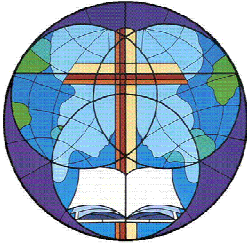


1 Peter 1:3-9

April 4, 2010 – EASTER SUNDAY

A Living Hope† **Forgiveness for sinners** (v.3)† **Inheritance forever secure** (vv.4,5)† **Hidden under cross and trials** (vv.6-9)

In the name of Jesus, our dearest Friend, our victorious Lord and Savior, fellow celebrants of **Hope**:



“We exist to carry out the will of God who has commanded us to proclaim the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ to the entire world. To accomplish this we unite in worship and join together in Christian fellowship. We grow in God’s grace through Bible study. We witness to the world that Jesus Christ is everyone’s Savior through his perfect life, sacrificial death and triumphant resurrection. We desire to share the comforting confidence that everyone can be certain of eternal salvation through God’s promise of forgiveness and peace in Jesus Christ.”

Do you recognize our Mission Statement? You can see it in living color in the round window above our altar. The symbol of the butterfly with the man and woman’s heads joined at the cross and focused on the Bible shows one reason. The hemispheres of the globe show the other. *We Preach Christ Crucified* because He is for us **A Living Hope** and for countless thirsty souls like ours around the world. We’re talking miracles here far beyond the butterfly or moth from the cocoon. This **Hope** holds...

† **Forgiveness for sinners** (v.3)

What a miracle that Peter could write this: *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”* Peter was the most unlikely disciple. Weeks earlier, *“Jesus began to explain...that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ‘Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you!’ Jesus turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.’ Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?’”* (Matthew 16:21-26 NIV)

Peter kept sinning against Jesus. In spite of warnings, before the rooster crowed twice, Peter disowned Jesus three times. A look from the Lord sent Peter out to weep bitterly. That’s all we could do if not for Easter. We would still be stuck in our sins against God and each other. With the world we would all be dead in sin, living only for *self*. Peter could have despaired like Judas in suicide. Instead he waited for Jesus to bring him **A Living Hope in Forgiveness for sinners**. On the shores of Galilee, Jesus showed Himself alive again to forgive Peter and reinstate him. By *“the living and enduring word of God”* (1:23) you and I *“have been born again”* with a *“new birth into a living hope.”* Because Jesus *“was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification,”* *“we were...buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”* (Romans 4:25;6:4 NIV), Easter shouts in triumph that God is satisfied. Your sins are all forgiven. With Peter we have a **Living Hope** that comes with an...

† **Inheritance forever secure** (vv.4,5)

No one works for an **Inheritance**. This is a gift from God which cannot *“perish”* in estate taxes or be *“spoiled”* by quarreling relatives. Our **Living Hope Inheritance** is secured from spoilage by

Jesus' last will and testament (διαθήκη – 1 Corinthians 11:25): ***“Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.”*** His New Covenant is one-sided: ***“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”*** (Hebrews 8:8-12 NIV) **Living Hope** makes us bright and beautiful like springtime butterflies because ***“It is finished”*** (John 19:30) by Christ alone. We will enjoy our **Inheritance** in glorified bodies like His, full of energy in an *unspoiled* new heaven and new earth **forever** free from sin's decay.

Because Jesus lives, our **Inheritance** ***“can never...fade.”*** In Paradise plants and flowers stay bright forever because ***“death has been swallowed up in victory.”*** (1 Corinthians 15:54) Think how pleasant life would be if clothes never faded, or the paint on your car stayed shiny forever. What if you never had sun damage on your siding or UV rays wrecking the finish on your windows or your skin? Christ is the light of heaven. No sun (Revelation 22:5) will damage that land. There ***“faith, hope and love”*** (1 Corinthians 13:13) ***“never fade.”*** Our Lord Jesus keeps making everything new (Isaiah 43:18f; Revelation 21:5).

This **Inheritance** is literally ***“guarded in heaven for you”*** while you ***“are shielded by God's power.”*** Satan never stops trying to make us hate the cross like Peter. A world of sinners want us to despair of anything good from God. Politics can never provide an **Inheritance forever secure**. But Jesus did. He came at the right time to win our ***“salvation.”*** The full enjoyment of all Christ won by His death and resurrection ***“is ready to be revealed at the last time.”*** But for now, God says our **Living Hope** is...

✠ **Hidden under cross and trials** (vv.6-9)

Look how true to life our window really is. At first, some don't see the face of the man and woman. Some not even the butterfly. But the cross is clear. That's how God made it happen in His-story where Old and New Testament meet. Jesus' enemies wanted secrecy, but God packed the Passover in Jerusalem with pilgrims and soldiers. Roman governor Pontius Pilate and King Herod were in town. Mob arrest in the Garden, illegal Jewish night trials, nothing could keep everyone from seeing this gruesome spectacle. An innocent man was condemned by His own church, robbed of justice and forsaken by friends. Not one of the blind or deaf He healed, not Jairus' daughter or the widow's son from Nain or Lazarus – all He raised from the dead, not one of the 5,000 He fed miraculously, no one stepped forward willingly to help Jesus carry His cross. Jesus had to suffer alone, publicly for all to see.

But Easter? Jesus' glorious resurrection? Only chosen eyewitnesses were allowed to see the resurrected Christ during the forty days between Easter and Ascension. God hid His glory under Jesus' **cross and trials**. As surely as you can see the cross and barely the butterfly, so God hides His glory in our lives **under cross and trials** too. When you come to Jesus in faith, expect tears and heartache.

That makes this all the more a miracle. **Living Hope** in Jesus gives the troubles of this life meaning and purpose. Our risen Lord Jesus says through His holy Apostle Peter: ***“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”*** Yes, we will be praising Jesus as the Champion who delivered us from sin, death and hell. But don't you know? He will be praising us as God's own children, giving us ***“glory and honor”*** in places reserved at His wedding banquet for His holy bride. ***“Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”*** Such grace, our **Living Hope!**

Since God so loved us to keep all His promises in Christ crucified for our sins, since God has the power to raise Jesus from the dead in satisfaction for our forgiveness, you can be sure your eternal soul is safe. God's power and love will bring you home. Keep your mind on the cross and your eyes on God's Word. Let the world know our **Living Hope** in Him. ***“And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever.”*** (5:10f NIV) Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Amen.