



THE LIVING HOPE OF  
EASTER

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1 Peter 3:1-7

- Please open your Bibles with me to 1 Peter, chapter 1.
- Michigan State basketball “bringing hope” to economically Michigan. They lost 89-72. (The game was over in the first few minutes.)
- This really is not a big deal, but it is a small picture of a much more widespread sense of hopelessness.

I mean, all around us we are seeing and experiencing signs of decay and demoralization. We constantly hear about crisis in the stock markets, crisis in homeownership, crisis in the schools, in the government, our neighborhoods, and all around the world. Moreover, we have all been plagued by the curse of cancer and the distress of disease. Lately, we have been witnesses to the murder of policemen, murder on the streets, murder in a nursing home, and even murder in our churches, as we remember the tragic shooting of Fred Winters while he was preaching five weeks ago.

- Where is the hope?
- **Big Idea: Only in Christ is hope alive.**
- Read 1 Peter 1:3-7
- Pray

There is one key thought upon which we are blessed to set our focus on this Easter morning, and it is found in verse three, where the Apostle Peter says, "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." Notice here how he describes the hope we have in Christ. It is a "living hope." And notice how it comes. It comes "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." You see, only in Christ is hope alive because...

### **1.) Apart from the resurrection of Christ, all hopes lead to death.**

Just listen to the so-called "hope" espoused by Ludwig Minelli, who is founder of a Swiss "right-to-die" organization. In a recent interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], he contended that suicide is a "marvelous, marvelous possibility for a human being." Minelli's organization, which in a chilling twist is named "Dignitas," advocates the legalization of euthanasia and assisted suicide. The group has even gone so far as to advocate bringing hope to psychiatric patients by helping them commit suicide.

Now, in this BBC interview, Minelli criticized people who are opposed to suicide and said, "I have a totally different attitude to suicide. I say suicide is a marvelous, marvelous possibility given to a human being." Furthering his profuse advocacy of killing oneself, he added: "Suicide is a very good possibility to escape a situation which you can't alter."

Apart from the resurrection of Christ, all other hopes lead to death.

Another example of this hopeless hope is found right here in the United States. In a recent report, *U.S. News and World Report* columnist Bonnie Erbe argues in a recent column that abortions are "not a bad choice" in an economic downturn. In this column, she tells the story of a woman in Oakland, California who aborted what would have been her fourth child because she felt her family could not afford another baby. According to the woman's doctor, this mother-to-be really wanted to keep the child, and she cried as she told the doctor why she was seeking an abortion. But this

columnist, Erbe, thinks her tears are unnecessary and that her decision was right. Listen to her unnerving words:

“Yes, it's sad that this unwed, pregnant mother of three had no money for bus fare. It's terrible that her boyfriend lost his job. It is heart-wrenching that she fell to tears in the doctor's office. But in the long run, can we not agree that an unwed couple's decision not to bring a fourth child into the world when they are having trouble feeding themselves and three children is no tragedy? It's actually a fact-based, rational decision that in the end benefits the three children they already have and society as well.”

So here we have Ludwig Minelli, who believes that suicide is a “marvelous, marvelous human possibility” and Bonnie Erbe contends that abortion is “a good decision” that will benefit us all. What is worse is the fact that these two social elites are not joking, and in their frightening beliefs, we see the terrible hopelessness of a resurrection-less world.

You see, if there is no resurrection, then who is to say that these secular writers are wrong? I mean, if death really is the end of us, then why shouldn't we go ahead and die on our own terms? Moreover, if there is no resurrection, then there is no judgment. And if there is no judgment by a holy and almighty God, then why not be spared the inconvenient expense of a baby? In fact, as long as we can get away with it, why shouldn't we go ahead and do whatever we want? As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:32, *“If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.’”*

That is the underlying logic that currently dominates our popular culture, and we see its devastating hopelessness everywhere, don't we? Though it remains blind to the truth, all that a world without the resurrection of Christ can ultimately promise is death. Apart from Christ, that is all that remains. Is your hope is not firmly rooted in the resurrection of the Savior who died for your sins? Or do your greatest hopes end only in death? Only in Christ is hope alive.

Second, hope is alive only in Jesus because...

## **2.) Apart from the resurrection of Christ, all are dead to true hope.**

In our main verse for this morning, verse 3, Peter says something very interesting. He writes *"In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."* Notice that this hope is something to which we must be *"given new birth."* If we are *"given new birth"* through the resurrection of Christ, then the clear connotation is that apart from this resurrection, we are dead to this one living hope.

Rookie pitcher for the Los Angeles Angels, Nick Adenhardt, was making his fourth major league start last Wednesday night. His father had flown in all the way from Maryland to sit in the stands because Nick was sure that *"something special was going to happen"* at the game. Indeed it did. In what was easily the best performance of his burgeoning career, Nick threw six scoreless innings and had finally solidified his lifelong quest to become a major league pitcher.

Nick's big moment had finally come. His great dream had finally arrived. All his years of practice, the countless hours of training, all his struggles in the minor leagues, and even the reconstructive surgery he had undergone on his pitching elbow at the age of 17—all of it was suddenly worth it. For this young pitcher who had battled for several years with an injured arm and doubts that he could ever cut it in big league baseball, Nick Adenhardt's performance last Wednesday night gave promise that the great hopes of his youth had become now become the reality of his future.

To celebrate his great performance, Nick went out with two of his close friends, and while they were basking in the long-awaited joy of this long-pursued dream, the Mitsubishi they were driving was struck by a drunk driver—a repeat offender, named Andrew Gallow... Now... just a few hours after the highlight of his brief career... just seven miles from the

mound where he had just thrown six scoreless innings... just that quickly... Nick Adenhardt was dead.

Because of one man's recklessness, Nick's dream was destroyed. Because of one man's sin, his hope was forever demolished. Such promise was, in an instant, gone.

I tell you this today because this same story applies to every one of us here today as well.

-- There is a very profound sense in which we are all Nick Adenhardt.

-- For all of us, hope without Christ was shattered by one man's sin.

-- Romans 5:12 - *When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.*

-- Not only so, but we are also all like Andrew Gallow.

-- Like Gallow, we are all guilty of heinous sin.

-- For all of us, hope without Christ has been shattered by our own sins.

-- Romans 3:12 - *"All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."*

-- Romans 3:23 - *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*

-- Ephesians 2:12 - *"Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ...without hope and without God in the world."*

-- Apart from Christ, all of us are dead in our sins and dead to hope.

Only in Christ is hope alive because apart from the resurrection of Christ, all are dead to true hope. Not only that, but hope is only alive in Christ because

**3.) The resurrection of Christ is the *only* source eternal of hope.**

In the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, the Bible could scarcely be any clearer about this truth. In verses 14, the Apostle Paul writes, *"If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith."* Yet, in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, he continues, *"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."* It is in Christ's death alone that believers are spared eternal death, and it is in Christ's resurrection alone that we shall rise again.

With that in mind, let me ask you: Where *is* your hope? ...Is it in Islam? Mohammed died. Is it in Buddha? He passed away as well. In fact, every contrary religious leader is either dead or will be soon... But Jesus Christ lives! So, where is your hope today? ...Worldly fortune will one day be forfeited. Worldly fame will soon be forgotten. And any perceived power on earth will become feeble and fail. The prettiest faces will grow aged and even most sculpted physiques will turn back into dust. Indeed, every single human glory will falter and fade... But Jesus Christ lives! So, where is your hope today?

Even the most commanding armies have been conquered. Even the grandest governments have gone down. Even the most noteworthy nations have been utterly annihilated. Even this planet upon which we stand will one day perish... But our Lord Jesus Christ lives forever! So where *is* you hope this Easter morning?

Can you see today that our ultimate hope is not in who governs us, or in what laws we pass, or in what great things we do as nation? Real hope will not be found in fortune, founded on fame, or forged by force. It cannot be attained by our strength, acquired by our insight, or achieved by our innovation. It is not originated with science, obtained by sociology, or offered through secular psychotherapy. We will simply never find certain hope in self-actualization, self-indulgence, self-esteem. We won't discover it on Oprah, detect it in Dr. Phil, or develop it by watching American Idol.

In fact, we will ever and always find living hope in one thing, and in one thing only, and that one thing is this – the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

True hope is found in an empty tomb.

You see, our only Hope was born in a stable some 2000 years ago. Our Hope was tempted, yet He remained true to His task. Our Hope drove out demons. He healed the hurting. He saved the sick. Our one true Hope was beaten and mocked and whipped. And then, astonishingly, the only hope of all humanity willingly wore a crown of thorns and carried a cross to Calvary, where Hope became a substitute for sinners. And on that very cross He carried, our great Hope gave His life for you and for me.

But Hope wasn't cancelled on that cross. No, not in the least... Because after three days in the tomb, this very Hope that was slain came to life once again. This one perfect Hope for all people in all places at all times rose again, and as He rolled away the stone, an everlasting hope was forever revealed in a grave that was gloriously empty.

Now, hope in Christ cannot and will not ever be threatened, diminished, or destroyed. Because of this scene, we can forever say together with 1 Peter 1:3-4, *"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, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you."* Because of this unblemished hope, we can say together with Paul in Romans 6:4, *"Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives."* In the empty tomb we know what living hope is, and it tells us this:

**Because Christ is risen, we too will rise.**

To close this morning, please look with me at our passage from 1 Peter 1 once again. Let us read it together in light of this hope that we have received in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us consider it again responsively by echoing this singular statement of hope: "Because

Christ is risen, we too will rise.” Thus, after I read each verse, I pray you will echo the refrain with a voice of praise that shakes this sanctuary...

-- Pastor: And into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade— kept in heaven for you (1 Peter 1:4)

-- People: **Because Christ is risen, we too will rise.**

-- Pastor: 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. (1 Peter 1:5)

-- People: **Because Christ is risen, we too will rise.**

-- Pastor: In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. (1 Peter 1:6)

-- People: **Because Christ is risen, we too will rise.**

-- Pastor: 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 1:7)

-- People: **Because Christ is risen, we too will rise.**