

Our Living Hope – 1 Peter 1:3
Sermon – Pastor Joe Davis
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INTRODUCTION

HOPE. A sure and confident hope based on what's really true. A hope that endures through the hardest of times in life. A hope that's alive. A hope that's life-giving. This kind of hope simply can't be found within the worldview currently being presented to our youth in schools and currently being promoted as fact on TV shows, at every national park, through most news outlets, and in thousands of other ways every day...a worldview that begins with the non-negotiable assumption that there is no God and that the design and order visible everywhere in the universe and the miracles of life, brain power, reproduction, DNA,...to name just a few...are simply the result of millions or even billions of years of chance and accident arising out of nothingness.

And while the motivation for the development of this elaborate worldview is to leave behind God and moral accountability and "free" people to do what they want and ignore their innate sense of right and wrong, the end result is actually an incredibly hopeless world...a world where hope is very hard to come by. Oh people are still desperately looking for it in a thousand different places, but there's no foundation for whatever hope they find and at most it simply amounts to wishful thinking. How can you find hope if the world is simply random chance and accident, survival of the fittest, and there's no absolute truth, no guide for life, no overarching purpose in it all? The best you can do is try to be "good" person, based on what that peculiar thing called your conscience still tells you is good and right; or try to just enjoy the pleasures of life and/or numb the pain when you face it. Is it any wonder that suicides, drug use, depression, gender confusion, mass shootings, are all on the rise?

But, my friends, those of us in Christ don't have to live in the hopelessness or fragile wishful thinking that a world without God is left with. Why? Because through Christ, God has given us ***a living hope***...a hope that's alive...a hope that's life-giving...a hope that's based on absolute truth that endures forever...a hope that we can build our lives on and know without a doubt will prove true...a hope

that the world needs desperately! And this is what Peter wants us to embrace and think about as he begins providing us with the foundation we need to endure and even thrive in the midst of trials, testing, hard times and persecution...to thrive as God's chosen sojourners just passing through this world that's not our home.

As Peter begins expounding on the great salvation God has given us in verses 3 through 12, he first zeroes in on this living hope we have through Christ. Turn with me in your Bible to 1 Peter chapter 1 and let's read verse 3 to 5 to begin our study today:

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

May the Lord bless the reading of his Word and enable us by his Spirit to understand it this morning.

These 3 verses are just jam-packed with deep and life-giving truths that, when believed and lived, will quite literally transform our perspective, our priorities, and our purpose for each day we have left on this earth. So don't fall asleep today. The rest of 1 Peter won't make sense without the foundation provided in verses 1 through 12 of the book. And to experience the full effect of this foundation, we need to unite head knowledge with heart belief and a commitment to actually living in light of these truths. Today I want to share with you 4 truths about the living hope God has given us in Christ, truths that, when believed and acted upon, can begin transforming us to be people of hope in a hopeless world.

OUR LIVING HOPE CALLS FOR ENDLESS PRAISE TO GOD THE FATHER

The first truth is this: *Our Living Hope Calls for Endless Praise to God the Father.* Notice as Peter begins in verse 3 that his first statement is a call for God the Father to be praised. ***Blessed be*** [or "Praised be"] ***the God and Father of our Lord***

Jesus Christ! In other words, what Peter is about to share about what God the Father has done for us, when properly understood and believed, will lead us to continual praise – with words, with songs, and with our very lives – to God the Father.

From the rising of the sun to it's setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised! Amen?! And when we truly understand who God is and what he's done and continues to do for us, this praising will not be a burden or a duty, but a natural response of gratitude and gratefulness and joy as we live in the reality of who he is and walk with him through life. And this overflowing song of praise to our God and Father will start welling up when we understand one of the core realities of who God is...and in fact the one which Peter identifies as the core motivating factor that caused Him to take action on our behalf.

OUR LIVING HOPE COMES FROM THE FATHER'S ABUNDANT MERCY

And this brings us to the second truth about our hope: *Our Living Hope Comes from the Father's Abundant Mercy*. Notice as we continue in verse 3, that short phrase: ***According to his great mercy***. This can also be translated: ***According to his abundant mercy***. You see, God doesn't just have a little bit of mercy that trickles down occasionally from time to time, if we're "lucky." No. He is overflowing with mercy. It's who he is. His heart toward the people he's created, even when they rebel against him and suppress his truth, is mercy. He has mercy and compassion on all people and longs for them to be reconciled with him and living under his loving care.

Think about this: God the Father is a Father. And he didn't become a Father. Rather, it's who he is. He is Father. And for those of us who are imperfect, human fathers, even we know what it's like to feel great mercy toward our own children...even when they've made terrible choices and rebelled against us and have a heart of anger toward us. Still we feel mercy for them and long to see them reconciled to us and back to good ways of living and free from bitterness and the harmful choices their making. And if we're good human fathers, we'll do whatever it takes to make the way for that to happen. And when our sons do finally come home and want to reconcile with us, we won't hesitate or put up barriers, we'll run to them, embrace them and welcome them home. That's what a good Father does.

And this is the way God the Father is to all people. Only his mercy is way beyond what we can muster up in our humanness. Abundant, overflowing mercy, doesn't come and go with God, or fluctuate in any way. Instead, its who he is AND his mercy motivates him to actually take action on the mercy he feels. ***In accordance with his great mercy***...in other words, because that's who he is, this is what he did. He acted consistently with his character.

So what did God's abundant mercy motivate him to do on behalf of sinful, rebellious sons and daughters? Well, of course, it motivated him to send a Savior, his only Son, to lay down his life for them and pay the penalty that another aspect of his character demanded: *his justice*. And in this way, all people would have a way to be reconciled with him through simple repentance and faith in what the Son had done on their behalf...their sins forgiven, their debt paid, their shame taken away, and peace with their merciful Father restored forever. Aren't you thankful for the abundant mercy of God the Father? Doesn't it make you want to praise him? We all desperately need God's mercy, don't we?

OUR LIVING HOPE ARISES AS THE FATHER CAUSES US TO BE BORN AGAIN

Now remember, as we continue on in verse 3, that Peter is writing this letter to followers of Christ, those who have accepted God's gift of salvation and forgiveness through repentance and faith in Christ and are seeking to follow him. So let's look now at what God the Father, out of his abundant mercy, did for each of these people who have accepted his great salvation. And herein we'll find the third truth about our hope: *Our Living Hope Arises as the Father Causes Us to Be Born Again*. Verse 3 says: ***he has caused us to be born again***. The Greek word is *anagennao* – regenerated. And to generate something is to create it. So the idea here is re-creation...new creation...re-birth.

And the picture we're given of being born again is so dramatic in fact that when Jesus was telling Nicodemus about in John chapter 3, he was like: *What?! Born again. How can a grown man be put back into his mother's womb?* Of course, Jesus clarified for him that this re-birth was not physical, but rather a spiritual re-birth...being born again spiritually by the power of God's Holy Spirit. But still this re-birth was no less significant than if a person were to be physically re-born. Jesus also made clear that being born again was not optional if a person wanted to be reconciled with God. Without being born again, one would not even be able

to see the kingdom of God, much less enter it and live in it at peace with God and filled up with his presence.

This picture we get of being born again is not just a little band-aid to heal up some wounds...not just God cleaning us up a little here and there...not just re-working our spirit a bit so it functions better...not just some medicine to cure our sickly spirit and revive us. Instead the picture is removal of the old and re-creation of the brand new...the picture is resurrection...spiritual death to spiritual life...death to our old self and life to our new self...dying to our sin and being raised to new life with Christ. In other words, being born again is big. Its significant. Its radical.

You see, something amazing and life giving happens within us at the very moment we trust Christ for salvation. We don't necessarily feel it, but when its happened, we soon begin seeing the effects of it in our lives, and in our desires, and in our ability to conquer sin, and in our hunger for God and his purposes, and on and on. In short, being born again brings us from death to life spiritually and we see and enter the amazing world of the kingdom of God...the realm where God comes to act with us in this life and guides into his purposes, making us more and more like Christ in our words and actions, accomplishing his will on earth through us, and preparing us to reign with him when his kingdom is fully revealed to all at the return of Christ.

And God the Father is the One, out of his abundant mercy, who through his Spirit makes this happen within all those who repent of their sin and trust in Christ for salvation. Are you a "born-again" Christian? The world loves to belittle and mock the idea of a "born-again" Christian. Its right up there with fundamentalist. But don't ever underestimate the significance of being born again and the transformation the Spirit has brought about within you that has prepared you to actually walk in the power and presence of God, become like Christ in your affections, words and actions, and reveal his glory to the world as by his power you accomplish his will on earth.

OUR LIVING HOPE IS FOUNDED UPON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

And this brings us to the 4th and final truth about our hope from verse 3: *Our Living Hope Is Founded upon the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*. Did you notice at the end of verse 3, what made it possible for us to born again? For us to move

from death to life? Our resurrection is only possible through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Father has caused us to be born again THROUGH the resurrection of Christ. Scripture refers to Jesus as the firstfruits of those alive from the dead. It was through his own resurrection, that he made the way for us...that he secured our resurrection from the dead, both spiritually in this life as we're born again and then one day physically when receive our glorified bodies at Christ's return.

The resurrection of Christ is what gives our hope a foundation. It's not a take it or leave it aspect of Christianity. The resurrection of Christ is central to our living hope! Without we have no hope. Without it there's no salvation. Think about it: if even Christ's body was not able to be raised from the dead, then certainly ours won't be able to be raised either. And if Christ is dead right now, how can he save us? How can a dead person give us new life? What good would it do to put our faith in him? No. The resurrection is the foundation of our hope.

Listen to how Paul expresses this in 1 Corinthians 15, verses 14-26:

¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. ²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴ Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death.¹

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (1 Co 15:14–26). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

What a hope we have since Christ truly has been raised from the dead...a reality that's confirmed by the witnesses of the resurrection... over 500 people... including the apostles, many of whom died because they would not renounce the fact that they had seen Jesus alive from the dead and all their hope was fixed on him...so much so that even the threat of physical death through martyrdom couldn't shake their faith in him. They knew that on the other side of those painful final moments was the life that is truly life...eternal life in the presence of the living Christ in their true home, never to die again.

According to his great mercy, God the Father has caused us to be born again through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And this new life he's given us...this resurrection of we who were formerly spiritually dead like the rest of the world...has given us a life-giving hope that will not disappoint us or prove unfounded. The Greek word for hope is *elpis*, which means a "favorable and confident expectation...the happy anticipation of good" (*Vine's Expository Dictionary*). It has a foundation that gives us confidence. It involves eager expectation and anticipation. And it's an expectation of good things to come. This is the kind of hope that God, our merciful Father, has given to us. A living hope that simply can't be found apart from him.

In our next message, we'll see that this living hope involves a future inheritance that's reserved for us in heaven and is supported by the active work of God on our behalf right now to ensure that we come into that inheritance when our salvation is finally revealed for all the world to see.

APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

Are you walking around today with the living hope the Father has secured for you through the resurrection of Jesus Christ? And do others see that hope within you? That's God's intention for us: that we are a people with living hope, offering living hope to a world desperately trying to find it. And if you haven't seen the hopelessness of lost people around you, even those who project a good image of having it all together and living the good life on Facebook and in their public image – then look a little deeper. Take the time to listen to people...to ask some hard questions. Talk to them in their down time.

You see there are so many people, and sadly even many Christians, who are rushing around, busy with the American dream, with being entertained, with trying to find fulfillment in things that can never satisfy. And if they can stay busy and not think too much and push down those troubling thoughts like: *What are we doing here? What's life about? Is there any meaning in it all? is there anything I can know for sure? Am I spending my life on what's important?* – if they can keep these thoughts at bay, they can mask the hopelessness for a while. But when tragedy strikes, when life falls apart, when difficult times come, when dreams fail to come true, that's when we have a chance to see if people truly have hope or not. And if they do have some sort of hope, we find out what it's based on and if it has a foundation.

And my friends, there is no sure foundation for hope apart from the one true God, his abundant mercy, and being born again through Christ ...the only path to a certain and good future with God in his kingdom no matter what hard times we may face in this life. Let's live that new life he's given us, filled up with his power and wisdom through his Word and continual prayer, walking into his good purposes for our lives, being sanctified by him, and offering the living hope he's given us to others. As Peter will tell us in chapter 3, verse 15: ***always [be] prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.*** In other words, our living hope should be visible to other people; so much so that they ask about it and why we have hope.

How do we become people who live out the hope we have so that it shows? Well, Peter gives us two clues in what he shared with us today in verse 3, and he'll give us more when we focus on verses 4 and 5 next time. But it begins first with comprehending that in Christ, we are not just like everyone else in the world, with the exception that we have some morals and some purpose and a guidebook for life. No. We have been radically changed on the inside through being born again and God's Spirit now dwells within us. Do you believe that today?

This is not a minor thing. This is life as opposed to death. We are different on the inside and have the capacity to change, to please God, to do God's will by his power, to say no to sin, to adopt the life-giving ways and practices of Jesus himself. God has given us everything we need within to start leaving behind our self-centered ways and the destructive habits we've gotten chained up to throughout our lives. But until we really believe this is true...until we believe we

are actually different on the inside and that we do have God's power ready to give us what we need as we ask; and until we believe with more than head knowledge, but with a willingness to take action on what we believe. Until then we will have anemic, weak, fragile hope that will struggle to see us through the hard times and will not look much different from the world around us.

So it starts with comprehending and living out of the reality of new birth through Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. But then the second clue Peter gives us is found in that abundant mercy of God our Father. How do you view God the Father right now? Does he seem harsh, intimidating or distant? Does he seem demanding and do you feel like he's always disappointed in you? Well, my friends, to grow living hope in your life, you need to see your Father as he is...the good, good Father who is full of mercy; who loves you with a love that doesn't change even when you sin; the Father who, even when he disciplines you, is doing it with perfect love desiring your good and freedom.

He's the Father who acts like the father in the prodigal son parable, hating to see you self-destructing and longing to see you come home and live with him...running to embrace you as you come to your senses and use the path to freedom and reconciliation that's always available to you no matter what you've done. And that's the path of simple and honest confession and repentance whenever you fall into sin and your fellowship with him is hindered. Never hesitate to quickly embrace repentance when you sin. The blood of Christ is enough. And you don't want to spend a moment of your life in broken fellowship with your good Father.

Endless praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He's full of abundant mercy that never runs out and he's caused us to be born again, brought to life, resurrected, made completely different on the inside through repentance and faith in Christ. Are you ready to fully live the new life he's given you, to be transformed, and begin offering living hope to a hopeless world as you show them the abundant mercy you yourself have received from him? May our good Father, our Savior Jesus Christ, and the indwelling Holy Spirit lead us there!

For Additional Study and Application

Read and meditate on Titus 3:4-8. What truths in these verses are parallel to 1 Peter 1:3-5?

According to Titus 3:8, what does Paul want believers in Christ to devote themselves to as a result of what God's done for them? What would that look like in your daily life?

Looking further at Titus 3:4-8 and 1 Peter 1:3, what were the aspects of God's character that motivated him to make the way of salvation for people who were his enemies? In your interactions with nonbelievers (including those with differing political views and those antagonistic to Christianity), do you exhibit these aspects of God's character to them and do they see hope in you? Explain.

How is someone who is born again different from those who are not? List the ways. How does being born again give us hope?

Why is the resurrection of Jesus the foundation of our hope?