

The Living Hope of the Exiles

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 April 2026

Preacher: Rev Jon Bealey

[0:00] He is risen. He is risen with me. How do you?

Thank goodness for that. I thought everybody would have forgotten.! This, as Dave nicked my intro, is Low Sunday.! Last weekend was the super high.

We go through the year. We aim at Easter. It is the pinnacle of the year. And then we kind of run off the edge, a bit like Wile E. Coyote coming off a cliff. And we get to Low Sunday.

And it's kind of the Monday morning of the church year. But it isn't. Because those readings are absolutely incredible. If you listen to the enthusiasm and the power in what Peter is saying, it's absolutely incredible.

It's electric. And there's imagery in there, which is just amazing. Now, the Peter reading is great.

[1:10] I particularly love the angel reference. But the John bit, what a story. There they are, the disciples. Exiles in their own city.

Locked away. Hoping that they are not going to wind up getting arrested. Hoping they're not the next ones to get executed. And who rocks up? But Jesus.

He walks in. He proves that he is resurrected. Not just a ghost, but a person. He walks in. He eats. He drinks. He talks. He breathes.

He has a heartbeat. He is there. He is resurrected. And then he goes away. And then Thomas comes in and says, No, I don't believe it. So what does Jesus do?

He turns up. He holds out his hands. He proves that he is there. Is it any wonder that Peter, later on when he's writing that letter, writes with such conviction, such enthusiasm, he explodes onto the page.

[2:13] It's incredible. But then again, he's seen a man that was crucified, buried, and come back to life again. So perhaps not that surprising. He addresses his message to the elect exiles.

And he promises us, us, the elect exiles, a living hope. Now, to understand that hope, we've got to have a bit of a think.

We have to look at the divine architecture that he's laying out. Now, if you look at verse 2, he doesn't just say, God chose you. He uses a very Trinitarian formula.

It's breathtakingly deep. He says, you were chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. This isn't just God knowing the future. It is a sovereign, a loving choice, made before time began.

You were chosen then. He speaks about a sanctification of the Spirit. The process of the Holy Spirit setting you apart.

[3:26] As the holy world often feels anything but. And finally, he talks about a sprinkling of blood. Now, that might sound odd to us, but to a first century year, that sounds like a tabernacle.

For the Jews, God dwells in the tabernacle. He's saying that you, we, are now the tabernacle. God dwells in our society, in our workshops, in our offices, in our homes and towns and villages and shops, in us, so that we can spread the word.

Is it any wonder he was so enthusiastic? However, he does use some words which are a bit odd. Think about elect exiles. Now, I've struggled with that one, but, my friend. I came up with this on Friday as the best way I've got of explaining it.

Now, I work with my hands these days. And this is not a screwdriver. It is a turn screw. It's a posh word. This I made for working on a very, very, very fine English shotgun, which was valued at £95,000.

[4:46] and had a stuck screw, which I had to undo. It's one of those moments where prayer comes in and you kind of just hope and there was an awful lot of doubt.

To undo that, I use this. The weird thing is, this tool, which did such an important job, is rubbish. The blade here. is made out of an old file that I found in the bin. It was covered in rust and it was blunt. But I knew the steel was really good. The handle is walnut. English walnut. Again, found in the bin. It was part of a stock that had snapped and wasn't any good anymore. And the brass ferrule, that's the barrel inlet from a Swedish rifle, again, which was defective and had gone in the bin.

I picked a bunch of stuff that was rubbish and chose it for the most important job in the workshop. Elect exiles. We are exiles.

[5:58] We are not particularly good. But God has seen something in us. He has chosen us. He has elected us. We are the ones chosen by God.

How amazing is that? It's not just a chance that you're Christian. It's not just luck. He picked you. He pointed his finger and said, oh, you.

I want you. I want you in my family. And he selected all of us. Isn't that incredible? Now, what about hope?

The other phrase there is a living hope. Now, we often hope. As I was saying earlier, I hope that my car passes its MOT. I hope that it isn't going to rain because I left my coat in the car.

These hopes aren't particularly important, but they are pretty much up in the air. But Peter's talking about a living hope. Because we hope in Jesus.

[7:00] And Jesus isn't just some fairy tale. Jesus is alive. He was raised. He has a heartbeat. He breathes. He talks. He eats. They touched his wounds.

This is not some fairy tale hope. This is an actual hope that we have found it in something real. And because of that, we have gifts.

gifts. These gifts are anchored in... Let's look at the Greek words. Greek words.

Aphatos. Amiantos. Amarantos. Aphatos. It means it can't be corrupted by death. The gift we've been given by grace cannot be corrupted.

It can't be just wiped out by death. It is unending. Amiantos means it can't be stained by sin. Unstainable.

[8:03] The gift that we are given. Amarantos means its beauty never dims. It's untarnishable. In a world governed by greed and power, everything is subject to decay or theft.

But Peter tells us that the inheritance that we are given by God's grace through his son is shielded by God's power. And when we look at the word shielded, it's a military term.

God has stationed a garrison of angels around us and our future to protect us. You aren't the one keeping your salvation safe. God is doing that.

God is the watchman that looks after you. God is the one who is the one Now, the refining fire.

Peter's a realist and there's a downside to all of this.

It isn't easy. You will be refined. He talks about a gold being tested by fire. The heat isn't there to destroy the gold.

[9:07] It's there to burn away the dross, the rubbish in the gold so that it leaves something that's pure. I am reminded again of my turns group. Making this was a pretty violent process.

I had to take this steel, I had to grind it clean, I had to heat it until it was incandescent, cherry red. I had to then let it cool slowly over hours before I could work it.

I then filed it, machined it, ground it, polished it. And then when I'd done that, I had to take it up to cherry red again, taking it until it's incandescent just before the point where it actually starts to burn and oxidise.

And then quench it in the slack tub and then heat it again after polishing it, chasing the colour up the blade until I wound up with blue at the tip and then polishing it again.

In the same way, we wind up being tested. We wind up going through the fire. And it's not pleasant. But it's got to be done because if we're going to be perfect, if we're going to be good, we've got to be tested.

[10:17] And also, that testing leads to our faith. And faith is more precious than any gold. Finally, we've got to recognise the sheer privilege of our position.

St. Augustine is supposed to have said, the new in the old concealed and the old in the new revealed. Peter tells us in verses 10 and 12 that great prophets, men like Isaiah and Jeremiah, were searching and inquiring.

It was like they had the lyrics to the song, but they didn't actually have the tune, the music. They were serving us, even the angels, Peter says, long to look into these things.

The way if you read that in the Greek, it's almost like a bunch of kids peering over the banisters, looking down the stairs at what's going on. Can you imagine angels doing that, looking at us because they're so interested?

Peter makes a startling claim. He says, though you have not seen him, you love him. That takes us straight back to Thomas in that room years before.

[11:33] When Jesus turns around and said, blessed are those who believe in me even though they have not seen. And that's you, that's me, that's us. We believe even though we haven't seen Jesus.

Isn't that incredible? We are the elect exiles. We don't believe or belong to a God of greed, a God of power.

We've left that behind. We belong to a God of grace who loves us and heals us and guarantees our salvation.

I challenge you this week, when you leave this place, just spend ten minutes sitting down. Ask the Holy Spirit where the God of greed is in your life.

Ask where he is trying to steal the joy from your life. and ask what you can do about it. Think.

Maybe it's an ethical problem at work.

[12:40] I have plenty of those. Maybe it's seeing the trial, the refining fire as being a disaster, rather than what it is, something that's going to shape you and make you better.

it's a shepherd. There's someone who's still locked in that room with the disciples and needs to be set free. Whatever it is, think about what you can do.

What can you do to spread the message? Again, you are the elect exiles. You have the living hope. You are the prophetic stewards.

You have the message. you have the good news. The greatest story ever told. Go out. Take it out into the world and spread it.

He is risen. Amen.