

A Living Hope Through Christ's Resurrection

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[0 : 00] Good morning and a very warm welcome to our live stream this morning from Stornway Free Church. From wherever you're watching, I pray that this will be a time of blessing for you, that we'll know the Lord's blessing as we come together in this way to worship Him.

So let's begin our worship with, first of all, read from the scriptures, and we're reading from John chapter 20, and reading verses 1 to 10. Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb.

So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to him, They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.

So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going towards the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter, and reached the tomb first.

And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in a place by itself.

[1 : 21] Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in and saw and believed. For as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

Then the disciples went back to their homes. And we pray that God will bless to us this reading of his word. Let's now call upon him in prayer. Let's join together in prayer.

Almighty God, we give thanks today that we have this opportunity once again to come to worship you together, and to be able to call upon your name, and to read your word, and to give our minds to its teaching.

We thank you today, O Lord, for this passage that we have read, on a day when we commemorate the Lord's resurrection from the dead, which we do every Lord's day, but which at this time of year, O Lord, we have a particular focus upon it.

We thank you for that unbroken sequence that your word speaks of. You are coming into the world and taking our nature. You are living a life of perfection in this world.

[2 : 31] Your death on the cross, your resurrection from the dead, your ascension to glory. You are seated at the right hand of God, and you are coming to judge the world at the last day.

We give thanks, O Lord, that these are unbroken realities. We bless you for the way that you grant us faith, to trust in your word, to trust in yourself, as the one who has brought such salvation to us.

We thank you today, O Lord, that we can indeed call upon you, who is great and glorious, and unfathomably majestic.

And yet we, who are creatures and sinners as well, are able to call upon you in prayer and worship you, through the grace that is in Christ Jesus. We give thanks today, Lord, for your victory over death.

We pray as we find ourselves in a world that is so familiar with death, and particularly in these few weeks gone by, we give thanks, O Lord, that there is a power over death, that you have made it clear to us in your word, which speaks of your resurrection, that death does not have the final word in our human experience when we come to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3 : 52] We thank you, Lord, that that final word is life, for you came to bring your people life, and to give them life. We thank you that you are the resurrection and the life, so that whoever believes in you, even though they die, yet they may live, and whoever lives and believes in you shall never die.

Help us, Lord, we pray, to believe this, but to transfer it not only from your word into our minds, but from our minds into our way of life, so that we may live in the power of your resurrection, and live that life that is already triumphant over sin and over death, through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed today, we pray, all who gather to worship you as we do, wherever they are found, and in whatever form their worship is, O Lord, we pray that your blessing will be with your people.

We pray today, especially in the light of this virus that has overtaken the world, and caused so much death already, in so many places. Gracious Lord, help us to look to you.

Enable us, we pray, to see you as our great creator, the one who has power and control over all things. But help us to know, Lord, also of your wisdom, and to accept your wisdom, in the plan that you have devised, for the whole world, and for the whole of history.

[5 : 18] Bless us then today, we pray, as a congregation here, through this medium, that we use to worship you. We thank you for that technology. We pray today for those, Lord, who are able to meet in this way, different places in the world.

And we ask today, especially, that your blessing will be with those who suffer, those who have already lost loved ones through this virus, or other ways in which they have come to the end of life.

Lord, our world is so full of suffering, and we give thanks that you are the one who in yourself is marked by suffering and sympathy with us in our condition. And Lord, we pray today, that your grace and spirit will be abroad, mightily throughout the world, to bring people into your kingdom, and to assure us, O Lord, that you care for us, that you love us without question, having revealed it in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So hear us, Lord, we pray, and all who today are beset with difficulties, confined to their homes, and finding anxiety over loved ones.

O Lord, we pray that your blessing will quieten our hearts and enable us to look to you. Bless our children, we pray at this time, as they find confinement also sometimes so difficult, and not having school lessons to attend.

[6 : 45] O Lord, we pray for them and ask that you bless them and help those of them sharing in this live link too, to remember the Lord Jesus Christ and to have and to hold him dear in their hearts.

So receive us, we pray, and pardon our many sins for Jesus' sake. Amen. Now, we're to the children at this point, just a few words, a story I came across the other day.

It's a story, it's one of those stories that has a lesson to convey to us. It's a story about birds, birds that lived in a forest, a very dark forest, and they were involved in a conversation as to whether the sun really existed or not.

And almost all of them believed that the sun did exist, apart from the owl, because the owl only went out at night, and the owl had never seen the sun, and the owl refused to believe that the sun existed.

So the other birds persuaded the owl one day to go out with them into the daylight. And off the owl went in the morning with the other birds out of the forest into the daylight to enjoy the sunshine.

[8 : 00] But as soon as the owl got out of the forest and into the light, it closed its eyes tightly and said, I can't see the sun. Where is it? You know, some people do that with what the Bible teaches.

They close their minds tightly against the Bible and refuse to believe in the existence of God or that God can do miracles or that Jesus did the miracles described in the Bible, especially that Jesus actually rose from the dead.

They're a bit like that owl. They just refuse to open their mind and accept that God's word is true and that all of these things it teaches us are for our benefit and are true as well.

So today, don't be like that owl. When you believe in God and when you believe in Jesus Christ who is God, you must believe in miracles because that is what God does.

And the greatest miracle in relation to this world is Jesus rising from the dead. We're going to speak in a minute from the Bible's teaching about that.

[9 : 16] Nobody ever opened a grave from inside and nobody else has done it since Jesus did it in his resurrection from the dead.

That's how death has been defeated and for us, as we come to believe in Jesus, as we come to share in that victory that he has obtained over death, we too come to know of that eternal life that he gives us when we come to trust in him.

So let's say the Lord's Prayer again together as we come to continue with the service. We'll say it slowly so all the children can follow it. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

[10 : 35] Now we're going to read again from God's Word. This time we're going to read in 1 Peter, the first letter of Peter in chapter 1 and verses 3 to 9.

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 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.

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have 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 honour and glory 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.

And I'd like to spend a few minutes just thinking about the teaching of verse 3 especially, although these verses are so closely tied together, especially verses 3 and 4.

[12 : 14] Verse 3 says, 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.

From the time that Peter denied the Lord to hearing about the tomb being empty and especially coming to realise that Jesus was actually alive, there were very, very long days.

Luke chapter 22 tells us that when the Lord looked upon Peter, following his denial of him, Peter went out and wept bitterly.

And then, he appears in John 20 verses 1 to 10 as we read. And he came with the beloved disciple to the tomb and he checked for himself by going into the sepulcher, would have been a small cave, that it was indeed as was reported to them.

And as he went in there and saw, along with John, the beloved disciple, they believed that he was risen from the dead. And in his first letter, Peter is here writing his mature thoughts about that wonderful event and about that wonderful experience.

[13 : 30] So these are his reflections, really, in many ways, in verse 3, on the scene that met him at that time when he looked into and went into the tomb of Jesus from which Jesus had risen.

And here, first of all, reference to a life-changing event. A life-changing event, this resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

You see that Peter is saying, God has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. So he's tying together the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead with this wonderful change that took place in his own experience as he really came to believe and to trust in the Jesus who had risen from the dead that he was indeed now alive.

And the resurrection is, first of all, a fact in history. As a life-changing event, it is a fact in the history of this world. Scripture records the resurrection of Jesus in a way that shows us and assures us it was well attested.

It was something that people actually could prove for themselves. The body was not in the tomb. The tomb had not been opened from outside. The records show that Jesus, having risen from the dead, met with many people at different times.

[14 : 56] And it's absolutely crucial that we see the resurrection of Christ as a fact in history. It cannot be a life-changing event unless it's, first of all, factually true.

Unless it really happened as the scripture records show. And it's crucial for us and for our faith that that's indeed the case. Let me just remind you of what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15, which, more than any other chapter in the Bible, deals with the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of God's people.

This is what he says in 1 Corinthians 15, verses 1 to 6. He says there, referring to reminding them of what he preached, the gospel I preached to you, which you received.

But then he goes on to say, for I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, that he appeared to Cephas, that's Peter, then to the twelve, then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive.

You see, this could be checked out. And here is Paul saying, in common with Peter, the message that we actually preach in the gospel contains, as an essential element, the fact that Jesus rose from the dead.

[16 : 26] That's, you see, how important it is for us today. The resurrection, as a fact in history, is closely tied to the place the resurrection of Christ has in the gospel message.

and both the resurrection as a fact and the resurrection in the gospel message are tied to the resurrection in our saving experience of it.

You remember Paul again in Philippians chapter 3, verse 10. He's giving his testimony there. He's telling us why he actually now didn't, no longer consider the things he once saw as foundationally important to be foundational at all.

His own obedience to the law of God, his own attempts to keep that law of God, these things he said I count but loss. Why did he say that? What had he discovered? What had come to him? That I might know him, Jesus, and the power of his resurrection.

You see, God had taken Paul from his trust in his own ability to keep the law to trust in the ability of Jesus who had kept the law for him.

[17 : 41] And that's why all of these as facts in history are so important. The resurrection as a fact becomes the fact preached which becomes the fact believed.

That's the unbroken string, the unbroken chain that scripture itself puts together for us. So what is not true in fact cannot be true in faith.

That's why Paul says again in 1 Corinthians and chapter 15 verses 16 to 18 where he says for if the dead are not raised that's if there's no such thing as resurrection at all if it's not possible if the dead are not raised then not even Christ has been raised.

And if Christ has not been raised your faith is futile. you are still in your sins. Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

If in this life only we have hoped in Christ we are of all people most to be pitied. What is not true in fact can't be true in faith.

[18 : 53] It is a fact of history this life-changing event. But it's also secondly as a life-changing event it is a foundation for hope. You see what Peter is saying?

God has caused us again to be born again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. These were men whose hopes had been dashed and women as well.

Those followers of Jesus who as the two who were travelling on the way to Emmaus walking on the way to Emmaus in Luke 24 one of the things they said as they went on in their journey disconsolate and downcast their faces down to the ground their heads had really dropped we thought that this was he who would have redeemed Israel.

This Jesus of Nazareth they thought through having come to know him in his preaching and his teaching and his miracles we thought this is the one the promised Messiah who would redeem Israel but then he died he was crucified he was put to death on the cross and their expectation and their hope and their view of him was dashed until they came to realise as we read in John chapter 20 verse 2 that he was no longer in the tomb that he was no longer dead that he was in fact alive and for Peter that experience was really essentially like a being born again like a new birth he has caused us he said to be born again to a living hope this transformation this wonderful realisation and belief that Jesus was in fact risen from the dead that is why he calls it a rebirth it really was a transition moment for him a moment of intense and important realisation that this Jesus was alive and that he was alive on the other side of death that he had overcome death that death was behind him and now he was alive forevermore and that's where our Christian hope is also anchored it's anchored in the fact of Christ's resurrection following the fact of Christ's actual death that's why Peter calls it a living hope it's not just an ordinary hope it's not like the hope we usually express when we say something like well I hope this will turn out but I'm not sure of the things that you have in the ordinary course of life you might be hoping for the best but there's no possibility or no certainty that it will turn out that way that's not what this hope is like at all this is a living hope this is a hope in which you say you can say it contains life it's a living hope it's a real living thing it's a thing that will never be put to shame will never be disappointed in its outcome when Jesus returns it is a living hope and for Peter that's so important not all that long since we went through the first letter of Peter and we saw so many times it was written to people in real suffering in real difficulties as we read even today in the first chapter who if necessary being necessary you're going through all of these different types of temptations testings and sufferings this is a living hope for life in the real world it relates to life's actual circumstances the real sufferings the real tough testings the real disappointments the real crushing blows of providence that's where this hope really comes into its own again remember how

Paul wrote to the Romans in Romans chapter 5 where he speaks about through faith we've been justified and we have peace with God through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace this position this standing in which we stand and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God more than that we rejoice in our sufferings knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us you see what he's saying there Paul is saying the same as Peter really essentially this hope is a living hope for living life as it now is in the real world with an expectation that there is much better to come with an expectation of that glory it's the hope of glory it's Christ in us the hope of glory where the resurrection as a fact in history through being preached as an essential element of the gospel has come to be a fact in our faith where we come to rest our life upon it our present and our future friends today we live as you very well know in a crippled world there's always been a crippled world ever since Adam sinned against God but it's very obvious today that it's a crippled world when we find this virus throughout the world having overtaken so many nations and people societies a world that has in it so much death so much negativity so much fear so much bewilderment so much uncertainty that's where this hope matters that's where this hope can transform our outlook on life and will transform our outlook on life through faith in Christ and through a belief in his resurrection isn't it a wonderful thing that the Bible tells us this hope that you have through the resurrection of Christ this hope that contains in itself victory over death and the prospect of a final glory this hope was created by God for the hopeless hopeless for you and for me hopeless sinners in ourselves and that's what Paul reminded the Ephesians of in chapter 2 of Ephesians the epistle to the Ephesians you aware he said at that time cut off from Israel from the promises of God without God without hope in this world that's me that's you as you find yourself coming into this world but here is

[26 : 10] Peter saying God has caused us to be born again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead for all the benefits friends that we have through technology through wonderfully skilled and dedicated medical staff and workers and also scientific discoveries and all the things that we hope will find a vaccine that will address the demands the requirements of this virus for all of these wonderful things the most important thing that the world including you and I needs to know today is that Christ is risen from the dead is that death has been defeated is that there is indeed hope for all who come to trust in this wonderful Savior and that's where this hope really matters to us today where we need to show it in our own lives today as Christians that we don't live as uncertainly in an uncertain world that we don't live as unconvinced hope that there is a hope in this unconvinced world we need to live out our faith and our hope in such a way that would seek by God's blessing to touch people's lives and even under his lockdown or that people would come to know the hope the living hope that is in Christ

Jesus a life changing event then a fact in history a foundation for hope but secondly I want to finish with this the second main point is an outburst of praise because Peter is here not just referring to the resurrection of Christ as the way that God caused them to be born again to a living hope he's not just referring to that matter of fact in a way that just looks at it coldly or presents it just there like you would a mathematical formula or something no he bursts onto the page in verse 3 blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ it's an outburst of praise and he's taking this word blessed from the Old Testament the likes of Psalm 72 blessed be his holy name blessed be the one who came to save us blessed be the Lord and he's taking that word and applying it to this situation blessed be the God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ let this God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ it means let him be well spoken of let him be praised let him be honoured for this isn't that a reminder to us that praise is not a little prelude to the rest of our life nor is it just an epilogue stuck on at the end of every day praise worship of God is for all of life it's what life is about it's really what gives meaning to life and here is Peter saying blessed be the God and Father isn't that today how we ourselves feel isn't that how we ourselves want to engage with the resurrection of Jesus Christ by saying blessed be God for this blessed be his name let him be praised forever that he has brought victory to us in Christ's resurrection and you see he's saying according to his abundant mercy or through according to his great mercy abundant mercy that too is an

Old Testament formulation abundant mercy of God as the covenant God of the Old Testament and the wonderful truth of that is in this context that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead the Father the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ him raising his son from the dead is an act of our covenant God have you ever thought of the resurrection of Jesus Christ being an act of the covenant God in commitment to the safety to the security to the salvation of his people it's because the Lord God the God of the covenant was absolutely committed to the life of his people to the salvation of his people there is no way in all the world that even death could actually stop that from happening and so he raised his son from the dead and he has caused us to be born again to a living hope it's according to his great mercy according to all that you find spoken about God and all that he has said about himself like when he said to

Moses having heard Moses beseech him show me your glory and in Exodus 34 God showed him his glory how did he show him his glory by showing him his goodness by talking to him about his covenant mercies a God who is rich in mercy long suffering forbearing with us that belongs to his glory that's what's behind the resurrection of Christ God's commitment to the salvation of his people and that's why he's saying he has caused us to be born again this is an act of God this covenant God he produced his hope in our hearts you know people dismiss this today as if it's just a psychological shift in people's thinking you come to look for some sort of crutch that will see you through the way in this world through the difficulties the trials the things you meet with and so you come to the

[32 : 32] Bible and you come to this idea of resurrection and it feels good so you just accept it's a shift it's a bit of positive thinking it gets you through the day is that how Peter regarded the resurrection of Christ from the dead of course not it's a foundational stone in the salvation that he enjoys in Christ and he's saying he produced it God did this he caused us to be born again it's a creative act of the saving God and that's where this hope as it's from him exists now in a renewed soul in a believing soul let me ask you as I ask myself what is your hope today how far does your hope reach today does it go beyond the borders of this present life your own life does it go beyond the present circumstances in this world does it go beyond the hope that somehow at some point this virus will disappear will be overcome how far does your hope and my hope reach does it first of all reach down into the resurrection of Christ is it anchored there is it rooted there and does it reach upwards to the return of Christ to glory with Christ to salvation in heaven because that's what it was for Peter and he knew

Christ and he knew that Christ was risen from the dead he had checked it out for himself and he had met with the risen Christ after he had seen the tomb without his body no he says God produced this living hope in us maybe so for you for me as well that we come to know this for ourselves turning to Christ accepting Christ receiving Christ the Christ of the resurrection this life changing Christ so that your life will also live in expectancy of that final return of the Lord I've spoken more than once of Ellie Holcomb's songs I'm just going to finish by quoting from one of her songs I will never be the same and it's a song relating to the resurrection and this is one of the verses from it when you rolled a stone away when you walked out of the grave you were standing in the light of day and just check out the you have already probably the wonderful photo on the facebook page from inside a cave with a magnificent explosion of light at the entrance well that's of course indicative of the resurrection and life and hope when you rolled the stone away when you walked out of the grave you were standing in the light of day everything changed you said do not be afraid you were scarred to heal the pain you defeated death and shame and everything has changed everything has changed and when I mess it up you say your love is enough you say you will never leave or forsake me when I come undone you are the only one to say you will hold me now and forever amen let's pray oh gracious god we give thanks once again for the wonder of your resurrection and for the life changing experience that you give to your people as they come to know of your resurrection as a fact in history and as a matter that's foundational to their own lives so bless us we pray today oh lord and bless this day to us help us to use our time of confinement well enable us we pray to come to know you better through it and to come to know your word in a way that exceeds our knowledge of it already we pray that you would sanctify to us today lord help us we pray to celebrate the fact that jesus is risen that he is alive forever more that he is coming again to this world on the last day hear us we pray and accept our worship for jesus sake amen now we're going to conclude today from psalm number 71 that's in the sing psalms version psalm 71 and verses 14 to 21 sing to the tune boon ely psalm 71 at verse 14 but as for me my hope is steadfast and more and more your name i'll bless i'll show your measureless salvation and all day long your righteousness verses 14 to 21 but as for me my hope is steadfast

and more and more your name i'll bless i'll show your measureless salvation stand by and all and all ■ mogelijk your righteousness I will proclaim your acts, O Lord God, your righteousness, yes, your shalom.

For since my youth, O God, you've taught me, and still your wonders I make known.

And now, my God, do not forsake me, when all and free I have become, till I declare your might and power to generations yet to come.

[39 : 30] Your justice reaches to the heavens, who is like you, O God, in strength.

Though you have shown me many troubles, you will restore my soul at land.

From the deep places of earth's darkness, you will bring up my life once more.

You will increase your servants on my comfort once again restore.

Thank you once again for watching. We'll close now with the benediction. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore. Amen.

[40 : 47] Do please watch again this evening for our evening service. That will be conducted by Reverend Kenny I. McLeod. That will be at 6.30. If you can log into that as well.

We'll appreciate that very much. And thank you for all your support at this time. God bless you. God bless you.