

The Lord's Message: A Living Hope

Date: April 7, 2024

Where: Tilghman Methodist Church

Scripture Reference: 1 Peter 1:3-9

Have you ever had news that was so wonderful, you could not keep it a secret? Well, I have. I am bad at keeping secrets. When JoAnn was pregnant with Davey, she told me, and she told me to keep it a secret for a little while. Well, you probably guessed it. As we were leaving a family gathering, I was filled with so much joy that I let it slip out. Peter is having a similar problem. He has this wonderful news, and he can't contain it. He must share it. In Peter's day, one writes a letter to share good news with others. In our day, we would put it on Facebook. There is a format that is used for writing letters. Start with the person who is writing the letter, follow by who it is being written to, and finally a prayer.

Let us compare this letter to Paul's in the book of Romans. Peter simply says in verse 1a. Paul uses 6 verses to get to the point that he is the writer, **Romans 1:1-6**. Peter then tells whom he is writing the letter to. He does not want to leave anyone out. He says in verses 1b-2a. Now Peter has one of the quickest prayers on record in verse 2b. He is so excited about this news.

Before we get into this Good News, let us pray.

Peter starts off with giving praise to God, verse 3a. The reason for this praise is found in verse 3b. God has shown us mercy. We who committed sin, and the penalty of sin was death, have now been forgiven of sin and death has been conquered. God placed our sins, past, present, and future on the body of His Son, Jesus, as Jesus hung on the cross. We are no longer burdened by our sins. Jesus showed the full extent of how much God loves us by dying on the cross for us. Paul says in **Romans 5:8-9**. You and I could not pay the penalty for sin. God did that for us. God made a way where there was no way. That is why this act of love by Jesus is called Grace. Paul says in **Ephesians 2:8-9**. We did not deserve it. We can only accept it. This was the work of God on the cross at Calvary. Oh, how merciful God is.

The news gets better. After Jesus died on the cross, He was placed in a borrowed tomb. For three days, Satan thought that he had the victory over God. God would get the victory. God would not allow His Son to be dead. God raised Jesus from the grave. We are not Good Friday people, but we are Easter people. The cross is empty. The tomb is empty. Alleluia! Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Because Jesus lives, we will live forever. Peter describes this as a “new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Death has been defeated. Death used to be the end of all existence, but through the resurrection of Jesus, death is only a passage into eternity. Peter goes on to say that you and I have “an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.” Our earthly bodies may decompose, but our spiritual bodies will never perish. When a believer in Jesus dies, their spiritual bodies go to be with God. Paul tells us in **2 Corinthians 5:7-8**. Paul tells us at the return of Jesus upon the earth, our spiritual bodies will receive heavenly bodies, **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**.

Peter tells us that this is guaranteed for all believers in Jesus. It is kept in a place that will not perish or spoil or fade. That place is found in heaven – “kept in heaven for you.” Our place is kept in heaven by faith. Faith is described in **Hebrews 11:1**. We cannot see Jesus, but we believe what the Bible tells us. That Jesus was born as one of us. He died on the cross for us. He was resurrected from the grave. He ascended into heaven and is sitting on the right-hand side of God. He will return to take all believers to live in heaven with Him. Peter claims all of this in verse 5.

Peter knows that Christians are going to face suffering. So, he provides them with hope. He says in verse 6. In verse 7, he goes on to say that this suffering is important, because it leads to strengthening our faith.

I said earlier none of us were around when Jesus first walked this earth, but that does not mean that we cannot love Jesus. Peter confirms this for us in verse 8. In verse 9, Peter goes on to say that this love of Jesus is the result of our salvation.

You and I have a living hope because of the resurrection of Jesus. We are not Good Friday people, but Easter people. The cross is empty. The tomb is empty. Our hearts are filled with joy. There will be a resurrection for all of us. When we die, our souls will be with the Lord, until Jesus returns on this earth, and we will be given new heavenly bodies.

This is Good News that Peter could not keep from sharing. We should not keep it to ourselves either, but tell this world that so desperately needs to hear this Good News, so that they will have a living hope as well.

Sharing the living hope of the resurrection of Jesus is how we grow together in faith. Amen.

