

April 19, 2020
1st Sunday after Easter

A Living Hope

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from the God and Father of our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. I was preparing for Easter sermons and I came upon a very interesting quote I'd like to share it with you. This is this individual's description of the Easter season. I quote: "It is the season to proclaim with joy and boldness, that all in which we had previously, falsely hoped has been put to death." What have we falsely hoped for? Well, we had hoped for a quick Small Business Administration Payroll Protection Plan; a plan whereby businesses could easily get a loan to keep their workers in place for eight weeks. It did not go as smoothly as we hoped. We I think all hoped for a quick 'Care Act' stimulus check to show up in our bank accounts. And as of the recording of the sermon, it has not found its way into mine. I think we had hoped for quick approval of unemployment insurance for those who lost their jobs because of the coronavirus and the shelter at home call. We're hearing about individuals who weeks, almost a month, later still have not gotten unemployment. I think we had hoped for a short-lived shelter at home order. And we're finding that if anything it sounds like it's going to go longer and longer and now some penalties are being put in place. A family of Seven that went out for a drive and got some Slurpee's at 711 were fined \$1000 each. I think we all had hoped for a better return on our investments in our 401K's and 403B's and other pension type plans and they've not gone so well recently. I think in fact, actually the majority of Americans had hoped for unity to come in our country. There has been such a divide between Republican and Democrat or right and left and so many people within our country. And yet even in the midst of the coronavirus, a pandemic; there seems to be an awful lot of finger pointing. Here in California, I think we were hoping for a March miracle. We had a very dry January in February and we're hoping for storms to come in in March and bring us up to normal on rainfall. it didn't happen. And so, when this person says that Easter is the time to proclaim with joy and boldness that all in which we had previously falsely hoped has been put to death; I think the person is saying we all have a lot of false hopes. Because we all put our hope in things that end up being disappointing.

But that's where Easter comes in. The season of Easter is a week of weeks. That is, beginning on Easter Sunday for Seven weeks, so that's a week of weeks. Each one of these weeks being Seven days, so for 49 days, we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord. We look back at it. We get the false projects, the easy answers on which we have pinned our hopes, have actually been pinned or nailed to the cross and left dead in the tomb. Because Easter is a time living hope. This is what Peter writes: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ according to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again through a living hope. How? Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. A living hope is a hope that actually is alive. And members of Zion, I'm sure that you know what I'm going to say about the word hope. In the Greek language, hope is much different than our word hope in the English language. We say things such as; I hope I win the lottery, knowing that our chances of winning the lottery are like one in 15 billion or something. In the Greek

language, the word hope is an assured expectation or a promise with a unfaltering guarantee. When we look at Easter, we look at the false hope. For instance, the false hope of the Old Testament. And understand I'm not going to be going off and saying scripture is wrong, but the whole sacrificial system it was set up so that it was incomplete. There was a false hope in it if you thought that your sins could be forgiven, and that you could have eternal life through the sacrifice of the goat, or the bull at atonement; or that you could be delivered for all eternity through the blood of the paschal or Passover lamb . The reality is with both of them, there was precious little hope because the goat died, the bull died, the lamb died, and they stayed dead. Therefore, if you send after that, there was no more blood. In fact, the whole concept of sin and how atrocious it is, was made very clear in the day of atonement and the sacrifice of the goat for the people, and the bull for the priests. The sins of the people were also then placed on a second goat, the scapegoat, and that goat was pushed out of the encampment, pushed out of town. It was sent into the wilderness the idea was take our sins away from us so that we can live for the Lord. This had to be done every year and there was no real hope in it because they were always sinning, and the people were always sinning, and they were always having to sacrifice, and it was never enough.

Which brings us to Easter and what Peter is talking about. We now have a living hope because Jesus is the Lamb of God, the Paschal, the Passover Lamb of God. He gave His body, He shed His blood to deliver us from our sins. And then He rose. He lives. In fact, in John 14 verse 19; Jesus himself tells us how important Easter Sunday and this Easter season is, our focus on the resurrection. Jesus said, "Yet, a little while and the world will see me no more. But you will see me." Let's just stop there for a moment. "Yet a little while and the world will see me no more." When He died and was buried, the people would not see Him anymore. This is very much like our sermon last week on Easter Sunday, when Paul was in Athens and preaching. When he finished preaching, there were those who mocked it said this is stupid, this idea of someone rising from the dead. When your dead, you're dead. And there were those who said, this is an interesting thing, could you come back we'd like to hear you some more? A Paul's reaction to those two groups of people was he left. He had told them, they weren't interested, he left them. There were those who also had faith; they put their faith in Jesus and Paul talked with them and they became the followers of Jesus Christ. When Jesus says, 'yet a little while in the world will see me no more and you will see me.' He is saying all these people who have been around the Pharisees the Sadducees, the skeptics whatever; when I rise, you're not going to see me. They've had their time with me. I' going to focus on those who have put their faith in me. And so just as Paul spent his time with those who he had ministered to and who had listened to him and put faith in Jesus; Jesus appeared to those who had put their faith in him.

Now let's go back to that verse John 14:19 and let's hear it in its totality. Yet, a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; and because I live, you also will live. There's the living hope! We put our faith in Christ and because He lives, He is the living hope. We have the assured expectation that we will live. Now and eternally. We are alive now but, with faith in Jesus, eternal life has already been given to us. But wait, there's more! Peter goes on and says, 'we are born again to a living hope through the

resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.' We are born again to this living hope and it is a hope to an inheritance; Peter writes; an inheritance that is imperishable. I'll tell you on Easter Sunday this one just came home so loud and clear to me. It wasn't during the church service, it was afterwards. I was at home; the family was there, and I have been out in the garage actually doing some work on some furniture I'm building. And I came in because it was getting close to time to eat and when I came into the house what was on the TV; my wife my family videos from when I was a child. At the point they were at, I was like 4 years old. I saw my aunt and uncle, grandparents my grandfather who I myself never actually remember seeing; and then my other grandpa "Papa" who I only remember seeing once or twice before he passed away when I was only five years old. And I was watching it and I was just flooded with memories draw a line they have inherited the Kingdom of heaven it's imperishable it's not going to decay and pass away like this world and the stuff we have here; this lasts for eternity. All of these loved ones who I know loved the Lord, are already experiencing it. It's also undefiled it's no garden of Eden, there's no sin to defile it. It's also unfading. That means it keeps its glory. The furniture I was working on is a dining room table and then a table for outside and I was putting this epoxy finish on it why, because it's supposed to last longer. The normal spar varnish finish on a table outside will last for a couple years but then it starts getting cloudy and foggy and it doesn't look so good. Then you need to sand it and redo it, so I'm doing epoxy that should last, they say about 70 times longer. But it has a shelf life too. But not heaven. It's unfading. It's always glorious and this inheritance that comes as a result of being born again to the living hope; we read that it is kept in heaven for you. It's a reality. It's a reality right now but it's kept there for us.

When it says kept in heaven for you, who are you? For we are the ones. He, as Peter says, by God's power. So, this is not our doing, this is the doing of God. Who by God's power, are being guarded through faith. Did you catch that? It who by God's power, are being guarded through faith. That faith is a gift of God. Again, it's not our own work. It's what God works in our hearts, through the power of the Holy Spirit. And that faith that guards us, is more precious than gold that perishes. Because eventually this earth is going to perish and that's why we're told store up for yourself treasures in heaven. How do you do that? Have faith. It's more precious than gold that perishes, because it's for a salvation. This faith is for a salvation. what kind of a salvation? A salvation ready to be revealed at the last. It will be made so unbelievably clear on judgment day when our Lord returns, and we are restored. Restored, resurrected, brought back from the dead, and we know this can happen because Jesus Himself has risen. Restored body and soul because our soul does not die. Those family members who I saw in that video, their souls are alive in heaven with the Lord right now. But on judgment they don't be restored, body and soul brought together. Restored to what was meant to be in the Garden of Eden. That we would live with the Lord forever. This is our hope, this is the living hope that we have. The assured expectation, the guarantee that is backed by God. And so, I ask you, what is your response? Well, I'll tell you what Peter says, "therefore (since all this is what's happening) therefore preparing your minds for action. In other words, get ready to live. So, prepare your minds for action, being sober minded, that means well thinking or scripturally thinking. Set your hope fully, on

the grace, the undeserved love, that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ when He returns.

We are to set our minds and prepare for action, which takes us to our gospel reading this morning. Easter Sunday, Jesus rose. He met with the women, the angel met with the women, then Jesus met with women. Jesus met with Peter. Then Jesus met with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. And still with all this news what did we find? The disciples hiding in fear and so Jesus comes to them. What does He do? He gives them three things. First, He gives them a benediction or a blessing. It's very simple, "Peace be with you." I've shown I have power over death. And He does say 'peace be with you' twice. Then He gives the second thing. Even as the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. He gives them a Commission, a job, a purpose in life.

Again, I find it unique that the latest modeling for the coronavirus has less people dying from the coronavirus this year, than suicide. Why are we not addressing this fact? It's only a 10th of the number of people who are committing suicide. Why is this happening? People are going on drugs people are taking their lives because they have no purpose. And with Christ we have a living hope and we have a purpose because He has called us, and He has sent us. And it's even more than that. The third thing that He says to them is 'receive the Holy Spirit.' The Holy Spirit who works faith in our hearts, that great gift from God, that great gift that protects us, that great gift then lets us see this hope, this living hope. Easter, this Easter season is about hope. The living hope, Jesus Christ. The One who gives us peace, the One who gives us a commission. It gives us purpose and the One who gives us the Holy Spirit to enable us to live this hope.

I'd like to remind you that we are to be ambassadors for Christ. An ambassador is one who serves in place of another. So, if Jesus is the living hope Christ, as ambassadors for Christ, we are to be a living hope. And I think everyone hears this sermon would agree, it's what our Country needs, it's what society needs, its what our friends and families need.

In our Savior's name, Amen.