

St. Andrew Evangelical Lutheran Church
Rev. Christopher Raiford, Pastor
"Where There's Life There's Hope" 1 Peter 1:3-9
Sunday April 19, 2020 – 2nd Sunday of Easter

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

I think it is safe to say that all of us have been watching a lot more TV since "*Stop the Spread*" started. Being cooped up in the house for such a long time we have to get our entertainment from somewhere. Also, it's good to keep up on what's happening with COVID-19. The more information we have the better our chances are to beat this invisible enemy (to quote the president).

Due to the 100's of thousands of people infected with the virus, just about any time you see the news, you will see images of people in the hospital, on ventilators, dying, with only medical personnel by their sides. Every news broadcast (doesn't matter what channel), has their own doctors and they have all said that once you go on a ventilator, and remain on it for a long period of time, your chances of survival are very slim. The doctors are saying at that point there is no hope. But every now and then they run a story of someone who recovered where there was no hope. That individual while on death's door made a recovery. **Where there's life there's hope.**

Picture a woman flirting with the dangers of a particular sin. She's fallen into this sin before and been hurt. The temptation is great and the ability to fall is easy. It would be easy to give in, to simply live with the guilt rather than struggle. But then she's reminded of what Jesus has done. Jesus died to take away that sin. God promises her strength to fight against all temptations. Spiritual struggle is actually a sign the Holy Spirit lives in her. **Where there's life there's hope.**

In the days following Friday people in Jerusalem tried to figure out what happened. What was that darkness covering the whole land in the midday? Why was the curtain of the temple, a massive weighty thing, laying on the ground ripped in two pieces? The man hanging on the cross in the middle had been buried quickly in a tomb with a huge stone in front of the door. But the news going around, the rumor was that on Sunday morning at the tomb the body wasn't there. Peter was one who witnessed that tomb that morning. He wrote the second lesson. He saw the empty tomb. That could only mean one thing. Jesus was alive. **Where there's life there's hope**

To some hope is actually what holds people back. Can you believe that? Some people are convinced we're not real enough. Life would be so much better if we weren't so optimistic, if we would just confront reality and deal with it. Take reasonable positions towards life and advance ourselves. I suppose we'd have to agree if the unreasonable hope they speak of is hope in nothing or hope in lies. Hope based on money or on powerful leaders puts us all in trouble. "It's going to be okay. Just keep having hope." Those don't work when hope is really just wishful thinking. Then yes, we should abandon that kind of hope and get real.

Peter didn't think that way. Not the apostle out at the tomb early on Easter morning. Not the apostle in the upper room that Easter Sunday night. Not the apostle who wrote this section of God's Word called 1 Peter. That apostle talked of hope, but a different kind. Peter spoke of hope different from worldly wishy-washy hope. It was living hope. ***"In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."*** Even though he died, Jesus rose from the dead. Where there's life there's hope. The resurrection is the basis for living hope.

Last weekend my parents flew down, rented a car, and bought dinner for us a couple of times. Spending my inheritance again. I can joke that way because they joke about it too. When they take a trip, they say that's spending my inheritance. When they buy a new car, spending my inheritance. That's the way inheritance is. There's only so much and it isn't yours until the person dies. Until then they are really spending it. The pile goes down and down. There's a fading nature to inheritance. Not so with the inheritance our heavenly Father gives. ***"In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope...and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade—kept in heaven for you."*** Living hope isn't just some subjective thing. Living hope amounts to something. It is an inheritance from God the Father. It won't perish, won't spoil, and it won't fade. Ever. Nothing corrupts it. After even many years you're still looking at the same amount and then some. How can we know? Because God stands guarding it like a circle of soldiers might surround a fellow soldier who's wounded. God has

your inheritance under lock and key in heaven; perfectly safe.

The inheritance waiting for us and the fact that God is guarding it are all promises we look forward to in the future. Peter was fond of looking forward to the future. Quickly after the resurrection Peter was reminded Jesus wasn't staying too long on earth. He would be leaving earth physically. But where there's life there's hope. Jesus was alive and that gave Peter hope, living hope. The promises of Jesus were for Peter to look forward to. We do too. Jesus isn't physically around, but he has promised we can look forward to when he returns. That's our future. That's our living hope.

While waiting for the future the present is different. Even Peter recognized there would be problems. ***"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials."*** For some that might sound like an understatement. If you still move and feel the old pains coming back from surgery or injury, does that seem like suffering only a little while? If you look across the table and see a child changing before your eyes and not always in the greatest of ways, does that seem like suffering a little while? If decisions weigh heavily on your shoulders, if you're struggling to provide for those under your care, if suffering and grief seem to follow you, does that seem like suffering only a little while? If you're trying to live with a temptation or a sin where the guilt is unending, does that seem like suffering only a little while? Troubles, suffering, and pain of the present seem like a long time. Living hope? We just want a little hope.

Now is when we must be reminded of the hope based in the resurrection of Christ Jesus. It's living hope. That means we're given hope and strength in Christ to live. Peter says, ***"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."*** To make a gold ring or watch first the gold must be refined in fire. This testing of the gold is important. Only pure gold remains, only what is genuine. You want real hope, genuine living hope. Genuine living hope has been tested and proved over and over. The suffering you face each day is the testing that proves each day how genuine your living hope in Christ is. That genuine living hope will result in praise and honor and glory to Christ Jesus. The gold watch will completely go away someday. Your genuine faith and your genuine living hope in the genuine risen Christ never goes away. No amount of suffering and no amount of trouble or grief can make it go away. Those

trials help confirm just how genuine your faith and living hope in Christ truly are as you rely on him more.

Jesus didn't owe Thomas an appearance. The demands Thomas made after missing the first appearance of Jesus that first Easter Sunday night could have caused Jesus to just skip him altogether. But most amazing was that Jesus appeared to Thomas anyway. He gave Thomas living hope. Even more important Peter caught on to that living hope in a way we can apply to our lives. ***"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 for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls."*** Thomas saw. Peter saw. Peter saw Jesus before he died and saw Jesus again after he rose. We haven't seen either. Yet we believe in him. We love him. We love and we believe because Jesus lives. He rose again from the dead and where there's life there's hope. We have living hope in a Savior who was raised from the dead. That isn't foolishness, that's not blind hope, that's not hope in a lie. It's a miraculous living hope.

Satan thought he won the day on Good Friday when Jesus died. Jesus was hauled off and buried. It looked like countless other crucifixions and countless other deaths. No life and no hope. But the power of Satan was gone. Our souls now do not belong to him. His threats, accusations, and his favorite tool of death because of sins are gone forever. When Christ stirred within the tomb and came bursting out on Easter Sunday there was life again. Where there's life there's hope. We have that hope. The proof is in the resurrection. It's living hope because we've been saved in Christ. It's living hope that gives us joy. Amen.