

A Living Hope

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[0 : 00] We have a mighty thank you to offer this morning, Lord, to you for all that you are and all that you've done. We are incredibly privileged people to call upon the name of the one who has defeated death and made a way for us to live eternally with him.

We praise your name. You are too good for us to even understand and far too good for us to recount in one or 10,000 prayers.

Praise your name for how faithful and good you are to us, dear God. We really feel it. We really believe it. Thank you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. You can be seated and we'll dismiss our kids to children's ministry.

Here on Easter Sunday, we begin a sermon series through the letter of 1 Peter. So if you'll turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter, we'll be in chapter 1 this morning, verses 1 through 9 or so.

1 Peter chapter 1, beginning in verse 1. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia.

[1 : 17] According to the foreknowledge of God the Father and the sanctification of the Spirit, for the obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.

May grace and peace be multiplied to you. 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.

To an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you. Who, by God's power, are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials. So that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in the praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

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

[2 : 50] Again, this is Resurrection Sunday. Again, we are beginning this series through the book of 1 Peter. And this is really a whole book built on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

You saw, as we read, it didn't take long before the resurrection of Jesus is mentioned explicitly in verse 3. We have been born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord.

And you're just going to see, as you continue through the letter, instance after instance where Peter is talking about the resurrection. And that is because this particular audience needed to be reminded of the resurrection repeatedly, you know, not so much for theological reasons as for psychological reasons.

These are suffering people. And the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a medicine for a suffering soul. And I'm not sure it is for anything other than medicine for a suffering or discontent soul.

I think it's important as we start this series to just understand, just get an overview of what's going on on the ground. As Peter is writing this letter to these people, let's make sure we understand what's going on in their life.

[4 : 15] They are repeatedly described as exiles and sojourners. They are experiencing the realities of being outcast, of not belonging any longer to their previous social circles, probably also experiencing rifts in their family.

We actually see in chapter 3, wives addressed who are living with unbelieving husbands, probably didn't get married as a believer and an unbeliever.

That probably happened after she converted. And so that's actually a really good picture for the way the whole vibe of 1 Peter. The people on the ground are experiencing the thing that that woman is experiencing in her marriage.

Does that make sense? Because she's experiencing what used to be a certain kind of togetherness is gone. And a certain kind of foreignness is present.

And really, that's what's happening to the audience across the board of this little letter. They were of the world, and now they are out of the world.

[5 : 26] Everything is still the same. Same houses, same jobs, same city streets. Only now they don't really fit in.

They are referred to as exiles and sojourners. We saw in verse 7 that they are experiencing various kinds of trials. Later on, we're told that the devil is prowling about, seeking to devour them.

The whole idea is that these folks are in sort of psychological distress. The Bible's clear, or the letter's clear. They're not actually experiencing physical persecution.

They're really just experiencing what you might describe as sort of loneliness in a crowd. Isolation amongst a bunch of people that they used to have real, viable connections to.

And so Peter is writing this letter because people like that have a tendency to do dumb things.

People in situations like that have a tendency to do dumb things.

[6 : 29] You know, it's kind of like a just basic life hack that we all have to figure out at some point. And that is to sort of like, how can I learn to endure discomfort without doing something stupid?

It's kind of like, if you don't figure that out, life just really doesn't progress as it ought to. It's just a common human danger that we all have.

Half of the U.S. economy, I think, is built around easy buttons for us to escape discomfort, right?

And so Peter is very aware that these people are going through a lot.

And what you do as a friend, as a pastor, when someone's going through a lot, is you say, you know, this is all counting for something. Don't return back to the former way of life just because it socially felt better.

Don't freak out about this. Trust the Lord. And so what do you do for someone in those situations?

A resurrection is a unique medicine for people like that.

[7 : 32] And the reality is, as I said a moment ago, I'm not sure the resurrection makes any difference to someone who is not experiencing some kind of fundamental discontentment with the way things are.

I think after I've read this letter over and over and over again in the last few months, here's what I've seen. The empty tomb will do little good to a person who is full of himself.

It just doesn't line up. It doesn't do anything for you. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is really for people who are experiencing very specific kinds of discontentments.

You know, there's a whole list of negative emotions that we typically think of as just like things we shouldn't feel. Anger, jealousy, so forth.

But in reality, if you don't feel those things in appropriate times, you're kind of messed up. Like, can you imagine a spouse who's been cheated on not feeling jealousy? That's an indictment on that spouse if somehow they didn't feel this negative emotion of jealousy.

[8 : 44] Imagine seeing a child hurt by someone and not feeling anger. Like, that would be a deficiency of character to not feel anger in that moment.

And I think discontentment is one of those negative emotions that we usually think of as don't be discontent. Be content. Don't be discontent. Be content. But in reality, there are really good reasons for a kind of fundamental discontentment to exist in your heart.

And if it does exist in your heart, I'm going to talk about five different discontentments this morning that are actually good and righteous and answered by the resurrection. If those things do exist in your heart, this disquietude, this, no, things aren't okay.

If that exists in your heart, then the resurrection is just what you need to hear. It's the good news.

But if you are full of yourself, I don't think the empty tomb has much to offer you.

So let's go through what I'm calling five divine discontentments. Five specific kinds of discontentments we find in this text that are actually good and allow the resurrection to be good news to us.

[10 : 01] And the first one is a dissatisfaction with purely sentimental religion. It is good to be dissatisfied with a purely sentimental religion.

Let me just say it this way. If you are content with any old religion, as long as it makes you feel good, I don't think the resurrection of Jesus Christ has much to offer you.

But if you're looking for something that is actually rooted in history, something knowable, something knowable in the way that we know the rest of history, if you're looking for a religion that has a factual event as its foundation, then the resurrection is incredible news.

Every single year as I preach the Easter message, I want to take a little bit of time to always say to the congregation, we are celebrating an event which actually took place and which is verifiable in the way that any historical event is verifiable.

The very one who wrote this letter, 1 Peter, preached five sermons in the book of Acts in relatively short sequence from Acts chapter 2 to Acts chapter 10, and all of his sermons had three points.

[11:18] Point one, you killed him. Point two, God raised him. Point three, we are witnesses. Every one of his sermons, this man who was so afraid to stand by Jesus that he allowed some little slave girl to intimidate him into denying Christ, this same man now boldly says these three things over and over again in the face of certain death.

You killed him. God raised him. We are witnesses. We will often talk about this using what's known as the minimal facts argument, and that gets expressed in all sorts of ways, and you can go back through, again, pretty much any Easter sermon that I've preached, and there'll be some part of that sermon that discusses this central idea that actually, insofar as you can know that any history existed, insofar as you can know that George Washington existed, or Alexander the Great existed, and so on and so forth, by the measure that we use to understand history being real or false, the evidence that Jesus Christ was crucified, dead, buried, and then rose from the tomb is solid, knowable evidence.

I think that's important to say every single year. One way that we talk about this is by the three E's. The empty tomb, the early creeds, and the eyewitnesses.

The empty tomb, the early creeds, and the eyewitnesses. And again, some of you are remembering this is Christ's greatest hits. I talk about this all the time, but one of the most compelling pieces of evidence for me for the resurrection is that it began to be immediately taught.

That's the early creeds. Immediately taught by the believers in Jerusalem within days of the actual resurrection. And as I always say, every single year, this is not like the tomb wasn't just down the street and could be easily investigated.

[13:25] Jerusalem was not that big of a place. The tomb was readily accessible. So to make the audacious claim that Jesus rose from the dead and that the tomb is empty, that's significant because anybody could have just gone down the street and looked at it, and I'm sure many did.

So that's the empty tomb. And the early creeds, people began to teach this seriously, immediately. Even a skeptic like Bart Ehrman, who walked away from Christianity, not because of the evidence in the Gospels, but because of what he calls the problem of evil.

But even a skeptical scholar like him, who is widely considered today, even today, to be one of the best scholars on the subject of New Testament Christianity, people say openly, Jesus really existed, he really did die, and his disciples really did believe that he rose from the dead, and they began to say so immediately.

And that brings us to the third E, the eyewitnesses. The truth is, is that there were many people who witnessed the risen Christ, and many people willing to go all the way to torturous death, saying what they believed to be true.

That Jesus was killed, that God raised him, and that they were witnesses to this very thing. People were fundamentally transformed from skeptics and cowards and so many other things by the evidence that they saw.

[14:56] And so one thing I'd say is, if you are discontented with mere sentimental religion, and would like to find a religion based on a real historic event, then the resurrection's incredibly good news for you.

Because the resurrection is a real historical event. It really happened. Number two, the second dissatisfaction gets a little bit more into the spiritual.

And that would just be, if you are dissatisfied with superficial self-improvement, then the resurrection is good news to you.

Look at verse 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.

That phrase, born again, is a favorite in the New Testament. It comes from Jesus directly in John 3, 3, who told a person far more religious than anybody in this room, you must be born again, or you will not see the kingdom of God.

[16:07] Jesus taught, and the New Testament teaches, that we are dead in our sins and trespasses and cannot affect change on ourselves. That self-improvement as it's presented in the world is simply folly.

It doesn't work. And that we must be transformed. We must be born again. God must give us a new heart. I want you to entertain me a little bit.

You know, I'm very visual. I imagine a lot of things happening. As I'm working on my sermon, I imagine a lot of things. And I have this image I'd like to see if you could get in your head, too. How many of you know who David Goggins is?

Okay, David Goggins is a, well, you know, like he's the hard-nosed, self-help, you know, motivator guy, kind of a psychopath. You know, mixed results.

You know, some people love him, some people don't, whatever. But he's just known for this kind of brutal, pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps kind of counsel. I want you to picture, if you can, if you don't think of him, just think of a kind of, almost like a fictional drill sergeant character.

[17:14] Just absolutely, just picture a close-up on his face. And he is sweating, he is scowling, hard-nosed, motivational. And he says, get a hold of yourself.

And the camera's just tight on his face. Get a hold of yourself. You can do better. And he's just throwing out all of this advice. And the camera starts pulling away and pulling away and pulling away.

And finally, at some point, you realize that David Goggins is shouting all of this inspirational stuff in a cemetery. That's what the world can offer you.

That's it. We could replace David Goggins' face with Bren Brown or some positive, you've got this, you can do it, you've got all of, you know, you're enough, zoom out.

She's standing in a cemetery speaking to bodies buried under six feet of dirt. We could take the Silicon Valley, Peter Thiel type guy who's thinking philosophically and data-driven, and we can zoom out and see that in reality, all of the world's prescriptions for change are what I would call life coaching the dead.

[18:30] That's it. Life coaching the dead. And if you're content with that, the resurrection's not for you. But the resurrection is for those who have realized in one way or another, possibly by buying a few of those books and trying really hard, that something must happen in you.

Every other religion hands you a list of rules, a list of instructions, and says, now go do it.

Christianity alone insists that you be born again.

Rather than instruction first, it's regeneration first. It's resurrection first. And this possibility of being made a new person is, first of all, it's essential.

It's absolutely essential. You know how hard it is to pastor someone who doesn't have the Holy Spirit living inside of them? It's a bit like being a cheerleader for roadkill.

It's like all of your best intentions are there, but man, if you have not been born again, you lack the fundamental power necessary to be the kind of person you know you ought to be.

[19:49] And the Bible teaches that because Jesus rose from the dead, we can become new people in him. That's what this passage says.

We have been born again to a living hope through the resurrection of the dead. The great news of the resurrection for a person who's tired, of superficial self-improvement, is that God was on a cross bearing not just your sins, but your sinfulness, your flesh, the stuff that keeps screwing you and your relationships up, was on the body of Jesus Christ.

And he endured God's wrath on your sin, for your sin, and took your sin down into death so that it is no more and has no more power over you.

And then he rose from the dead, bringing newness of life to all who put their faith in him. You must be born again. Superficial self-improvement isn't enough.

You must be born again. And the risen Jesus is who makes that possible. Number three discontentment is you should, if you desire a better world, the resurrection is for you.

[21:14] If you think this world is great and no improvement needed, I don't think the resurrection's going to get you very far. It's not going to be very interesting to you, but if you desire a better world, if you've even come to suspect that this world isn't ultimately your home, then the resurrection is

great news to you.

Look back at verse three. 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 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

If you have a longing for a reality that doesn't exist right now and can't exist in this current setup, if you find yourself longing for a world that is free of pain and full of joy and perfectly aligned with the good and the true and the beautiful and you're longing for a world with no more suffering and no more tears and pleasures forevermore, if you find yourself being eager for that and discontent with this world because it is not that and the resurrection that we celebrate this morning, is terrific news for a discontented soul like that because in reality, the Bible teaches that Jesus' resurrection is what's known as the first fruits of the new creation.

We find Jesus in Revelation chapter 21 telling his church, Behold, I am making all things new. We're told in Philippians and in 1 Corinthians 15 that we will one day enter a world custom fit for our risen king and we will receive bodies like him and we will live in a world that we, to be honest, many of us wish were here right now.

C.S. Lewis put it this way, If I find myself longing, if I find in myself longings that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.

[23 : 53] And if you have begun to feel that and you can now see that, oh my goodness, things are not so bad for me actually, but this world is simply not all that my heart yearns for.

If you begin to feel that, the resurrection is incredible news because it means that that world has already begun and that you, if you've been born again, are invited to be a part of it forever, forever up and forever in, as Lewis would say.

The fourth dissatisfaction or discontentment is if you are dissatisfied with fragile mode, then the resurrection is incredible news to you.

Here's what I mean by fragile mode. I mean the approach to life where your happiness and joy are always dependent on circumstances outside of your control. That's fragile mode.

It is absolutely the most fragile way to live your life. Your happiness being dependent on things outside of your control, well, you're a fragile person.

[25 : 01] And if that's frustrating to you and wish that you could find a way to rejoice even when things are hard and to have a kind of indefeatable joy that sustains you throughout your whole life, if you're tired of living in fragile mode, then the resurrection of Jesus Christ is incredible news to you.

Look at verse 6. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials.

So they're being grieved by various trials. Some of the worst non-violent trials you can experience in reality. It's really hard, actually, to be isolated in a crowd.

It's really hard to be isolated from people you once were not isolated from. It's hard not to fit in. It's hard to watch your career go to nothing because your boss doesn't like Jesus.

These are the things these folks are feeling and experiencing, and yet, Peter says that they are rejoicing. They are not in fragile mode. And the reason that they're not in fragile mode is that their lives and their perspectives are tied to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

[26 : 16] Peter is saying this same pattern that worked in Jesus' life will now work in your life. I promise you this. And he uses the language of refinement.

He talks about gold being refined in a fire or stones being pulled out and chiseled and shaped. He says that all the suffering that you're going through is actually just the familiar pattern you saw with the Lord Jesus himself where he submitted himself to death on a cross and then, because of that submission, rose to newness of life and received a name that is above every single name.

Peter is telling them the suffering is producing something. In fact, he stands at the end of the letter and he says, endure this because it will produce praise and glory and honor in the end.

To get out of fragile mode, you have to be a part of the risenness of Jesus. You have to have the kind of life that's plugged in to the risenness of Jesus.

If you would like to get out of the need for everything to be right, for you to be happy, I don't know of another way except to hook your wagon to the resurrected Christ.

[27 : 36] And fifth, finally, I want to talk about being discontent with human relationships. Oh, friends, so many people are so unhappy because they're trying to get something out of a human relationship that it cannot and will not ever produce.

So many people become disillusioned with marriage, with the church, with friendship because they thought in those contexts they would meet people who would fill certain rooms in their heart that only God can fill.

And if you still are thinking that you just need the right people in your life and you'll be happy, you're in, like, super fragile mode. But I think that probably some of you understand that there's only so much even the best human relationship can do.

And that you were made for something deeper than that. Look at verse 8. Though you do not see Him, these are people that are suffering real things.

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 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

[29 : 11] Think about what Peter's saying here. He's writing to people who had never walked with Jesus on the roads of Galilee. They never saw Him break bread or calm a storm.

They never watched Him die. They didn't touch His scars. Peter did all those things. These people hadn't done any of those things. And Peter says, though you have not seen any of that, you love Him.

You haven't seen Him, but you love Him. How do you love someone you've never seen? You can admire a historical figure.

You can respect a teacher. You can be inspired by a dead hero. But that's not what this is saying. This is saying that people, in a rough moment of their life, are in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Love, loving a person requires that that person be on the other end alive. The resurrection makes this great sweetness possible.

[30 : 21] Let me be very sincere. Please listen. Augustine said that God has made us for Him and that our souls are restless until they find their rest in Him.

Listen, friends, you were made to be a friend with the friend of sinners. You were made to walk in the cool of the day with the God who made you.

You were made to wake up in the morning and say, good morning, Lord. You were made to say, good night, Lord, before you go to sleep. You were made to talk to Him throughout the day.

You were made to relate to the God of the universe. And that relationship is only possible because Jesus Christ is alive.

He is risen. And that's where I want us to land. In Matthew chapter 5, Jesus says this, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

[31 : 37] What I've tried to say to you this morning is that there are certain discontentments which should be embraced, cultivated, because they bring us to find sweet satisfaction in our risen Lord.

The empty tomb has very little to offer people who are full of themselves. Is there anybody here who's too full of themselves to experience the glories of the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

I wouldn't know. I'm not sure you would know. but I do know that there are many here with various kinds of discontentments like the ones I've described. And I know that for you, you need to know this.

The living Lord of the universe is here to be your God and will lead you to the point where one day you stand and squint and look back and try to find these feelings of discontentment that you had and they will not exist.

You will not be able to find them. You will be living in total, complete, full satisfaction in a way that goes far beyond our ability to ask or imagine.

[32 : 51] And that's all because after bearing our sins, the Lord Jesus was risen from the grave. So let's end with a little bit of interactivity. I think you'll know what to do.

If you hunger for a religion based on a real event, he is risen. If you want something more than superficial self-improvement, he is risen.

If you find yourself with desires that cannot be satisfied in this current world, he is risen. If you are not interested in living a life on fragile mode but want real promise that suffering produces gladness, he is risen.

If you long to know God and enjoy him forever, he is risen. One more time. Your faith is not a fairy tale because he is risen.

Those who are dead in their sins and trespasses are born again because he is risen. Those whom he saved will live forever with him in perfect world packed with truth, beauty, and goodness because he is risen.

[34 : 05] We can rejoice in trials because he is risen. our souls now have a friend in God because he is risen. Let's pray. Blessed are you, O God and Father of our Lord Jesus.

We praise you this morning for your great mercy. You have caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

God, we thank you for the inheritance that you have reserved for us. It's not going anywhere. It's completely imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.

And it's kept in heaven by the one who keeps all things. Lord, we rest in the knowledge that by your power we are being guarded so that whatever happens to us is by your good and gracious will and will produce glories for us and for you in the end.

And God, we honestly do rejoice that even now, even if we're grieved by various kinds of trials, that what we celebrate this morning means the certain end of all suffering and the certain beginning of all eternal gladness for all time.

[35 : 29] Lord, we do not, have not seen you and yet we do love you. We pray, God, that you, through your Holy Spirit, would help us, Lord, to increasingly walk in relationship with you.

God, I pray for anybody here who needs to be born again, that today they would renounce all of their, perhaps even without their realizing, and all of their efforts at self-reform, and that they would cast themselves on your great mercy in which you've promised to be with the broken hearted and the contrite and spirit and give them new life in you.

And we pray, God, that even today some sinners would be born again and raised to walk in newness of life with you. Lord, you are faithful and good and true.

Thank you for leading us to yourself and loving us so well. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Stand with me. Let's sing. Thank you.