

Hope Is Alive

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[0 : 0 0] it is good to be here. Do you know that today we mark the day, the only time in history when the followers of Jesus thought he was dead.

The only Sunday in all of history the disciples thought that he was dead. And never again since have they gathered on a Sunday with that thought. And without that, we wouldn't be here today.

Happy Easter to you. This is the Resurrection Sunday. This morning we're going to be looking at 1 Peter chapter 1 and looking at the fact that we have a living hope.

We're going to get there in a wee minute. We've got a couple of things coming up before that. And there's going to be a couple of readings from Matthew that are going to be in video from Matthew's account of that morning.

How it started dark and dreary. It was sad and sorrowful. But it ended very differently. But let me pray just now.

[1 : 0 7] Then we're going to watch a video. Gene's going to sing again. We're going to watch a video. And then we'll come up and look at 1 Peter. It's so good to be here. After so long being shut up in the house.

Being on the screen. Not everyone could have done that as well. And we've missed that kind of fellowship together. But we're here gathered together today on this special morning.

So thanks for coming out. You're not here by coincidence. The Lord knows what he's doing. Let me pray. God our heavenly father.

We thank you so much for your son Jesus Christ. We believe that he is your son. We believe that his death was meaningful.

That it fulfilled the scriptures. What was written of him. And that he indeed on the third day was risen from the dead. Lord.

[2 : 0 7] This is your son. In whom we believe. In whom you are well pleased. And we thank you for him. Because through him. We have hope.

Without him there is no hope. But in him. There is hope of everlasting life. Forgiveness of sins. The renewal of our bodies.

And we thank you Lord for him. And God on this day. We celebrate together in his name. And we pray that each one. Every one of us that are here. Lord. That you would give us the spirit of wisdom.

And of revelation. And the knowledge of him. That we would have the eyes of our hearts enlightened. That we might know. What is the hope to which you have called us.

The riches of your glorious inheritance. And the saints. And what is the immeasurable greatness. Of your power. Towards us who believe. And that it is according.

[3 : 0 5] To the working of your great might. That you worked in Christ. When you rose him from the dead. And seated him. At your right hand. In the heavenly places. And that Jesus is far above all. Rule and authority.

And power and dominion. In this very moment. He is above every name. That is unnamed. Not only in this age. But in the age that is to come. And that you put all things under his feet. And gave him his head.

Over all things to the church. We who are his body. The fullness of him who fills all in all. All glory be to you God. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. Amen. Amen. And we're going to watch a video now. That is looking at Matthew's account. Of that morning. Jean's going to sing. We're going to hear the rest of that account.

And then we're going to be in 1 Peter. It was morning after Sabbath.

[4 : 20] It was the first day of the week. Because it was Passover, this was no ordinary start of the week. It was still a festival.

It was the feast of first fruits. So there was no work. Rather people would take the first fruits to the priest and he would wave it and present it before God and thanksgiving.

It was supposed to be a day of joy, a visible sign of the harvest yet to come, but not for us. Many people would be going to the temple, but we were going to a tomb.

First fruits, a sign of things yet to come. Was this a sign of things to come for us? The death of Jesus?

I remember asking Mary, his mother, many times about how Jesus was born.

[5 : 25] She would tell me about the magnificent angel that appeared.

But I had never seen one myself. Until that morning. We were walking along, wanting to speak about him, but not knowing what to say except small talk about who we could get to open the tomb for us.

We had noticed the tremor, but didn't think much of it. But as we got closer, we seen that the masterstone had already been moved.

But there was no one there. Well, at least we didn't need anyone to move it. But the first feeling I remember was a sinking feeling.

Confusion, anger, panic. Like someone just vandalised the grave of someone you will. When we got to the tomb, we were almost scared of what we might find.

[6 : 37] Haven't they done enough wrong to Jesus already? What have they done now? But when we got there, it happened. The thing I'd only heard about from Mary and from the scriptures.

Light. A pure and piercing light. An angel started speaking to us. You know, there's a reason the first thing an angel usually says is, Don't be afraid.

I will never forget seeing him.

That morning, I fully expected to see him.

But expected to see him still lying in that tomb where we saw him laid. One last farewell. And although our hearts were racing when the angel told us that he was risen, It still seemed too good to be true.

[8 : 05] We believed. We believed. But at the same time, we just really missed him. But now he was there. Standing in front of me.

Very much alive. With a gentle smile. And those eyes would fix on you like nothing else existed. And he said my name.

I burst into tears and fell at his feet. I held onto him, afraid that if I let go, he would disappear forever.

But he lifted me up and calmly said, Don't be afraid. They say everyone population here is stealing. We kept quiet, we didn't say any more about it, to be honest, we didn't think we'd be alive much longer anyway. Only about half of us went to the official to tell them, the other half just disappeared. They knew that nothing good was ahead after that.

Say you were sleeping? Ha, yeah. The others were right. Nothing good lay ahead. If we were sleeping, which we were not, then you could say goodbye to your job. Don't worry, the officials said, if the governor finds out we'll protect you. But they couldn't protect us. We took the money. What were we supposed to do? We were stuck. If we told the truth, we would be killed. If we took the bribe and said we were sleeping, we would be killed.

[10 : 31] So we just took the money. We took the money to leave to our families and then said what they wanted us to see. It was their conspiracy, not ours. But to be honest, it wasn't even a believable one anyway. I mean, we were good at our jobs. We knew how to guard a place.

We were strong, we were armed and we never slept on the job. Did people really think that after what we did to Jesus, a small group of Galileans would get past us? That they would open the tomb and steal away a dead body and not wake us up or have a single mark on them? Give me a break. And if the officials wanted to prove it, all they had to do was find the body.

But there was no... I didn't want to have anything to do with it. But it is what it is. And now, I'm just waiting. And you know, I just can't stop thinking about what really happened.

While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. When they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, Tell people, his disciples came by night and stole them away while we were asleep. And if this comes to the governor's ear, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble. So they took the money and did as they were directed.

And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day. Heavenly Father, we pray that as we open your word, you would speak to us by your spirit.

[12 : 27] In many ways, the world has been against your word and tried to shut it up for thousands of years, yet not succeeded. And we thank you for your faithful servants who have passed down faithfully your word to us. Speak to us now, Lord, as we open your word to us.

We open your word in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, if you have a Bible, then turn to 1 Peter. If you don't, don't worry, I'm going to read it out anyway. 1 Peter chapter 1. I'm going to read verses 3 to 12.

My thanks to David and to Jean. Some of the things you said, Jean stole half of my sermon. So, very on point. Thank you very much. Some really good things to think about if you were to ask people on the street about their hope of getting to heaven, or the hope of the next life, or hope at all.

1 Peter chapter 1. This is what Peter writes to a church.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

[14 : 11] In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you've been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours, searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves, but you, and the things that have now been announced to you through those who preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

Amen. Well, have any of you ever had a visit from air hunters? I don't know if you've seen the program, air hunters.

[15 : 43] Do any of you know that you will get a family inheritance? Any of you know that that's down the line for yourself? Maybe you do, maybe you don't, maybe there's one, maybe there's not.

Or would it be out of the blue? Is anyone here hoping for an inheritance from their family? Think for a moment. What would you do if you got the call?

Out of the blue, some family member you didn't know. And the amount wasn't disclosed. That's the thing as well. Air hunters, they call looking for family members to pass the inheritance on to because they get a fee.

They get a fee for a range. Now, it can be anywhere between 15 to 25 percent or even more. So, for instance, if you were to get a call out the blue, some family member has left an inheritance of one million pounds and they took a fee of 25 percent, that'd be a quarter of your inheritance goes to them just for arranging it.

But you can shop around, you can shop around and see who you can get to arrange it for you. And you have time. In fact, there could be an inheritance sitting there for one of you here today that you don't even know about.

[17 : 01] It could be years before you find out. It could be waiting up to 10 years, sometimes even 30 years before the treasury claims it.

There's this story about a man who died and eight days before his death, he cut out all his family from his will. And he left 250,000 pounds to his friend's daughter who was only six years old.

And she said later that it ruined her life. She said she had all sorts of people who knew about it, even strangers asking for money, people trying to steal from her.

She said it ruined her life. Or there's another headline where a woman says, I inherited millions and I'm hiding it from everyone. Funny thing, isn't it?

It's clear that money and possessions inherited can cause no small amount of strife. Yet, of course, a parent or person would be desiring to want to take care of their family.

[18 : 11] Of course. So here's a question. Who are you going to leave your estate to? In fact, the question really is what are you leaving behind?

Now, I don't mean are you leaving something worth inheriting or are you leaving debt for someone? That's not what I mean. You see, it seems like in many stories, if our hope only belongs in this life and if our inheritance only belongs to this world, then it will be much less valuable than we actually think.

See, without the events of the first Sunday after the last Passover that Jesus observed, we just wouldn't be here today, folks. Without that, we would not be gathered together in this building.

In fact, this building wouldn't even have been built. Easter's a celebration of what happened on that day, that Sunday, the first day of the week after Passover. Almost 2,000 years ago.

It was the Feast of Firstfruits. And that's the time when the Firstfruits of the harvest was brought by the Jews into the temple where the priest would wave it and present it before God.

[19 : 24] The Firstfruits were the first physical, invisible sign that God was providing a harvest to the people. Without this Firstfruits, you didn't know if you were getting a harvest or not. But as soon as that popped up, you would thank God because you knew that the harvest was coming.

It was on that day, that day that the tomb of Jesus was found empty. That is a historical fact. The tomb of Jesus was found empty.

On the day, Jesus' disciples also saw him alive again. It's also a fact.

The disciples claimed to have seen him alive. It was on that day that the Firstfruits of the resurrection appeared. On the Feast of Firstfruits.

Now here's the thing. This is what Gene was talking about. You either believe in life after death or you don't. But the thing is, our belief doesn't make a thing true or not.

[20 : 31] Our belief is subjective. Either there is or there isn't, whether we believe it or not. And that makes Easter, this day, this celebration, this celebration is either the most important event in the calendar or it's the most pointless event.

So what is it that you're hoping for? Do you have hope? Is it only for something that belongs to this life or this world? As Gene was saying, what is the basis of your hope?

Well, listen to Paul. Paul was an enemy of the Christians. He wanted to shut the Christians down because they kept on proclaiming this person, Jesus.

And they were proclaiming that he is alive. Paul, the enemy of the Christians, wanted to shut them down and he met Jesus alive. Historical fact, his life turned around and he changed the world.

He brought Christianity to Europe and it didn't stop there. This is what Paul says. For if the dead are not raised, then not even Jesus Christ has been raised.

[21 : 49] And if Christ has not been raised, then our faith is futile. And if that's the case, then we are all still dead in our sins.

If in Christ we have hope in this life only, then we are of all people most to be pitied. See, Christianity is not a religion that only caters to this life.

If that was the case, then we are the most to be pitied of all people, says Paul. If there's no resurrection, Christ is not risen. If there's no life after death, then the things that Jesus said are not true and the words of the apostles are misrepresenting God.

God. But if that were the case, we would not be here today. We wouldn't. We simply wouldn't be gathered like this, nor would we have the life and hope that we have.

See, Paul says in verse 20 as he keeps going on, but in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. He has. It happened.

[23 : 03] There's nothing to change that. It's a historical fact. The tomb was found empty. Disciples went from fearful to bold, claiming to have seen him.

Enemies turned to the greatest disciples and he changed the world. And if you look at your calendar, the number on your calendar is after this person that they tried to shut up 2,000 years ago.

That changes everything. And so this is what Peter says. This is what Peter is writing to a church that is facing persecution, facing hostility, facing hatred.

A church that needs hope. This is what Peter says. Folks, look at what God has done through Jesus Christ, his son. Look at what he's done.

Peter starts with a who. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is who has done this. And why? Because of his great mercy.

[24 : 08] According to his great mercy. What do you think about God? If you were to ask people in the street, what do you think God is like? What would they say? Angry?

Disappointed? Judgmental? Bad? God is merciful. This is how God reveals himself.

Yahweh, Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty.

See, God is just. He won't let the guilty get away scot-free. Otherwise, he wouldn't be just. But look at the weight of his character. Merciful and gracious, loving and faithful.

This is why he has done what he has done through Jesus Christ. And this is exactly what you see in the person of Jesus. A God who is merciful and gracious, loving and faithful.

[25 : 15] So what has he done? What is it that he has done? Well, Peter says he has caused us. He has caused us to be born again.

Gene said it earlier. This is not our own doing. He has caused us to be born again. If you're a believer, then it's because of God, not because of you. This is something that our first birth cannot do.

Our first birth cannot achieve. Something that anything that belongs to our first birth cannot achieve. See, no earthly inheritance will buy your way into heaven. No amount of good works will make us acceptable.

We need to be born again. But to what? Born again to a living hope. God causes us to be born again to a living hope.

Why? Because in Adam, we only have a dead hope. All of humanity, we all come from Adam, so we all inherit death.

[26 : 19] Is that not true of humanity? That's definitely true of humanity. Everyone ever born in Adam, in the flesh, dies.

We need to be born again because at this moment, we are all born to die. But God has caused us to be born again to a living hope.

How? Well, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. See, our hope is living when we are born in Christ. It's dead as we are born in Adam.

That's how we start life. But he is alive, never to die again. See, our hope is living because he is living. God is the God of the living.

So the hope that he gives is a living hope, one that doesn't result in death, but in eternal life. And he's done this through Jesus, his son, whom he raised from the dead in a new body, never to die again.

[27 : 20] It's happened. It can't change. Nothing can undo what has been done. And those who believe in Jesus, who have faith in Christ, well, God has united them with Christ, causing us to be born again in Christ.

Born in Adam results in death. Born again in Christ, eternal life. So he's the firstfruits of those who die but will be raised to eternal life.

The resurrection of those who believe in Jesus is as sure as the rest of the harvest when you see the firstfruits come up. It's happened already, so it's going to happen.

You can be sure the harvest will now follow. And so the inheritance that we receive doesn't belong to this world. Hallelujah and amen. The inheritance that we receive, we who believe in Jesus does not belong to this world.

Even the best inheritance in this world is neither secure nor does it last. You cannot take it with you and it does you no good in death. You see, earthly inheritances are only as good as the world they belong to.

[28 : 35] So, where's your treasure? What is your hope? What is the basis of your hope? What is your security in?

What's your future plan? This inheritance for those who belong to Christ, who believe in Him, it has been kept for you.

Isn't that good? You don't need to keep it safe yourself. Remember the the parable of the sons.

One went away. I want my inheritance and he goes away and blows it. How many of us would do that? I probably would. We don't need to keep our inheritance safe.

We don't need to look after it. We don't need to keep it secure. It is kept for us in heaven. It's kept out of the reach of ruin. It's kept out of the grasp of those who would want to steal it or get a piece.

[29 : 39] It's kept out of the reach of this world. And so, this inheritance is not subject to the ruin of this world. It cannot fade. It cannot be defiled. It cannot perish.

It has been kept for you in heaven until the time when it will be revealed. So, what about you? Your inheritance is safe, but what about you? See, there have been cases where people people don't even live long enough to receive their inheritance.

But look at what Peter says. For those who are in Christ, well, you, you are being guarded by God. God's not only making sure your inheritance is safe, he is making sure that you are actually going to be able to inherit it in the first place.

And how is he guarding you? He's guarding you by your faith. By faith in Jesus. And that not of your own, it's right there.

For by grace you've been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing, it's the gift of God. This gift that God has given you of faith, and by the way, anyone can have it.

[30 : 54] God never once said, I will only let so and so believe. anyone can believe. God is willing to give this faith to anyone who would receive it.

And by that faith, you are being guarded by God. See, remember Paul's prayer. We just read it, we just heard it earlier in Ephesians 1.

The eyes of our hearts would be opened, enlightened, to see the hope to which he has called us, the inheritance, and to see the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe.

His power towards us, his power in our faith, his power in faith is immeasurable. I don't know if you think about your faith like that, you probably don't.

Your faith, you might feel like you're hanging on by a thread, you don't realise the power of God demonstrated in your faith. your faith is a demonstration of the immeasurable greatness of God's power.

[32 : 03] It is. You wouldn't have it if it wasn't for God. Your faith is a sign of the immeasurable greatness of God's power that he is giving you and he is guarding us through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

It's there, it's ready, and it will be revealed. So, what do we spend our lives guarding? What do we spend our lives in trusting? Because we don't need to guard our inheritance.

We don't need to guard ourselves. We don't need to guard our faith. God is doing that. He's the one that's done this. Because of all this, it's a work of the merciful and powerful God through Jesus, his risen son.

Do you have hope today? Because you don't need to end the day without hope. And your hope doesn't need to belong just to this world. Is this not what Peter's talking about?

Later on in this, Peter says to the church, always be ready to give a reason for the hope. You might think he would say for your faith, but he says for your hope.

[33 : 15] Do people see your hope? Are people asking, why are you hopeful? Oh, this is going on. Why are you hopeful? Are you ready to give a reason for that hope?

Well, because this hope that I have doesn't belong to this world. This hope that I have of an inheritance cannot be touched. What are you going to do?

Kill me? Jesus has been raised, and I will be raised. What are you going to do? Try and steal my inheritance? No. Unfading, undefiled, imperishable, kept in heaven, away from the hands of anyone on this earth.

that's the hope that I have. Do you have that? If you're believing in Jesus, whether you realise it or not, this is yours. And this is the thing that Peter says, through trials, these trials that we go through, they just test our faith.

They prove our faith to be true. They give us an opportunity to tell people about the hope. because the world doesn't go through trials the same way.

[34 : 28] You don't go through trials the same way when you have no hope. You don't even go through trials the same way when your hope only belongs to this life because it doesn't have any great foundation.

But when you're going through trials and your faith is tested and people begin to ask, why are you hopeful? Always be ready to give a reason.

And that's it because of what Peter says in this first chapter. Because of what God has done. And so Peter goes on in this passage here to say, though you have not seen him, I'm pretty sure that describes every single person here today.

Though you have not seen him. Yeah, Peter has, but you haven't. But though you've not seen him, you love him. how is that possible if he's not risen?

How is that possible if God has not given you faith? How is that possible if your faith is not genuine? Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe.

[35 : 40] believe. You believe in him and you rejoice with a joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory and obtaining the outcome of your faith, which is the salvation of your souls.

this is proof of your new birth. Your love of Jesus, your belief in him is proof of your new birth, a demonstration of the immeasurable greatness of God's power towards us who believe.

So what do we guard? Not this, not our faith, not our inheritance, not our salvation, not heaven, not even our own lives, not even our own souls. That's not what we guard.

What do you pass on? What do you leave behind? Not just an inheritance that belongs to this world. Do we just leave behind that which lets people reach death more comfortably?

If it even does that, and I don't think it does. Or do we give them that which lets people reach eternal life through Jesus Christ?

[36 : 48] And that's why, that's why Peter here at the end says, concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied these things about Jesus ahead of time didn't know what it was about, didn't know who was going to do it.

They searched, they inquired. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves. It didn't happen then, they were serving us who now know Christ and believe in him.

And the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news, that's what we guard. We guard the good news and we pass on the good news.

That's the inheritance we leave for people because that's the only thing that can give people an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, and kept in heaven for them.

It's the only thing that can do it. Who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven things into which angels long to look.

[37 : 53] Let me tell you, none of us would be here if no one had done that, preaching of the good news, passing on this which leads us to an inheritance that is kept in heaven for us.

None of us would be here if that were not true. praise God. So let us rejoice today, this Easter resurrection Sunday that Jesus is risen.

And because of that, God has given you this faith and he is guarding you for the inheritance that he is keeping for you in heaven.

This is good news. If you know this, then rejoice today. If you know this, then let your hope be filled up and let that hope not wane because it's not belonging to this world.

If you hear that and that's you and you believe in Jesus, then let your hope swell up so that people ask you the question, why do you have hope? And if it's not you, if you don't yet believe, then believe.

[38 : 56] Jesus is the only way, as Gene said. No one else has been risen from the dead. But Jesus Christ has. and we today are evidence of that.

Let me pray and then Gene's going to sing a last song. Heavenly Father, we thank you so much because we are only here today because of you. I was once at a point in my life when I did not believe and I did not like you.

I used to curse the name of Jesus, but God, you've saved me. You've saved us and many thousands and millions and billions more like us.

without that first Sunday, Jesus rising from the dead, none of us would be here, but we are.

Without the faith that you have given us, none of us would love him, but we do. Without your immeasurable power, none of us would believe in him, but we do.

[40 : 03] And so we thank you, God, and we praise you in Jesus' name and we pray that we would have the boldness and courage to share this good news with others so that they might also have an inheritance that is kept in heaven for them through Jesus Christ and that they might have a hope that goes beyond this world.

Praise you, God. Blessed be your name through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.