

A Living Hope

Michael J. Nielsen / General

Hope; Promise; Resurrection / 1 Peter 1:3–9

- › Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!
- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Risen and Victorious King. Amen.

You turn on the news and there is very little that is positive right now. Job loss numbers increase, CoVid deaths increase, CoVid numbers continue to grow. Death still happens. Other sickness still happens. Mental health declines. Loneliness is becoming a reality for many. There's very little that is improving our spirits. Even this last week we had several days where we woke up to snow on the ground.

We are all seeking something to hope in right now? You and I hope we can get back to the "new" normal soon so we can gather with friends and family. You and I hope that we can get in the garden or go to a ballgame sometime in the near future. You and I hope that our government and healthcare leaders are directing us in the right way. You and I hope that the Scientists researching this virus find the right therapy for it and then a vaccine.

We are now at the end of week 5 at the safer at home mandate. With what I foresee may be many more weeks to come. It's hard, we are looking for some good news. There are times that I am thinking we are looking for good news in all the wrong places. The good news that we have is found in the Holy Scriptures. Listen again to St. Peter's opening words here in our text:

Lutheran Service Book Three Year Lectionary *Second Sunday of Easter*

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.

Christ Jesus promises us a living hope. It's a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's a living hope that provides you with an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. This is good news. Martin Luther comments on this text by saying:

Luther's Works, Volume 30 And to an Inheritance Which is Imperishable, Undefiled, and Unfading.

This blessing is ours forever and ever, even though we do not see it now. These are powerful and extraordinary words.

Then he goes on:

Luther's Works, Volume 30 And to an Inheritance Which is Imperishable, Undefiled, and Unfading.

He who knows what they mean will, I think, not be greatly concerned about a temporal blessing and pleasure. How can anyone cling to a perishable blessing and to pleasure if he really believes this?

This question is so true. How can anyone cling to a perishable blessing and pleasure if he really believes that the blessing of a living hope that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading is actually his? You and I have been desiring to cling to the blessings of the flesh, but where has that gotten us? Many are wondering when things are going to go back to the way things were? We want our sports back, we want our social gatherings back. We want business to start back up. I get it, so do I. These are only mere perishable blessings. Will our sports be in heaven for us? Will our finances be there in heaven for us? Will our academics be there in heaven for us? Will our other earthly pleasures be in heaven for us?

Listen to Luther again:

Luther's Works, Volume 30 And to an Inheritance Which is Imperishable, Undefiled, and Unfading.

For if one compares the worldly blessing with this, one sees that the former passes away completely and lasts only for a time. Only the latter remains forever and is not consumed. Furthermore, the former is totally unclean and defiles us; for no one is so pious that the temporal blessing does not make him unclean. But

this inheritance alone is pure. He who has it is forever undefiled. Nor does it fade, wither, and rot. Everything on earth is changeable, even if it is as hard as iron and stone; it lacks permanency. A human being is ugly as soon as he becomes old. But this inheritance does not change; it remains fresh and green forever. On earth no pleasure is so great that it does not become unpleasant as time goes on. We see that one becomes weary of everything. But this blessing is different. All this is ours in Christ, by God's mercy, if we believe. It is given to us gratis. For how could we poor people merit such a great blessing with our works? No human reason and intelligence can grasp it.

These are powerful words from Luther on these verses of Good News. It's so true, our worldly physical blessings do not last. We are experiencing that even now. Our worldly blessings are not permanent. They do not last. Yes, we still have some of them by the grace of God. We still have our homes. We still of electricity and water. We still have food and clothing. The Lord God continues to bless with many of our first article gifts. Yet, dear family of God these we only have by his grace.

Yet, we have this greater gift. This living hope that is kept in heaven for you. This living hope is the opposite of an empty, false, deceptive hope. This empty, false, deceptive hope is of the devil. He wants to give you hope that is really no hope at all. He wants you to be your hope in the things of this world and not in the living Christ. This living hops is not living because it is bright, strong, and active in us...but it's because God guarantees and produces its fulfillment. It's living because the one who guarantees this hope is living! This living hope is given to you by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This living hope that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. This is a remarkable inheritance for you and me. It's not just remarkable it's a life-giving inheritance.

It's the inheritance that is kept safely in heaven for you. Yet, you have it even now. You have it now by the basis of your baptism into Christ. You have eternal life now, even though we aren't experiencing it in it's fullest glory.

This living hope is yours dear Church. This living hope is yours because of the living Lord Jesus who defeated death for you. We aren't the only ones looking for hope. In our Gospel reading we see that the disciples are behind locked doors out of fear of the Jews. They had heard earlier that day that Jesus was alive from

the women, but yet, didn't quite believe it. They were still looking for hope and peace as they were living in fear and grief. Yet then Jesus Christ himself provides them with hope and peace. Living hope and peace. Jesus Christ came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

He did it again the following Sunday when Thomas was with them and he gave him that living hope as well. Thomas then confessed, My Lord and My God!

Jesus Christ provides his people with a living hope. You and I are his people. You and I have a living hope. This living hope is in the inheritance that is fully kept in heaven for you. You will experience this fully when the Lord returns and you awake from your graves.

Yet we have this living hope from the beginning of our spiritual life to the consummation of this life. As Christians there are times we will suffer in this world. We suffer because number one we are sinners and live in a fallen sinful world. Number two we suffer because the world is hostile to Christ and his people. Yet when we suffer, and we all do in our own unique ways. It seems that we are all suffering now...I still don't believe it is persecution of the Church or on the people. We are suffering now because we live in a fallen broken world where pain, pandemic, plague and pestilence befall us. We are suffering now in a world that is plagued with darkness, disease, and death.

Yet even as we suffer, even as we are grieved by various trials our faith be stronger and we praise our God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We have reason to rejoice. We have reason for joy. This reason for joy is that Christ Jesus who was crucified is alive for you. This reason for joy is that Christ Jesus who once was dead and buried is now risen from the dead for you. The reason for joy is that because Christ Jesus died and lives for you, your sins are forgiven.

Dear Church, you have joy, you have a living hope. You have an inheritance this is kept in heaven for you. This inheritance is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. Now dear Church, we are constantly living in world that is need of hope...a living hope. This world needs hope whether it was pre-Covid time, Covid time, or post Covid-time. This world needs the hope that we have, and now is the time to share it. We have to think creatively how we can share this hope. We

can do it. It's the church's time to shine, even if we can't meet in person out of love for our neighbor.

Now hear the closing words of our text written by Peter:

Lutheran Service Book Three Year Lectionary Second Sunday of Easter

8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,
9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

This is more good news for you in a world filled with bad news. You believe in him, you rejoice with with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory. You have the outcome of your faith given to you by the one who lives, the salvation of your souls.

You have salvation dear brothers and sisters in Christ. Rest assured that even during these difficult days, Christ Jesus continues to assure you of your salvation. Christ Jesus continues to forgive your sins. Christ Jesus continues to be with you through this living hope. This living hope because He himself defeated death for you.

In Jesus Name, our Risen and Victorious Lord. Amen.

- › Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Resurrected Lord of Glory. Amen.