

Hope for the Doubters

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Preacher: Ricky Njoto

[0 : 00] Please turn your Bibles back to 1 Peter, 1 Peter chapter 1, and that's on page 1220. Life is full of uncertainties, isn't it?

So we have doubts, we have doubts. Some people might have doubts about their financial future. They might be trying to find a job.

I know a few people who are. They might be struggling with the rising house prices or with their mortgage. Some others might have doubts about their health, what's going to happen in the future.

And yet others might have doubts about the future of the global political situation with all the wars and conflicts everywhere. Or perhaps your uncertainties are more personal.

You might be experiencing a relational limbo. Or if you're studying, you don't know whether what you're studying right now will get you a job in the future. It's hard to find a job these days.

[1 : 10] Or if you have kids, you're not only struggling with your own uncertainties, you're struggling with theirs as well. There's a lot of uncertainties in life, which means not only that we have become skeptics in life, but we are also anxious.

We are anxious people. Because we truly don't know what's going to happen in the future. According to the Australian government, in the previous 12 months, about one in five Australians struggle with anxiety and mental health disorders.

One in five. That means if you look at two people on your right and two people on your left, amongst the five of you, on average, there's one person who's struggling with anxiety and mental health.

And one in seven children and teenagers experience anxiety and mental health disorders. Now, if you're one of these people, what do you do?

What do you do with all those uncertainties that are bogging you down and making you anxious? You might be telling yourself, it will be okay, it will be okay, it will be okay, Ricky, it's going to be okay.

[2 : 41] But you know, even that statement, it will be okay, is uncertain. You doubt whether things will really be okay and when are they going to be okay.

What God is offering you right now through our Bible reading today is the certain hope that things indeed will be okay.

If you have Jesus. Let's jump in. In our reading today, Peter, one of the disciples of Jesus wrote a letter.

And this is what he said in verse one. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God's elect, exiles scattered throughout all those places in the Roman Empire.

Now, Peter was writing to people who were facing a lot of uncertainties. Life in the first century Roman Empire was extremely uncertain.

[3 : 49] The vast majority of people were poor. Most of them only had one set of clothing that they would wear every day. What if that set of clothing were to be destroyed?

They wouldn't know what to do. Uncertain. Most of them only got paid one day wage at a time. So the prayer, give us our daily bread, was relevant.

What would they eat tomorrow? They wouldn't know. Well, work again, so that they get wage again and get their daily bread again.

Life was uncertain. There were no formal hospitals if you're sick in the Roman Empire. And in that uncertain world, Peter was writing to Christians whose lives were even more uncertain.

They were considered exiles in the society. At least the general population, even though life was highly uncertain, they would have support from one another, from the society.

[5 : 02] But when you're considered exiles, and back then in the first century in the Roman Empire, Christians were socially marginalized people, and the church was an association that was not socially accepted and therefore received no rights or protections, life was extremely uncertain for them.

And yet, after greeting them in verse 1 to 2, the first thing, the first thing that Peter said in verse 3, praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Praise God in this uncertain life? Why? He continues. Because in His great mercy, God has given us new birth into a living hope.

They were praising God in this uncertain life because He has granted them new birth into a living hope. What does that mean? Well, just like a natural birth starts a natural life, this new birth starts a new spiritual life.

And that's why you often hear Christians talking about finding Jesus as the start of a new life. Their lives change or being born again.

[6 : 30] Our lives change when we start following Jesus with our whole heart. And what does the change look like? Many things. But one of the most important changes is our lives become hopeful.

That's what it says. New birth into a living hope. There's hope right now and it's living. And this is how the living hope comes about.

Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. 2,000 years ago, God became a man, Jesus. He lived and died and he came back to life.

That doesn't happen every day. And our new birth is achieved through Jesus' resurrection. Meaning, just like his life cannot be broken even by death, it's eternal and secure and certain.

our new lives are eternal, secure and certain. In fact, this is the only way we can get certainty. We can't be truly certain of what will happen in the future, whether the housing prices will rise or not, whether our health will get better or worse.

[7 : 54] There's no certainty. But we can be certain of what has happened in the past because it has happened. And Jesus' resurrection has happened in the past.

It's certain. And just as that is certain, our new life is certain because it's achieved through what has happened.

We have a certain living hope that even if the worst happens in our lives, we die, our lives are unbroken because his life is unbroken.

We jump to verse 6. Peter says, In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

Christians are not unrealistic. Just like the Christians back then in the first century, Christians today also have to suffer much grief and many trials.

[9 : 08] We have to struggle with inflation too, with job losses. We get sick, our loved ones die. Christians in some places are being tortured for their faith.

We grieve and suffer trials. But through all that grief and through all those trials, we have a living hope, a hope that cannot die.

We're not always happy, but we're always hopeful because we know that someone has defeated death. Because we know that although we struggle in the present with our mortgage, with uncertain jobs, with uncertain health, with uncertain relationships, with uncertain political situations, we know for certain that things will be okay because someone has defeated death.

We are certain that we have a new life and that life is unbroken. So it will be okay. because although there are still uncertainties in life, we are certain that Jesus is with us because he's alive.

And he loves us way more than we could ever love him back. And so it will be okay. Because we are certain that when Jesus died, Jesus has bought us with his blood.

[10:45] And we are his and if we are his, the only person who has defeated death, that powerful person, we are his, nothing can happen to us that is not within his control.

So it will be okay. If you have Jesus, you have a living, unbroken hope.

I'm going to show you a video testimony of someone who has suffered a lot in her life, but in all the uncertainties that she's facing, she remains hopeful because she has Jesus.

Take a look. with Ehlers-Danlos, a lot of people have a lot of severe, severe pain and joint dislocations, so I started having problems there. I found out that I also had POTS, which is postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome, basically meaning every time I stood up, my heart would race, and I would sometimes pass out.

But it's what's been causing me to have low oxygen. I faint a lot. I have low blood pressure because of it. I no longer sweat. And then by August, I developed a really bad tremor, and it turned out I had severe spinal cord impingement in my neck.

[12:11] Four of my discs were pressing on my spinal cord. And then in April, I stopped being able to swallow, and I was given a tube that went up through my nose and into my stomach to feed me.

I had that for about a month, but I wasn't able to gain any weight because it turns out that not only is my esophagus affected, but my stomach is also not working very well.

So we had to bypass my stomach, and now I'm fed directly into my intestines, so it bypasses my esophagus and my stomach completely. Even though I don't know all the answers, even though I don't know if I'll be able to eat again, I'm not angry with God anymore because I don't think that He owes me anything.

And through all of the suffering that I've had, He's given me such comfort, such peace, such joy, that my life is a thousand times better than it was before.

I'm not any better physically, but I am so much happier because I have Jesus and He's right here. I can't even imagine having one thing that she has.

[13:25] She has a lot of things. But the hope that she has, that's the living hope that we have if we have Jesus.

Note how she said, even though I don't have the answers, I don't know whether I'm going to feel better. There's a lot of uncertainties and doubts in her life.

But she's got hope and joy and peace and contentment. Don't you want that hope too?

In whatever uncertainties you're facing right now. Now, that new birth that Christians experience in Jesus is not just a new birth into a life of hope now in the present, but also for hope of the future.

Peter continues in verse 4 and 5, after saying that we have new birth into a living hope, he said, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade.

[14:34] This inheritance is kept in heaven for you 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.

If you have Jesus, you're not only reborn spiritually into a life of hope now, but you're reborn as God's children, meaning you will, you get hope for a future inheritance.

It's like being reborn into an extremely wealthy family with all the inheritance that the family has. and isn't God, by logic, the wealthiest being in the universe?

And pay attention to how the Bible says it. The inheritance is kept in heaven for you. It's certain. It will be there. Again, because it's anchored in the past resurrection.

The resurrection has happened, and so the inheritance will certainly be yours if you have Jesus. And in verse 5, we too are kept, we are shielded by God's power until the inheritance is revealed in the future.

[15:55] Meaning, nothing can happen to us if we have Jesus that will take our inheritance away from us. it's secure.

It's certain. So what's the inheritance? Well, there in verse 5, we are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation.

That's the main inheritance. We will be saved from our present sickness, suffering, relational breakdowns, will be saved from our own sin, which creates all this brokenness inside of us and around us.

Like when we struggle with our own anger issues that hurt others, or hatred, or lack of self-control, or addiction that hurts ourselves.

we need to be saved from that too. And if the problem is the sin inside of us, we cannot save ourselves.

[17:11] And we will be saved if we have Jesus. It's certain because it's our inheritance as God's children. salvation. And this salvation also includes many things in it.

It includes eternal life, of course, just like Jesus, life is eternal. So our new life also is. It includes perfect joy and peace and love as we will live with God, who is the source of joy and peace and love.

it includes a community, so we won't be lonely. That hope for a future eternal inheritance is important, even for our lives now.

We have heard from Huey and Tony, how they have been comforted and assured during their struggles. How they have a living hope, not only in the present, but also for the future inheritance, that things will be all right.

They have said that there's not one day when they don't think about Jesus' resurrection and what it has brought to their lives. That's what hope of certain future does for life in the present.

[18:37] Don't you want that hope? Now, you might be thinking right now, yeah, I do want that hope, but all this living hope in the present and hope for eternal inheritance in the future are anchored in the resurrection of Jesus.

What if I'm not certain about the resurrection of Jesus itself? What if I doubt that? And that is a valid question.

My response is twofold. First, there are compelling logical reasons to believe in the historicity of Jesus' resurrection, that Jesus indeed rose from the dead and it occurred in history.

you can ask me after the service or if you're here because a Christian friend brought you here, I encourage you to have that conversation with your friend.

Second, if you want the hope for certainty that Jesus offers, but you're not certain about his resurrection, I encourage you to pray and ask him.

[19:50] in our Bible reading from the Gospel of John, when Thomas was doubting the resurrection of Jesus, Jesus didn't say, you don't believe Thomas and so you're going to hell right now.

No. He approached Thomas with a compassionate, personal revelation. He showed himself and his scars and he said, put your finger here, see my hand, reach out your hand and put it into my side.

Now that doesn't mean that Jesus shows himself physically to everyone who's doubting him, but it does mean that he's compassionate towards them and he wants them to know him.

And you being here right now might be the first indicator that Jesus wants you to know him. so I ask, I encourage you to ask him and Jesus might reveal himself to you too, spiritually, through the reading of the Bible, just like what John says in the next few verses.

But these writings are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, even though you don't see him. and that by believing you may have life and hope in his name.

[21:21] A lot of you have heard my personal story, why I believe, so I'm not going to repeat it. But I believe because Jesus has revealed himself to me personally, although in a spiritual way.

But I truly see him and his beauty and his glorious and love him. And I know that he's with me every day, giving me hope through life's struggles.

I battle with depression from time to time, and every single time I can feel his presence with me, comforting me, giving me that living hope that cannot die.

And I know for certain that one day he will return and make everything all right. and I'm certain of it because I'm experiencing his goodness and his work of renewal in me every day.

And a lot of times that work of renewal cannot come from myself. I know myself. I cannot do those things. And if you want to know more about my experience of Jesus, feel free to ask me after the service.

[22:37] Jesus, but don't you want that hope? Friends, Jesus died to pay for your sins, and he came back to life.

So we can have living and broken hope that when we put our trust in him, his eternal life becomes ours. God and he is with us every step of the way, giving us assurance and certainty that things will indeed be okay.

Because he has defeated death, and whatever happens, he is right next to us, giving us peace and comfort and a living hope.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, thank you for dying for our sins, and thank you that when you came back to life, you shared your life, your new life, your new unbroken life to people who believe in you, who follow you.

Help us, Lord, with the power of your spirit to live out our living hope, the hope that cannot die. whatever we do today.

[23:59] In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.