

A Living Hope - Sunday 22nd November, 2015

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,⁴ to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,⁵ who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” 1.Peter 1:3-5

Beloved in The Lord,

Our hope, our Christian faith is solely based upon one very important historical event – The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ on Easter morning. This is the greatest event in human history and it is at the very centre of our faith.

If Jesus had not risen from the dead, He would have been just like any other prophet or religious leader that has come along throughout the course of history. Buddha lived and died; Krishna lived and died; Mohammed lived and died; Joseph Smith lived and died. Take whoever you want. They are all dead!

Jesus Christ is the exception. He lived; died; was buried and on the third day He rose again to live eternally. He never was, and never will be, just another prophet – He is the Son of Almighty God; He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

He Himself said: ***“Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,¹⁸ and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.” (Rev.1:17b-18)***

Jesus Christ is the only one who can say: ***“I am the first and the last, and the living One!”***

False prophets have come and gone. Jesus has always been; He is, and shall be forevermore. He is the Living One. We do not place our trust in some human wisdom or philosophy. We are not hoping and trusting in some idol. No, we have placed our trust and hope in the one true God – The Lord Jesus Christ, who with His own blood, shed on the cross, has paid the sin debt of mankind in full. With His Resurrection He proved that He is indeed the Resurrection and the Life. He is the true God. So we are to place our trust in Him alone, because He alone is the Truth.

We read: ***“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.² In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.³ If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.⁴ And you know the way where I am going.”⁵ Thomas *said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?”⁶ Jesus *said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:1-6)***

Jesus and Jesus alone is The Way, The truth and The Life. He is the only way to the Father in Heaven. There has never been, and never will be any other way. That is why I repeat that we need to put our faith and trust in Him alone.

This hope and trust in Jesus is not some wishful thinking, some empty unfounded hope. We are placing our trust and hope in our Lord who lives. We have a living hope. Our hope is founded in the promises of God and His unchanging, unerring Word – The Bible. Peter rightly calls our hope “a living hope.” We read our text again:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” 1.Peter 1:3-5

Note that our inheritance is described as imperishable, undefiled and one that will never fade away. I don’t know about you, but these words bring great joy to my heart. Our inheritance, which we receive from our loving Lord and Saviour is perfect. It is imperishable, undefiled and will never fade away.

The prophet Isaiah wrote and Paul quoted him:

***“Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard,
And which have not entered the heart of man,
All that God has prepared for those who love Him.” (1.Cor.2:9)***

This tells us that we cannot even really begin to imagine how beautiful and how precious the inheritance that our Lord has prepared for those who love Him is.

In order to be recipients of this inheritance, all we need to do is believe in Jesus. We need to lovingly trust in Him. He freely gives this inheritance to all who believe in Him.

He Himself proclaims the Gospel to us:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.” (John 3:16-17)

When we believe in Jesus, when we trust in Him then we are saved and we have a beautiful inheritance. Faith is the key. To have faith means to trust in Him. To realise that only His shed blood can atone for your sin and open the door of heaven. It is all His work, and He freely gives to all who will receive.

Today we close off another Church Year. As we do every year we remember those who have passed on before us. We especially remember those who have died in this year. We remember them in love and we praise God that in Christ Jesus we have life. Jesus has conquered death. Death is swallowed up in victory.

Jesus not only grants us a living hope, but he also offers us peace. He knows that death has a sting. He sees and feels our pain, He knows our loneliness, He sees every salty tear that runs down our cheek and He lovingly invites us to Himself:

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Mt.11:28-29)

Jesus Himself is inviting us, encouraging us to come to Him and to lay our burden upon Him. He wants us to lay all our hurt, all our fear, all our anxiety upon Him. He promises that if we do, we will find rest for our souls.

Only Jesus can fully help us. He alone can give us true peace which we all seek.

He says: ***“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.” (John 14:27)***

The peace that Jesus gives cannot be found anywhere else. Paul calls it a peace that far transcends our human understanding. It cannot be explained, only experienced. Jesus gives it freely to those who come to Him and receive it from His loving Hand. Do you see what a great God we have?

We have a God who loves us so very much. We have a God who has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have a God who gives us peace.

As we close out this Church year, may we come to Him anew and may we receive all that His love offers to us. May we do as Jesus said: “Learn from Him”. Jesus lived His whole life in complete trust and obedience to the Father. He calls us and encourages us to do the same.

Let us close this year not in hopeless defeat, in fear and worry, but with a sound mind and heart. May we close this year with a living hope knowing that in Christ we share His victory. All will be well.

May we look to the new year in faith, hope and love, with our eyes firmly fixed on Christ Alone.
Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.