

“A living hope” (3)

In our sermon series so far Peter has reminded us that this world is not our home, we are mere pilgrims passing through until we get to our eternal home in heaven. Peter has also reminded us that as Christians we are privileged to be chosen by God but with those privileges comes great responsibility. Privileged because of the many blessings we have in Christ but responsible for obeying and following the will of God.

There was a young Christian learning to preach and his mentor said, "When you get through I want you to stand at the door with me, so that the people can greet you." So after his first sermon he stood with his mentor at the door, and people came by. One woman grabbed the young Christian's hand, looked him in the eye, and said, "Preacher that was a sorry sermon." Of course, he was shaken by that, but he was more shaken when he noticed her in line the second time. She grabbed his hand again, looked him in the eye, and said, "A sorry sermon and you didn't even preach it well!" And she walked on. Then she came back a third time, grabbed his hand, looked him in the eye, and said, "A sorry sermon and you didn't preach it well, and I hope you never come back." Well, he was devastated. He turned to the mentor and said, "Sir, what is it with this woman?" He said, "Don't pay any attention to her. She's not very bright. She just goes around repeating what she hears everybody else saying."

Now I don't know about you but I don't believe that was the way to go about encouraging this young Christian. After all even with the poorest of preachers there always those in the audience that can but live in hope. Now one of the blessings which Peter is going to talk to us today is hope, but not just any kind of hope, a living hope. **1 Peter 1:3** "Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Because of his great mercy he gave us new life by raising Jesus Christ from death. This fills us with a living hope."

Peter begins by just praising God and tells us why our hope is a living hope. He says our hope is a living hope because **God is merciful**. In a world where people measure perfection by their own standards and the imperfections of others. In a world where people measure their standing before God based on their own merits and good deeds. Peter says right from the very beginning, listen our hope is not based on ourselves. Our hope doesn't lay on our own perfection or righteousness. Our hope is a living hope because our hope is based in God's mercy.

Because let me tell you something loved ones, if our hope depended solely on ourselves we would be in trouble. Because **Romans 3:23** tells us that "Everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence". Even when we become Christians if our hope depended solely on ourselves we would still be in trouble. Because **1 John 1:8-10** tells us, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us. But if we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise and do what is right: he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing. If we say that we have not sinned, we make a liar out of God, and his word is not in us".

The basis for our hope doesn't lay in our abilities; our hope is a living hope because it totally relies in the abundance of **God's mercy**. **Romans 5:6-8** tells us God showed us mercy even when we were still sinners. **Acts 2:36-38** tells us that mercy is given to us upon the conditions of faith, repentance and baptism. And **1 John 1:9** tells us that mercy is continually given to us as we repent and confess our sins to God. And so loved ones it's totally because of God's abundant mercy, that we who are sinners can have a living hope.

Now that's not the only reason why we have a living hope, Peter also says in **1 Peter 1:3** "Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Because of his great mercy he gave us new life by raising Jesus Christ from death. This fills us with a living hope."

Peter says that we have a living hope because **Jesus is alive**. Now I don't know if your aware of this but the resurrection of Jesus is absolutely crucial to our hope. **1 Corinthians 15:14+15** "If Christ has not been raised from death, then we have nothing to preach and you have nothing to believe. More than that, we are shown to be lying about God, because we said that he raised Christ from death---but if it is true that the dead are not raised to life, then he did not raise Christ."

Paul says, if Christ is not risen from the dead, then the apostles were liars, and our faith is vain, it's a waste of time, we have no hope. **1 Corinthians 15:17** "If Christ has not been raised, then your faith is a delusion and you are still lost in your sins". Paul says, if Christ is not risen from the dead, we are still held guilty for our sins, and we haven't been forgiven. **1 Corinthians 15:18** "It would also mean that the believers in Christ who have died are lost". Paul says, if Christ is not risen from the dead, then those who have died as Christians have perished, they are lost.

1 Corinthians 15:19 “If our hope in Christ is good for this life only and no more, then we deserve more pity than anyone else in all the world”. And finally Paul says, if Christ has not risen from the dead, then we do not have a living hope, instead we are to be pitied by others.

But praise God loved ones, Jesus did rise from the dead and it's through Jesus' resurrection that we have been born again to a living hope. But don't take my word for it, Jesus Himself said in John 11:25 “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will live, even though they die.”

Paul also said following on in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 “But the truth is that Christ has been raised from death, as the guarantee that those who sleep in death will also be raised. For just as death came by means of a man, in the same way the rising from death comes by means of a man. For just as all people die because of their union with Adam, in the same way all will be raised to life because of their union with Christ. But each one will be raised in proper order: Christ, first of all; then, at the time of his coming, those who belong to him”.

Paul said, listen church, since we have confidence to know that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, you need to know that our living hope is that we too as God's children will rise from the dead. It's totally by the abundant mercy of God, and upon the basis of Jesus' own resurrection, that we have been born again into a living hope. That's why when I conduct funeral services I get nervous, not with a Christian's funeral but with the non-Christian's funeral.

Especially when it comes to the committal words where for the Christian I say, “Forasmuch as we understand of the great permissive will of God, we ask the almighty God in his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of this dear person, here departed, we therefore commit their body to be burned. Dust to dust ashes to ashes in the great assurance of the resurrection from the dead.”

Now I can't say that for non-Christians, why? Because they are not in Christ and if you're not in Christ when you die then you need to know that you have no assurance of God's mercy. You wouldn't accept it on His terms and conditions whilst you were living, so what makes you think your death is going change God's mind? Now I know that a person's eternal future is ultimately in God's hand and it's terribly sad to bury people who didn't have any hope. But that's one more reason why our hope is a living hope; our hope goes beyond the grave.

1 Peter 1:4 “And so we look forward to possessing the rich blessings that God keeps for his people. He keeps them for you in heaven, where they cannot decay or spoil or fade away.”

We sing that song ‘Jesus you're my firm foundation’ and words read like this: Jesus, you're my firm foundation, I know I can stand secure. Jesus, you're my firm foundation, I put my hope in your holy word. The chorus reads: I have a living hope, I have a future. God has a plan for me, of this I'm sure.

Peter says our hope is a living hope because of the nature of our inheritance. And just like the song writer says, we have a living hope because we have a living future.

You know I give our children pocket money to buy themselves something nice in exchange for doing household chores and sometimes we have to negotiate a price. For example if Roxanne wants more money than usual to buy new shoes I will negotiate more housework in exchange. But if I say to Roxanne I want the whole house cleaned from top to bottom including cleaning the toilets and bath and I want you to change the bedding in all the rooms and I will give you £3:00, she would say, ‘your joking dad, that's simply not enough to buy new shoes.’ Now if I negotiate a price and say, ‘OK Roxanne I will give you £20:00 to clean the whole house’ she will then get stuck into it and get it done.

Why? Because she trusts me enough to know that I will stand by my word and she knows that after she's finished she can go out and buy her new shoes. You see loved ones, if our inheritance is a good one, built on God's Word then our hope is strong and living. But if our inheritance is a poor one, built on man's own words, then our hope is weak, or dead.

Suppose you were attending a meeting to hear a will being read, where you expected an inheritance; would you use the time criticizing the manner in which the lawyer read it? No, you would be giving all your attention to listening if anything had been left to you. Listen to the Jesus' will being read from 1 Peter 1:4 “And so we look forward to possessing the rich blessings that God keeps for his people. He keeps them for you in heaven, where they cannot decay or spoil or fade away”.

Loved ones, Jesus' will says our inheritance is unique because it's **incorruptible**. Take a look at everything around you church and show me something which will never eventually decay. Show me something that will last forever. The only thing which will go on forever in this room are the souls of the people sitting next to you this morning.

We're going to look at this in a few months' times but Peter himself reminds us in **2 Peter 3:10-13** "But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that Day the heavens will disappear with a shrill noise, the heavenly bodies will burn up and be destroyed, and the earth with everything in it will vanish. Since all these things will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people should you be? Your lives should be holy and dedicated to God, as you wait for the Day of God and do your best to make it come soon---the Day when the heavens will burn up and be destroyed, and the heavenly bodies will be melted by the heat. But we wait for what God has promised: new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness will be at home". Peter says unlike the present heavens and earth in which we now live, and which will one day be destroyed, heaven will go on forever.

And not only that, but our inheritance is **undefiled**. **Revelation 21:27** "But nothing that is impure will enter the city, nor anyone who does shameful things or tells lies. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of the living will enter the city". You see the world in which we live in now is defiled and it's defiled by us, the people who live here because of our sin.

But John says that our hope is a living hope because where Christians are going to spend eternity is a place where **those who are defiled and impure will not be allowed in**. So not only is our inheritance unique because it's **incorruptible** and **undefiled** but it's also **eternal**. **1 Peter 1:4** "And so we look forward to possessing the rich blessings that God keeps for his people. He keeps them for you in heaven, where they cannot decay or spoil or fade away.

Our inheritance won't rust, it won't blemish, it won't decay, and it won't fade away. Now when I look around at the world today I not only see derelict buildings all over the place but I see flowers coming into bloom but then fading away and losing their beauty. But loved ones our inheritance isn't like that, it won't fade away, its beauty will last forever. Peter says it is reserved in heaven and you need to know that no one, not even Satan himself can steal that from you.

But not only is our inheritance **safely guarded in heaven**, but we too as **Christians are kept safe**. **1 Peter 1:5** "Through faith you are being protected by God's power for a salvation that is ready to be revealed at the end of time." Peter says that Christians are kept for the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. The word "kept" is an interesting word; it's used in the military sense. It means "to guard, protect by a military guard, either to prevent hostile invasion, or to keep the inhabitants of a besieged city from flight." Think about it, Peter is saying while our inheritance is being kept guarded in heaven under the watchful eye of God, we as Christians are also being guarded by God's protecting care for it.

And I want you to notice something here church, our inheritance, our very salvation being kept in heaven involves **two things**. **1 Peter 1:5** "Through faith you are being protected by God's power for a salvation that is ready to be revealed at the end of time." Peter says first of all our inheritance and salvation is kept **by the power of God**.

Now what does that mean? Well let me ask you this, if you've got a whole lot of money and you want to put it into a bank, wouldn't you want to put it in a bank where the people know how to use and invest your money wisely and keep your money secure?

There was a mobile telephone company called 'Amp'd Mobile' and when it comes to wasting people's money they are the best of the best, with **\$360 million** that ended in bankruptcy. The company's major problem was its customers' ability to pay. While other mobile providers check for an ability to pay bills within **30 days**, Amp'd let it go to **90 days** and marketed to these risky customers. It has been reported that **80,000** of the company's **175,000** customers were unable to pay their bills.

Now I don't know about you but if I was going to invest my money in another company, I would want to make sure the company knew exactly what they were doing and how they understand the market. When Peter says that our inheritance and salvation is kept by the power of God, what he means is, we have a God who understands investment, we have a God who knows the market. His investment was sending His Son Jesus Christ to die for you. His market was you and I and everyone who is willing to admit they are sinners. In other words, what Peter is saying is, God's power equals God's help, after all God knows we are sinners and He knows we have temptations.

And wouldn't you want someone to take care of your inheritance and salvation who knows our greatest needs and how to help those in temptation? Listen loved loves God knows how to deliver people from temptation. Peter himself reminds us in 2 Peter 2:9 "And so the Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials and how to keep the wicked under punishment for the Day of Judgment."

The apostle Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 10:13 "Every test that you have experienced is the kind that normally comes to people. But God keeps his promise, and he will not allow you to be tested beyond your power to remain firm; at the time you are put to the test, he will give you the strength to endure it, and so provide you with a way out".

God Himself supplies the armour we need when the day of evil or temptation comes. Ephesians 6:10-13 "Finally, build up your strength in union with the Lord and by means of his mighty power. Put on all the armour that God gives you, so that you will be able to stand up against the Devil's evil tricks. For we are not fighting against human beings but against the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly world, the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this dark age. So put on God's armour now! Then when the evil day comes, you will be able to resist the enemy's attacks; and after fighting to the end, you will still hold your ground."

So God's part of the deal is that He will guard our inheritance and keep our salvation. But loved ones we have a part to play too, our inheritance and our salvation needs faith. 1 Peter 1:5 "Through faith you are being protected by God's power for a salvation that is ready to be revealed at the end of time." We cannot expect God to guard our inheritance and our salvation if we don't treasure them ourselves. We cannot expect God to keep them safe in heaven if we are just going to live our lives however we please.

We need to live and walk by faith because if we don't then our inheritance and salvation will be lost. In fact Hebrews 11:6 tells us that "No one can please God without faith, for whoever comes to God must have faith that God exists and rewards those who seek him". You see God isn't going to take our rewards away from us, Satan can't take them away from us, our friends and family can't take them away from us.

The only person who can remove your inheritance and your salvation is you. Revelation 2:10 "Listen! The Devil will put you to the test by having some of you thrown into prison, and your troubles will last ten days. Be faithful to me, even if it means death, and I will give you life as your prize of victory". John is saying that the only way we can ever lose our inheritance reserved in heaven is to become unfaithful to the Lord. And make no mistake about it church, yes the Bible teaches us about the security of the believer but that same Bible also teaches us that a believer can become an unbeliever.

I was speaking with the couple who put the frames of my art work and they were professing to be Christians but they hadn't been to church for years because they were so busy but they still think they are fine with God. There is no such thing as 'once saved always saved' in the Bible, you can fall from grace, and you can give up your inheritance and your salvation.

Hebrews 3:12+13 "My friends, be careful that none of you have a heart so evil and unbelieving that you will turn away from the living God. Instead, in order that none of you be deceived by sin and become stubborn, you must help one another every day, as long as the word "Today" in the scripture applies to us".

And if you take a moment to read on in Hebrews 3:14-4:3 you will read that the unbeliever has no hope. So the key loved ones is faith, the key to ensuring that we receive our inheritance and our salvation in heaven is faithfulness to God and His word to the very end.

The Christian hope is a living hope because God is merciful. The Christian hope is a living hope because Jesus is alive. The Christian hope is a living hope because of the nature of our inheritance. The Christian hope is a living hope because we are safely guarded. And if that doesn't bring joy into our lives I don't know what will. No wonder Peters reminds them about this living hope and then says in 1 Peter 1:6 "In this you greatly rejoice."

In what, do we greatly rejoice? In the living hope that comes from everything we've looked at this morning in regards to the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

A young traveller was going around the countryside in search of peace in his life. As he entered the depot a porter taking his luggage, said, "Where are you going?" He answered: "To hell; away with you." A minister overheard the answer and was startled. Seated near the young man in the train carriage; he entered into a conversation with him, and

at length said, "When do you expect to arrive at your journey's end!" He answered that he did not know, as it was beyond the sea. The minister said, "I meant the place you told the porter you were going, upon entering the carriage." The young man answered, "Perhaps it may be so."

If you're not a Christian this morning I want to encourage you to seriously think about the kind of hope you have in your life right now and for eternity. I don't want you to leave here today like so many other people in this world who have no hope for eternity. I don't want you to be like many other people who ask questions but their answers to life's questions are often filled with confusion and uncertainty. You need to know that Jesus Christ is your only hope and only He has all the answers.

And so loved ones if you get anything from this sermon today, I hope and pray that you can see the difference between a hope which is here today and gone tomorrow. But a hope that isn't dead but very much alive and active both in heaven and in your lives. Let me leave you with Peter's words in **1 Peter 3:15** "Exalt Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be prepared to give a defence to everyone who asks you to explain the hope you have".