

A Living Hope

This morning I would like to talk about hope.

The Portuguese have an expression which says: that hope is the last thing to die! The Oxford Dictionary describes hope as: to want something to happen and to think that it is possible.

Hope is something we all need but what can we realistically hope for in such a complex and divided world? Where truth seems to be arbitrary, and we are raised to put our hope in all sorts of things, which in truth, are being tested and shaken?

For example, what do the people in Ukraine hope for this morning; what do asylum seekers, fleeing war, famine or corrupt regimes hope for; what do the poorest and the outcasts in our society hope for? What do you, and what do I hope for today, and is it wise to put our hope in something which to our intellect and upbringing seems impossible?

What happens when we hope against all hope - what do we do when all we have is hope or even worse, when hope runs out? Let me ask you: how does Christian hope differ from those who are without hope or who have lost all hope?

This morning's scripture teaches us that those who place their faith (and the bible says *faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see*), those who place their

faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and have turned to Him to receive forgiveness for sin, they have the right to be born into a living hope, a hope with an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

So, what is this living hope found in the Christian faith? Let's read what the word of God has to say.

- 3** *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,*
- 4** *and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you,*
- 5** *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.*
- 6** *In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.*
- 7** *These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.*
- 8** *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,*
- 9** *for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

I would like to suggest that a living hope is something which keeps us going when all else fails, a hope, a faith which is protected by God's power, even during the most difficult of times, and under the fiercest assaults by His enemies.

Even when we can't imagine a way forward and feel like giving up, our faith and hope in the resurrection, combined with the love and grace of God our Father, will preserve, and shield us from losing all hope.

Without this living hope, what happens:

- at the death of someone we love?
- at the failure of an idea or of a lifetime's ambition?
- when the world economy crashes, or you lose your job or fail an important exam?
- when a relationship breaks down and hope of restoration seems impossible?

If we put our hope in something which depends on other people or even on ourselves, they, like we, will eventually fail or fall short of expectation. At this moment does hope die? Perhaps, but there remains a hope, a living hope in a faithful and loving God, who has given us His living Word Jesus, the resurrected Lord who has conquered Satan, sin and death.

We place our hope in His steadfast love and mercy, which is new every morning, so great is His faithfulness.

This morning, do you have and hold this living hope in a God who is faithful to the promise of resurrection to eternal life in Christ Jesus?

As the timeless hymn "Great is Thy faithfulness" declares: strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow. Faith in the resurrection, gives you, me, and millions of others a living hope to make it through another day, regardless of failure or of falling short.

The hope we have in the risen Lord, is central to the Christian faith. The Apostle Paul speaking *for* the resurrection to eternal life (as some were *against*) wrote to the Corinthian church saying: *"If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied."*

Christian hope is living and never dies. However, imagine how the followers of Jesus must have felt, when he was crucified along with common thieves? They had hoped He would overthrow Roman rule; they must have lost all hope and doubted in His word, as their Saviour bled and died on a cross at Calvary?

But Jesus gave His disciples much hope, much instruction, many promises and a living hope in who He was and what He was about to do, and what He would finally do, (it took them 3 years and revelation to understand that) even so, all hope

must have seemed lost when he hung on a tree and was placed in a cold, dark tomb on that awful Friday!

But the Father knew otherwise and on the 1st day of the week Jesus rose from the dead and their hope came alive, as He showed himself to the disciples and to over 500 of the brothers and sisters. They were, like we are, living witnesses to a living hope in the Risen Lord.

However, our scripture this morning states: *8 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...*

This living hope we have and hold, is in the person of Jesus Christ, and in a personal relationship with Him. Our spiritual eyes have been opened by the Holy Spirit to see Him in all His majesty and glory and to recognise our need of a Saviour.

But if you remain in doubt, Jesus said these words to Thomas, a doubting disciple: John 20:29... *'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'*

He also said to Martha at the death of her brother Lazarus: John 11:25-26... *'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and*

whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?’

So, whatever you are hoping for, I would like to leave you with this same question:

“do you believe this”, do you believe there is eternal life in Christ Jesus, and have you turned from your past failures and from falling short to put your faith, your trust and your hope in Him; to be born again into a living hope, kept in heaven for you and shielded by God’s power – *“do you believe this”*?

Amen



ALL NATIONS
TODAS AS NAÇÕES