

Although Easter Sunday is passed, Jesus still lives!

1. Our Hope is alive.
2. Our joy is unending.

**TEXT: 1 Peter 1:3-9**

<sup>3</sup>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, <sup>4</sup>and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup>who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. <sup>6</sup>In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>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, <sup>9</sup>for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Let us pray:  
(From CW # 396)

O Savior, when we loved you not, You loved and saved us all;  
O great good Shepherd of mankind, Oh, hear us when we call.

Send us your Spirit; teach us truth To purge our vanity.  
From fancied wisdom, self-sought ways, O Savior, set us free. AMEN

Dear fellow worshipers of our Resurrected and victorious Lord,

Great and significant events of history have most often occurred just at that one time. Then they are past until the next great event comes along. Those great events can not be repeated, which most likely is a reason that they are even considered to be great events in the first place. For example:

- There will not be another discovery of the New World on this continent, like when Christopher Columbus made his great voyage and discovery. However, nations have been founded and established since then.
- There will not be another invention of the light bulb. Thomas Edison rightly gets that fame and recognition. It will not need to be reinvented, we already have it, and no doubt we have even taken this invention for granted.
- There will not be another single-manned flight across the Atlantic Ocean which will receive the great notoriety and attention that Charles Lindbergh received for being the first. Yet in our present day transatlantic flights are a daily occurrence.

Like so many of those, already mentioned historic events, Jesus' resurrection on that first Easter Sunday will not happen again. For us, this means something. This is a real and genuine comfort. This assures us that Christ truly did finish what he set out to do for us and for all people. This fact still remains, **“While Easter Sunday is over and passed, Jesus still lives and rules eternally.”** Therefore, as Peter proclaims to us in today's sermon text, **our hope is alive and our joy is unending.**

## 1.

One time an agnostic and non-Christian Professor questioned a Christian girl. He sought to undermine her trust in Jesus as the Christ, the promised Savior. He said to her, "There have been many who have claimed to be Christ. How can you be sure which one has told the truth? Which one will you believe?" Without hesitation, the youngster replied, "I believe in the One who rose from the dead!"

- God's gift of hope is a sure and certain confidence in our future.
- It is God's gift of a positive direction in life.
- It is built upon his sure and undeniable love for us and for all people.

Jesus' Resurrection gives us that kind of hope, that kind of confidence, and that kind of positive direction in this life and beyond. Indeed, Jesus' resurrection is God's way of saying, in simple and clear language that all can understand, **"Jesus Christ is all that he claimed to be!"**

Recall the words of St. Paul in the Great Resurrection chapter, 1 Corinthians chapter 15. "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:17-22).

Ponder and recall how necessary it is for us to be assured that every sin has been forgiven, has been paid for, has been taken off our shoulders and placed upon Christ our Substitute.

Our sins mount up as a pile of garbage at the landfill.

- They consist of all those times we have chosen to serve self rather than Christ.
- They include all those times we have thought and spoken cruel and inappropriate words of anyone, whether it was before their face or behind their back.
- Those sins are prevalent when we desire to draw up our own rules for living rather than abide by Christ's rules laid out in clear and simple language in the New Testament. At those times we are like the child coloring a picture, but refusing to stay within the lines. We too often refuse to stay within the lines and boundaries of God's law.

By Christ's finished work and his rising from the grave we are free from sin and free to serve him with a living hope and an unending joy.

## 2.

Jesus' resurrection is our springboard for life and all eternity. We truly have reason to live with the vision of heaven before us and the ongoing joy of being called God's People and citizens of God's Kingdom.

Sin and guilt is not the only inhibitor and barrier to such hope and joy. It may also be the hardships and trials of this life. Sin is clearly our greatest barrier, especially when we come to realize that sin is the cause of all hardship, guilt and tragedy in this life.

But today, our text speaks to those times of hardship as ways in which God emboldens and firms up our faith in him. Hardships hold out for us the greater gifts of this life, which flow from Christ's victory over the grave. Peter addresses the hope and joys we possess by faith, especially at those times of severe hardship. "Through faith (we) are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation this ready to be revealed in the last time. 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" (1 Peter 1:5-7).

What a remarkable and picturesque way for God to tell us and show us that we are works in process. He is still shaping us and fine tuning us for his work. Those times of hardship are part of his training and retooling. He is the potter and we are the clay. I recently read of a man who noticed an emperor moth struggling to emerge through a small hole in its cocoon. The man decided to assist this small creature in his endeavor. So he took a pair of scissors and snipped off the cocoon. The moth emerged easily, but it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings. The little moth spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings. It never was able to fly. Later the man learned the struggle required for the moth to get through the tiny opening were God's way of forcing fluid from the body of the moth into its wings so that it would be ready for flight. By depriving the moth of a struggle, he deprived the moth of health. So too, as just illustrated, God uses our struggles to further develop and fashion us as his people.

In view of God's control and his promise that he will not allow us to suffer more than we can bear but provide a way out so that we can stand up under it, we continue to have hope and joy. Saint James told the persecuted Christians in his epistle, chapter 5, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:2-4).

So today, there is work for us to do. This is a privilege. This is a joy. And it finds its source in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Recall those two disciples on that first Easter Sunday. They walked 7 miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They visited with Jesus. They ate with Jesus. Then they recognized Jesus. This had a real and lasting impact upon them. When Jesus disappeared from their sight the two men asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32) But that was not the extent of their enthusiasm and fervor for serving the Lord. Then they got up and returned to Jerusalem on that 7-mile walk to inform the Eleven Disciples. We too will want to go those extra miles for the Lord, to show and share the message of our Risen Savior.

People might think of the Resurrection as the end of the story when it comes to our Christian faith.

- Our Savior was born in Bethlehem
- Our Substitute live the perfect life.
- Our Redeemer suffered and died for the sins of the whole world.
- Finally, he rose from the grave as the King of kings.

But that is not the end. Our Resurrected Lord tells us clearly that the story is by no means over. His work of redemption is truly done, but his witnesses have just begun their work of proclaiming the Gospel to all nation. After appearing to those disciples on the road to Emmaus, Jesus appeared to them and the others in Jerusalem.

**<sup>44</sup>He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." <sup>45</sup>Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup>He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup>and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup>I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."**

We all have family and friends who don't know why Easter is a big deal.

Many do not see Jesus as the fulfillment of Bible prophecies.

Many do not see the comfort and confidence that we possess through a living Lord.

God help us to seek not only growth in our own faith – but the kind of growth that has the intent and purpose to share this one saving faith in Jesus. Let it be known, and make it no secret, that although Easter Sunday is passed Jesus still lives. Therefore our hope of heaven is alive, and our joy to persevere and to serve is unending.

Amen.