

¹ Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ² So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

³ So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus’ head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. ⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to their homes, ¹¹ but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³ They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” ¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ “Woman,” he said, “why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).

¹⁷ Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ ”

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her. ^(NIV84)

LIVING HOPE

A LIVING JESUS MEANS A LIVING HOPE

There were two twin boys, identical twins, identical in every way, except for this one thing. One boy was an optimist and the other a pessimist. One would see the good in every situation and the other would find bad in even the best situation. It got to be so extreme that that the twins’ parents asked their doctor what they should do about it. And he gave them some interesting advice. The doctor told them that on their next birthday they should buy the pessimist the biggest, shiniest, new bike that a kid has ever owned. And to the optimist, they should give a box of cow dung. The parents stewed over the advice for a while, because they had always treated their sons equally, but they thought that maybe this was worth a shot. The next birthday came around and they opened their presents. The first boy unwrapped his shiny new bike, only to a concerned frown. “I’ll probably fall off it and break my arm!” he lamented. Then the other boy opened his box of poop and he looked puzzled at first, but then smiled and said, “You can’t fool me! With this much manure, there must be a pony around here somewhere!”

John 20:1-18

Hope springs eternal for the optimist. For the person who sees the glass as half full, there is always hope, always a good spin to put on things, even the clouds have silver linings.

That description fits many of you. Go with the flow types of people – You don't get riled up about anything because no matter what there is always hope.

But some of you are the opposite. Some of you are the "I'll probably fall off and break my arm!" types of people. Even in good situation, you find a reason to be skeptical.

But whether the glass is half empty or half full, I've got news for you today! I've got news that brings Hope to all. Today we will celebrate that **A Living Jesus Means a Living Hope**.

We are beginning an Easter sermon series today. It's a series that starts at the Empty Tomb and flows from the Empty Tomb. We'll look at Peter's writings in the New Testament and see how they are flavored by what he saw at the end of that Sunday morning sprint to the tomb of Jesus. The proofs of the resurrection that he saw are the proofs of the Living Hope that he has in Jesus. We'll look at that today and for the next six weeks, Living Hope will be our theme. You're here for the start and I hope you come back in the weeks to come as we continue to look through Peter's eyes. I hope you return that we might learn more, be encouraged more and rejoice more in the Living Hope that is ours in Jesus.

We'll be sharing Peter's Easter perspective this season, so let's put ourselves in Peter's sandals. Imagine the emotions that Peter and his friends must have been feeling. Talk about a Hopeless weekend. They witness their friend savagely executed. And if that weren't enough they thought he was the one. They thought he was the one that was going to make life worth living. They trusted his promises they left their lives behind to follow him. Now what? A bunch of followers with a dead leader. A bunch of fools that mistakenly put their trust in someone who couldn't make good on his words.

Maybe it was there for the others, but for Peter, the spiritual strain must have been overwhelming. He had bragged about his own faithfulness. "***Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you***" (Mark 14:21). Yet so quickly he did just that. So quickly he scattered, so quickly he disowned. So easily he claimed to not know him.

Had it all been a lie? When he said that he was a King, was he making it all up? Establishing David's throne forever is a hard thing to do from the grave! For the disciples a Dead Jesus meant that their hopes were dead, their dreams died with him too.

It's too bad that they were listening when Jesus told them it had to happen this way! It's too bad that they were paying attention when he told them. At least 5 different times Jesus told them what he did here: ***Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life*** (Matthew 16:21).

They could have saved themselves some heartache and sorrow! They could have spent the weekend counting down the hours like New Years until their new lives began. They could have/they should have camped out in the garden and waited for the show! They should have known and should have been filled with hope to see the story of God's love unfolding. But they didn't and they weren't.

John 20:1-18

But enough of that now, how about you? What's your excuse? What's your excuse for not living in your living hope? Not only do you have the words of the prophets fulfilled, not only do you have Jesus foretelling the events of his life, but you have the rest of the story. You have the resurrection accounts. You have Jesus' appearances, you have a lifetime of God keeping his promises for you, yet you doubt. You allow yourself to be filled with fear. You don't cling to his Word and take it in until your heart is full. I know that you don't because I don't either. It's easy to point and blame those disciples for not catching on, but we are even more guilty than they. We know we have a living Jesus, yet we don't always have the hope that we should.

We get wrapped up in the things of this world and forget that our God is more powerful than all of them. Divorce, disease, despair? Turmoil, temptation, tragedy? God is bigger than them all. If Jesus is dead and we are left to ourselves, then those all would pose a problem, but **A Living Jesus Means a Living Hope**. Easter is the answer to all the problems of this life.

Martin Luther's wife, Katie, once put on a black dress and began doing her chores for Martin to see. When asked what she was doing, she explained to him, she was dressed up for God's funeral. "What do you mean, God's funeral?" he asked. "The way you have been carrying yourself sure makes it seem as if God is dead!" The story continues with Martin thanking faithful Kate. He got her point and received her encouragement. If the story is accurate, that's the day that Martin carved into his wooden desk 5 Latin letters – V-I-V-I-T . *Vivit!* "He Lives!"

May *vivit* be our refrain! May that thought guide our lives! We need not be filled with fear. We need not grieve like the rest of men that have no hope (1 Thess 4:13). He lives. He is Risen! And **A Living Jesus Means Living Hope**. A Living Jesus means that his promises are rock solid and our trust in him will not disappoint. A Living Jesus means that no matter what this world or the evil foe might throw our way, Our Jesus will overcome. Even when we fall, even when we doubt, even we act as if God is dead, He Lives.

A Living Jesus Means a Living Hope. We have a Hope that we can live by and a Savior that we can depend on in this life. He will guide our path. He will guard our ways. He will defend us and intercede for us before the Father's throne of grace. He loves us with an everlasting love. Nothing no one can take that away.

A Living Jesus Means a Living Hope. Not even death can take that away! Not the death of a loved one. Not our own death. Easter means that we will live forever. Easter means that our Hope is not just for this life, but we have a Living Hope, an Eternal Life Hope. Jesus' new life means new life for us after death. Jesus' resurrection is the foreshadowing of our own – raised with glorified bodies, ascending into heaven, reigning there with God forever and ever. That is the sure and lasting and Living Hope that this day and that This Living Savior brings.

If you are an optimist or a pessimist, if you see the glass as half full or half empty, remember that the *tomb is empty* and that makes *our hearts full* – full of joy, confidence, worship and praise. Full hearts that want to tell others what has been made known to us. "Vivit!" He Lives! Make it your motto, live its truth every day. Be happy, rejoice! Celebrate that **A Living Jesus Means a Living Hope**. Now that my friends is a reason to say: "Happy Easter!" Amen.