

Living Hope!
1 Peter 1:1-12
Easter Sunday
9th April 2022
Preacher: Pastor Roy Summers

“All is Lost”

In the film “All is Lost” Robert Redford plays a sailor in the Indian Ocean whose boat is hit by a stray shipping container which rips a gash in the hull. From that moment onwards, one disaster after another strikes the sailor: eventually he has to leave the sinking boat behind and set out on an inflatable life raft. In spite of firing off flares passing ships fail to see him. He ends up setting fire to his life raft by accident and the film ends with him sinking below the waves, at which point he sees a searchlight above looking for him. He swims upwards and grasps an outstretched hand but the film ends abruptly leaving you wondering whether he was rescued or not.

None of us can live without hope—which is perhaps why “All is Lost” only gets a 63% audience score on Rotten Tomatoes. Someone put it like this: “As food is to our bodies so hope is to our souls.”

Hope is the conviction that tomorrow will be better than today, that something about life today, our health, our employment, perhaps a relationship or family life, whatever, is not as we want it to be, and so we are looking forward to better things in the future.

The most remarkable feature of hope is that it has the ability to cast a backward gleam across our present lives. Some future event, a holiday, a cure, a new job, a restored relationship, brightens our present lives even though it may be months or years away! Future hope lights up our present lives!

Without hope, without a better tomorrow, we can so easily sink into the sadness of despair.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, is all about hope! Not merely the fact he personally rose from the dead, no, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 2000 years ago, is the basis of our hope, if we trust in him.

Our Bible verse is: *God “has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...” (1 Peter 1:3)*. Peter connects Christian hope to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead; the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the source of Christian hope, and this is what I want to explain and share with you on this Easter Sunday morning.

Peter calls Christian hope, “living hope”, because he wants to distinguish Christian hope from ordinary hope, from holiday hope, from exam result hope, from better job hope, from medical cure hope. The Hope Jesus offers is better than all earthly hopes!

(1) Living Hope is the Hope of heaven!

The fundamental promise of the Good News of Jesus, the Gospel, is heaven. Peter is talking about *“into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you.”* “An inheritance”- inheritances lie in the future! “Kept in heaven for you” - heaven is not now, but future. The promise of the Gospel is the hope of a new life in a new body living in a gloriously renewed heavens and earth in the immediate presence of the God who made and loves us, for ever and ever! Living hope is future Hope!

We must stress this again and again - because we so easily fall for earthly hopes - that living hope is the hope of heaven. And some preachers deliberately twist the Gospel to increase followers by teaching *“Come to Jesus and he will give you health, wealth and prosperity.”*

The Lord is good to all who trust in him. He promises to watch over us and protect us, *“He will not let your foot slip”* (Psalm 121:3), but he does not promise us perfect health in this life. Jesus came to *“to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.”* (Isaiah 61:1), but he does not promise perfect mental health in this life. The Lord promises to provide for all our material needs, *“according to his riches in glory”* (Philippians 4:19), but he does not promise to make us wealthy in this life. He encourages us to pray for one another like this: *“May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed.”* (Psalm 20), but the Lord does not promise prosperity in this life.

Christian hope, Living hope is future hope, it’s heavenly hope! I think of a Christian man who had a severe health condition. He went to one faith healer after another, but none of them cured him, so he ended up condemning himself for his lack of faith -

that's what the faith-healers told him "if you're not healed it's not our fault—it's your lack of faith!" It stumbled him seriously.

God is good to his children! As we look back on our journeys can we not say, *"Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life?"* (Psalm 23). Can we not confirm Romans 8:32, *"He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"* And say with Paul in 1 Timothy 6:17, *"God richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment."*

God is good to us in this life, our future in this world is as bright as the promises of God, but let us all have it fixed in our minds: Christian hope, living hope is the hope of heaven! An inheritance which...**"Can never perish"**—every human hope can perish—you may be made redundant or sacked from your brand new job; your newfound wealth may be stolen from you or lost on the stock markets. Earthly hopes can perish, but not the eternal treasures of heavenly hope! **"Can never spoil"** - the new car wears out, someone scratches it at Sainsbury's, the new house needs constant maintenance, but our heavenly inheritance will never spoil! **"Can never fade"** - one week on a cruise ship may be enjoyable, but a month or a year? Our satisfaction with heavenly treasures will never diminish with the passing of time!

All human hopes may fail, but heavenly hope never fails! During the second world war, prisoners in the concentration camps kept themselves sane with the hope of a better life after liberation! *"Many survived the war... by calling up daydreams of their past lives until they were almost certain that, the moment they were liberated, they would find themselves in the same happy, beautiful world they knew before the war. All their past difficulties would be forgotten, freedom would take them back to a world where nothing had ever gone wrong...a future paradise in which all people were good and all homes beautiful."*

But all their hopes were dashed. Their families were dead or scattered, their homes were destroyed, and Europe was a wasteland, *"Imagine a world without institutions... a world where borders between countries seem to have dissolved... There are no governments anymore... no schools or universities, no libraries no access to information whatsoever... no cinema, theatre or television. The radio occasionally works... no one has seen a newspaper for weeks... there are no railways or cars... no food... law and order are virtually non-existent. There is no morality only survival..."*

This may be an extreme example, but the reality is that human hope is often disappointed, is it not?

And so we must remind ourselves, again and again, that Christian hope, living hope, is the hope of heaven, a future inheritance that can never perish spoil or fade!

(2) Living Hope is based on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

Many of you know the story. On Good Friday Jesus Christ, pure and innocent, was crucified by the Roman authorities aided and encouraged by the Jewish religious leaders who were envious of his popularity.

Early Sunday morning, Jesus victoriously rose from the dead! Some friends who went to the tomb at dawn found the sealed door-stone rolled away and the tomb empty. A shining angel told them, *“Do not be afraid for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples “he has risen from the dead..” (Matthew 28:5-7)*

God has given us every proof that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead: The tomb was empty. No-one was able to produce a dead body—which would have squashed the resurrection belief in an instant! Jesus was witnessed by many people over the span of 40 days. He was seen in many lighting conditions from darkened rooms to the bright outdoors! He was seen by individuals and by groups, one made up of 500 people! And on top of the eyewitness reports Christianity was founded, grew and spread across the world based on this one miracle! Thousands of people, both then and today have given up their lives to death for Christ, and none of them would have done that for a lie!

There is no doubt, Jesus was raised from the dead! And this single miraculous event in the history of the world is the foundation for the promise of living hope. But how, you ask, does the resurrection of Jesus 2000 years ago give us proof of heaven for us?

1) *The resurrection of Jesus shows that there is life beyond death.* Well, to start, the resurrection of Jesus proves that there is life beyond the grave: one man has returned to prove that life does not end at death. But where shall we go beyond the grave? Shall we punished for our sins and go to heaven or be forgiven and welcomed into heaven?

2) *The resurrection of Jesus demonstrates that he paid the penalty for our sin.*

On Good Friday, Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, which the Bible says is sin, “the soul that sins will die”, “the wages of sin is death.” Jesus was punished in our place so that we could be forgiven and go to heaven, rather than hell. How do we know he paid the penalty for our sin in full? Well he stopped being dead! If the penalty was death, then we know it was paid in full when he rose from the dead! If a judge issues a penalty of 10 years in prison, we know the penalty has been paid for when the prisoner has been released from jail! The resurrection of Jesus confirms the full payment of our sins! So that we can be forgiven and be welcomed into heaven.

And more,

3) *The resurrection of Jesus was the first-fruits of a harvest,* the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:20. In Bible times everyone got excited when first fruits appeared, whether grapes or olives or whatever. Why? Because first fruits were the promise of a great harvest to come. One man has risen from the dead, he was the first-fruits, therefore a great harvest of resurrections will follow—all those who believe in Jesus Christ will one day rise from the dead to eternal life!

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of living hope!

And finally, on this Resurrection Sunday morning: Living Hope brings us joy in this present life, joy in the midst of all our pains and sorrows.

(3) Living Hope brings us Joy to this Life!

The Christian people Peter was writing to here were passing through many trials, verse 6. And so will we! This world is a broken world, a fallen world—you don’t need a preacher to tell you that! “All kinds of trials!” writes Peter!

But what does he say at the start of the verse? “In this you greatly rejoice!” In what do these Christians greatly rejoice? That they have been born again into a future inheritance that can’t perish, spoil or fade, and that while they are waiting for that future glory they are being shielded by God’s power!

The absolute certainty of heaven gives them great joy, here and now!

Some holiday companies these days encourage you to download their app—who doesn't encourage you to download their app? The guy at Lidl's check out this week was urging me to download their app! - and when you open the holiday app it tells you how many days, hours, minutes and seconds are left before your off on holiday! Designed to build hope, to help you through a difficult day at the office, an unhappy family situation, whatever, "Soon you'll be in paradise!" The prospect of future happiness is meant to brighten present cloudy days! That's how hope works!

There's nothing wrong with earthly hope! Nothing wrong with looking forward to a better job, a new house, a holiday, and whatever other good gift our bountiful Lord may send our way! But let's remember that all earthly hopes are uncertain.

Let us learn to hold lightly to earthly hopes
But hold firmly to heavenly hope!

"We are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness." (2 Peter 3:13)

Conclusion

How do we take hold of this hope in the first place?

Well, it's something God does, says Peter, "In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope."

And it is something that we do, we have to believe, further down in verse 8, Peter says, "Though you do not see him now, you believe in him."

"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Romans 10:9