

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—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 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 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. 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 goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. ^(NIV84)

LIVING HOPE

A HOPE THAT NEVER FAILS

Are you full? I hope you had a good breakfast, but that’s not what I mean. I don’t care if you’re full of food as much I hope that you’re full of faith, that you’re full of joy, that you’re full of hope.

We all live by hope – everyday. Martin Luther made that point once by saying, *“Everything that is done in the world is done by hope. No farmer would sow one grain of corn if he did not hope it would grow up and become seed; ... no merchant or tradesman would see himself work if he did not hope to reap benefit thereby.”* In other words, would you really go in to work this week, if there was no hope of getting paid? You wouldn’t go to school if there was no hope of getting smarter or better equipped for life. You wouldn’t go to the doctor if there was no hope of healing.

Hope is important to all we do.

But hopes can sometimes leave you disappointed. The crop might be destroyed. The job might be lost. The class might be failed. The cancer might come back. But we have a sure and certain hope that will not leave us disappointed. And we have a *living* hope that moves us to live differently. And that hope comes from our Living Savior. Today our Easter series continues as we look at the **Living Hope**. That is ours in Jesus. Today we’ll rejoice that our Hope is **A Hope that Never Fails**.

I. A Certain Hope That Does Not Disappoint Us

“Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!” How much fun it was to make that declaration and be in worship on Easter! Did you feel the same way? Was Easter worship uplifting and encouraging and refreshing and fun for you too? Were you filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy last Sunday? Do you feel it today? How about during the week? Did you then? Was it all week?

Or were you sometimes a bit distracted by the kids, by the bills, by the “to-do” list that didn’t seem to shrink much, by the funny noise the car’s started making again, by the mounds of homework? How about when you were suffering? When the flu left you wiped out, when you were in pain due to physical malady, some emotional hurt, or one more financial crisis—did you feel the inexpressible and glorious joy then?

1 Peter 1:3-9

Isn't it incredible that we so quickly come down from the peak of Easter joy. As soon as it's not right in front of us, we slip back into the rhythm and roll of life. It takes months for the smile to leave a bride's face. The father who holds his child for the first time won't let them go. The kid who gets the Christmas present he was hoping for tells everyone for weeks. But we have been reminded again of the Easter victory that literally opens the doors of heaven to us and it was probably only hours if that until we tucked that knowledge away and starting living our life again.

We don't live with Easter joy every day like we should. We allow business and distraction from this world to stand in our way. We allow the temptations and cravings of our sinful nature to spring to action while we back shelf the joy that should be there every moment of our lives. We sometimes take God's grace for granted and we certainly don't thank him as often as we should.

And for thinking little of God's love for us, he ought to think little of us. For taking him for granted, our God should take his love to someone who cares. For our selfishness, our God should be selfish with his love and we should be left to live and to die in our sins.

That's what we deserve. But, ***"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he [acted]!"***

Do you remember that in the Gospel of Luke two separate men asked Jesus the same question? They asked, ***"Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"*** (Luke 10:25 and Luke 18:18). Now every time I read that I can't help but think, "What a dumb question!" What does anyone do to inherit anything? Nothing at all! Someone else dies and leaves it to you!

That's what Jesus did and it's what Peter wrote: ***In his great mercy [God] has given us new birth into... an inheritance..."***

You and I have been given a new birth. We have been born again spiritually of water and the Spirit (cf. John 3:5) in our Baptisms, through the power of the gospel. We've experienced our own resurrection from the dead in our conversion—from *spiritual* death to *spiritual* life. ***We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life*** (Romans 6:4).

And by that new birth, we inherit forgiveness of sins, not by anything we might *do*, but entirely by what Jesus has done. We inherit forgiveness of sins because of the perfect life he lived and the innocent death he died. He died for us, and then wrote us into his will. He gave us an inheritance of forgiveness and life and hope. We have the peace that Jesus extended to his disciples in our Gospel lesson. We have the forgiveness of sins assured time and time again through his glorious gospel. We receive Jesus' very body and blood to strengthen our trust in this sure and certain hope. We have been given a deed, not to the family farm, but to our Father's mansion in heaven itself.

And not only is this inheritance glorious and gracious, it is one that cannot Fail. Peter tells us that this living hope inheritance is one ***that can never perish, spoil or fade..."***

A recent ESPN documentary called "Broke" chronicles the lives of professional athletes who once earned millions of dollars but have now gone bankrupt. According to a 2009 *Sports Illustrated* article, 60% of former NBA players are broke within five years of retirement. By the time they have

1 Peter 1:3-9

been retired for 2 years, 78% of former NFL players have gone bankrupt or are under financial stress. Sucked into bad investments, paying child support and alimony to their broken families, saddled with medical problems, and naturally prone to showing off and living the high life, many pro athletes find that their riches just don't last.

And how many people don't win the lottery and then only a few short years later wish they'd never played. That kind of money allows them to buy things they don't need, to get involved in drugs they shouldn't use, and ruins relationships and the lives of the "winners" in general.

The riches of professional sports, of lotteries, of hard work and good investments, all spoil, fade, perish. They just don't last. And they certainly don't last beyond this life. Country singer George Strait pointed that out well in his song "You'll be There," *"You don't bring nothing with you here and you can't take nothing back. I ain't never seen a hearse, with a luggage rack."*

But that's not the case the inheritance we receive through Jesus. Peter tells us it's *"kept in heaven for you."* It's kept far away from anyone or anything that could ever destroy it or even touch it. Satan cannot go there! And it's shielded for us, guarded and protected better than if it were in Fort Knox, better than it would be if a legion of angels were guarding it. It's *"shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time."* God himself will guard your salvation with his power until Judgment Day. And that truth that our inheritance can never spoil, fade, or perish, that it can never be lost or destroyed, gives us a sure and certain hope that changes how we live right now.

II. A Living Hope That Does Change Us

The term "living water" was used in Biblical times for water that was not stagnant like the water collected in a well or in a pool, but was active, moving, bubbling, "living water" was on the move. It was going somewhere, doing something.

Likewise, *"God... has given us new birth into a living hope."* Our faith is not dead or stagnant, but alive. It doesn't just sit still, but has to act. Our hope doesn't remain simple facts or the answers to riddles. It prompts us to be on the move, to do something.

That's what it did for Peter. It moved him to preach to the crowd on Pentecost like we heard in our First lesson today. It moved him to write to the words of our living hope text today. It moved him to devote his life to preaching hope to all the world. And it ultimately moved Peter even to face a martyr's death. In life and in death, Peter had **A Hope that Never Fails**

And this is the same living hope that moves us. It moves us to live for him. It moves us worship and praise him willingly and eagerly. It prompts us to be on the move - into God's Word learn about his love and rejoice in his promises. It prompts us to be on the move - into our world - proclaiming that victory and that out of this world hope that is ours in Jesus. It moves us to be filled with joy on Easter, on the Second Sunday in Easter and every day of our lives. It moves us even in the face of death to remember the Living Hope that has been given us.

And that hope moves us to live our lives confidently! We walk through life and we walk toward death with hope a living hope. Confident that he will guide, confident that he will protect. Confident

1 Peter 1:3-9

that when he is ready, he will take us to live with him in glory. We can fall back on his promises and lean on his love every day, until, ***“Jesus Christ is revealed... [and we receive] the goal of [our] faith, the salvation of [our] souls.”***

So dear friends, be moved by this living hope. And be full! Lunch is right around the corner, thank the Lord, but before you eat, rejoice that he has made you full – full of grace – full of joy – full of hope. And remember that yours in Christ is **A Hope that Never Fails!** Amen.