and keep on believing him.

### **C. Believe in Christ (8-9)**

Verse 9 speaks of the “outcome of our faith is the salvation of our souls.” You cannot rejoice in Christ and love Christ without believing in Christ. What Peter is saying is that the outcome of rejoicing in Christ and loving Christ is the salvation of our souls. The safety of your soul is the greater reality. Nothing matters more than the safety of your soul and when you know that your soul is safe, there is no reason to panic. You can face pandemics, uncertainties, trials, and anything else this world will throw in your face, with deep emotion but with a deeper hope. Nothing can move you.

#### **Conclusion:**

Earlier I asked if you knew someone who seemed a little too happy. At the same time, do you know people who complain way too much? Here’s what I mean. Some of you are on the front lines of the pandemic. You are involved in life and death situations with too many of them being death. That world in the ambulance, nursing home, hospital or funeral home is part of your world, but it is not the day to day experience of others. Here you are, on your way home from work wondering which person you cared for is going to live or die. You are wondering if you should try to grieve or disconnect, feel or forget when a friend calls you and is all upset and angry they just realized that due to the extended lockdown, they can’t get their haircut for another 3 weeks and on top of that they can’t find bread flour and popcorn and they are wondering how they can live. If you do not realize what really matters, then you are not in a position to assign the proper values to the things that don’t. But when you realize Who really matters and what Christ has accomplished by his life, death and resurrection then, when you turn from your sin and trust in Christ, then even in this valley and the ones yet to come, you can sing. The greater reality of our resurrected and returning King defines and informs our reality, forever.