

Sermon 4/19 and 23/17 What is our hope? I Peter 1:3-9

Dear Hopeful in the Lord:

What do people hope for?

- Good physical health
- A cheerful state of mind
- Financial security
- Friends
- Pleasant family relationships
- Independence
- Opportunity to help others

What is our hope? Where is our hope?

- It is easy to become bogged down by the routine of life
- It may seem that our lives are an endless cycle of the “same old, same old”
- Is there really anything in our daily lives to get us really excited
- Is there anything in life that really gives us meaning and purpose to keep going

There are so many voices in our world today clamoring for our attention. There are so many stories or approaches to life that are saying to us: Here it is!

There was a time in America when the Gospel message of the Church stood out among all of the voices that people heard. There was a time in America when...

- Going to church on Sunday was the social norm
- Most people knew their Bible stories
- Everyone went to Sunday School

Today all kinds of stories are being told in America...

- The Christian message is no longer the primary story or the privileged story
- Our culture today is similar to the early Christians of the Apostle Peter's day
- Our culture today is hostile to the Christian faith

One Christian author says: “Look at the tabloids lining the supermarket checkout stands. The headlines scream news of people's perversions...people are not ashamed of their sin; they boast about it...true believers must realize that the state of our society is the result of the righteous judgment of God...our primary task is to preach the truth of God's Word...we must saturate our minds and hearts with the truth of Scripture and refuse to yield to the spirit of our age...we must understand

our own sinfulness and know how to deal with our sins.” John MacArthur pp. 58ff The Vanishing Conscience

We deal with our daily sins by daily repentance and reception of God’s Word into our lives.

The people to whom Peter is writing these words had a tough life. Their lives were a lot tougher than our lives are today. They lived with physical persecution of their faith.

These believers of Peter’s day were on the run...

- They were forced from their homes and lost their jobs
- Some were imprisoned and killed
- Some were separated from their families
- All Christians were slandered by the culture and the government

In July of the year 64 AD the city of Rome burned to the ground. Many citizens of Rome believed it was their insane emperor Nero who started the fire. Many historians suggest that it was Nero who in fact started the blaze that burned Rome down to the ground. Nero wanted to rebuild what he thought would be a better Rome. The people of Rome were upset that they lost their homes and the temples where they worshiped false gods. They were ready to turn on their own emperor. The people of Rome were homeless and hopeless and many had lost their lives in the fire.

Nero had to find someone to take the blame for this fire. He had to save his own neck. He directed the anger of the people against the Christians. The Christians were already hated by the general public of Rome. It would not take much to turn Roman citizens against them. It worked. The Christians began to be hunted down by the people of Rome. They were considered hostile to the Roman culture. Nero spread the word that the Christians had started the fire. Believers in the Roman empire suffered because...

- They refused to worship the emperor as god
- They refused to worship at the pagan temples which causes a loss of money by the temple owners
- They exposed and rejected the horrible immorality of the pagan culture

Therefore...

- Christians were fed to the lions
- Christians were being crucified, lynched, imprisoned and burned

Peter wrote these words to teach believers how to live in the midst of a hostile world which was hostile to their faith. Peter taught them how to live...

- Without losing hope in daily life
- Without becoming bitter by circumstances of daily life

- By trusting in the Lord for their daily lives
- By looking forward to the 2nd Coming

Peter sums up our Christian life as a call to victory and glory through the path of suffering in an unjust world with the strength of the Lord.

In the midst of this horrible suffering Peter writes these words to the believers across the Roman empire and tells them: **“Live every moment not in view of your suffering, but in view of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.** His resurrection means your resurrection someday.” V3

Peter encourages these suffering believers to “Praise God for His mercy” even though they are living in a terrible, terrible situation. Peter reminds them that no matter how bad their lives are, they have a goal, a purpose in Christ Jesus and that is to receive “an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade ---kept in heaven for you.” Here it is...our hope!

Heaven is real!

How do I know I will receive this inheritance? How do I know that I will stand before the Lord in His mercy and not in His judgment?

Peter says **“Look at the resurrection!”**

At times we may doubt God’s forgiveness because of our sinful nature, the sinful world and the devil accusing us of our sins as it says in Revelation 12.

- We struggle with our sins that come from our sinful nature
- We struggle with our sinful thoughts that come from our sinful nature
- We wonder - Am I really forgiven?

Peter says: “Look at the resurrection!”

- Here is our hope
- The resurrection is the stamp of God’s approval of Jesus’ death which took away our sins

God reached out and changed...

- Our life...our past...our present...our future
- Our daily boring routine with no hope to a life that is filled with the certain hope of the resurrection

Peter reminds us in verse 3 “We have a new birth through the resurrection.”

The Greek word for “new birth” means **“to change the mind of one so that he lives a new life.”**

We have a new birth because we have been given a living hope from our Lord. Hope that is confident optimism which...

- Comes from God as a gift and is real
- Is secured by our Lord's resurrection
- Is confirmed by the Holy Spirit in us See Romans 15:13 "You may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."
- Produces joy in our hearts

Is your life a little like this past winter we had in December and January: cold, hard and dead?

Remember: You have a new life in Christ. Here is our hope!

We have been reborn with the restored image of God.

- Our old person of sin has to take the back seat in our lives
- The new person in Christ is now at the wheel with the Holy Spirit
- The old person of sin is in the back seat and tries to grab the wheel but our faith is the "metal-mesh screen" between the front and back seats.

It is the power of God through the Means of Grace that makes the screen of faith strong.

Look at the resurrection!

- See what a difference it has made in our story, our personal lives
- Because of God's mercy we really have a life, after all
- We really live...we don't simply exist going through the motions or daily routine
- We have a vital thrilling relationship with a vital thrilling and living God

When the risen Christ comes into a person's life through the mercy of God that person becomes a living and dynamic creature of God. We have hope in life and not despair. I Thessalonians 4:13

We still live with sin.

- Sin brings all sorts of trials and problems into our lives
- Our sins and the sins of others tries to rob us of our joy in Christ

But Jesus is bigger than anything that would even ruin our lives

- When Jesus rose from the dead he defeated everything that ever defeated you
- Like the believers of Peter's day we may look beyond the "trouble spots" of our lives
- Like the believers of Peter's day we are called to see our inheritance that is ours in Jesus
- Heaven is for real!

Peter says in verse 4 that we can always "count" on our inheritance...we may always have hope. Our hope is assured to us through the resurrection.

Our inheritance is...

Incorruptible + Immortal + undefiled

- Incorruptible – it does not tarnish or corrode
- Immortal – it is eternal
- Undefiled – is preserved for us in heaven; unstained by evil
- Hebrews 11:1-2 “Faith is being sure of what we hope for”

Peter says in verse 5 that we will “be kept in this faith by the power of God.”

Remember Peter is speaking to believers in his day who were poor, beleaguered, persecuted, slandered and slaughtered. He says to them and to us: “Hold on! Live in Christ who is your hope!”

We have a personal, intimate relationship with the Lord of the universe through His Son. How important this is to remember for us who suffer in this life. I Corinthians 6:17

- We need God’s mercy
- We need this “hope” in eternal life
- We need this confident optimism that can cut through all the “rotten stuff” in this life
- Psalm 146:5 “Blessed is he whose hope is in the Lord”

Whatever is of this world will “fade away” like flowers that wither and decay.

- Not so with what we have in Christ.
- No one can steal your treasure.
- No one can disqualify you from receiving it.
- Saving faith never dies

Peter says in verse 6 we are to “rejoice”

- Our joy is not based on the changing daily circumstances of our lives
- Our joy is based on our unchanging relationship with God
- Yes we will have trials but remember that...
 - Our troubles will not last
 - Our troubles serve a purpose
 - Our troubles will not diminish our joy in the Lord or heaven

Sometimes God allows trouble to test our faith so that we may grow in our faith. V7

Our trials and endurance will be to God’s glory and praise v8

Right now we possess a constant deliverance from sin and the devil as a benefit of our faith. V9

Faith is like a fortress

- The walls of a fortress keep the people safe within

- The teachings of Jesus Christ keep us safe within
 - God sent Jesus to die for our sins
 - Jesus perfect life means righteousness for our imperfect lives
 - Jesus' resurrection means our resurrection
 - The Holy Spirit keeps us safe for eternity

Therefore, we confess our sins, receive God's forgiveness and hold on to Jesus' promise of paradise.

Heaven is for real! This is our hope!

"Jesus may our hearts be burning with more fervent love for you; May our eyes be ever turning to behold your cross anew. Till in glory, parted never from the blessed Savior's side, Graven in our hearts forever, dwell the cross, the Crucified." LSB 423 v3