

NEW LIFE AT EASTER
Easter Sunday –April 24, 2011 – I Peter 1: 3-9
The Church of the Covenant

The burdened down disciples trudge to the garden tomb on that first Easter Sunday. But they come running from that same garden filled with hope moments later. They dejectedly come to the first Easter, as indeed may we come to this Easter, depressed and saddened by the struggles and the losses of this world. But they leap for joy as they exit filled with new life at Easter. However you entered this place today, beloved, I want you to exit this place having experienced NEW LIFE AT EASTER.

From whence cometh our HOPE? Is it just a thought in our own brain? An expectancy not based upon fact or reality? A childish dream? Grow up, become cynical, buy into the lie of the world that there is no hope. As a pastor I can tell you that where there is no HOPE people perish. When a person faces disease and they give up hope, they die. When a relationship gives up hope that relationship dies. When a church gives up hope that church is as good as closed. When a city or a nation ceases to hope in something, dare I say it in SOMEONE, beyond itself it begins to die; first in its heart and soul, and then in fact. On Easter we are all about HOPE. We are about a hope that death itself cannot take away. We are about a living reality in Jesus who has come today to address whatever part of our heart and soul lacks HOPE today. He is the hope for the hopeless; He is the hope of the world...

Burdened down disciples, you have come trudging into Easter this year, expecting little or nothing, but I tell you this, you will go running from this service filled with HOPE...for we have found an open tomb and a Savior who we thought was dead but is alive forevermore!

Our scripture is a scripture of HOPE. It declares, *“By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”* (I Peter 1: 3) Note first where our hope comes from. It comes from *“his great mercy”* not our own hand or our own head or our own world. And hope comes, not because we deserve it or have earned it, it comes because God is *merciful*, and we receive it in spite of ourselves, not because of ourselves. And this hope, as it says, is a **“LIVING hope”**; it is not an idea or a concept; it is a person; it is held in a person who was dead and is alive; what makes it a LIVING hope is that its surety and its certainty comes from a living Savior, an ever-present Jesus; the One at whom the world threw its worst and is still here. We don't hope in a polyana-ish hope. We don't hope in a hope because someone tells us we SHOULD hope. We don't hope in something un-real. We don't hope in some tall tale told to children. We hope in a living hope, a hope that exists quite apart from our belief in it, a hope that beat death itself, a hope that is eternal. And NEW LIFE AT EASTER comes from that feeling of new birth that has at its essence the burdened down disciples trudging to see the stone over the tomb at that first Easter but instead seeing an empty tomb and a risen Lord and a hope that is ALIVE and not DEAD, a hope that will not disappoint, a hope that lives and lives forever...

And our scripture is a scripture of HOPE. It goes on to declare that we have received this NEW LIFE at EASTER and *“an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you...”* (I Peter 1: 4) This HOPE we receive as *“an inheritance”*; it is a gift; it is a gift given by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; Jesus had to die in order for us as his heirs to receive our inheritance. It isn't ours; it is HIS. We didn't earn it; we were given it as an inheritance. But this HOPE is an inheritance which is, as it says, *“imperishable, undefiled, and unfading”*. (v. 4) It will not perish; it lives forever, this hope of which I speak. It is not defiled; the world cannot get its hands on this hope; the world doesn't give this hope, so the world can never take it away. It is unfading; it doesn't matter that Easter was 2,000 years ago; the light of Hope shining from that Open Tomb is just as bright today as it was on that first Easter

morn. And the best part of this HOPE is that it is held by Jesus Christ Himself; it is held as He sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; it is untouched by this world but it is for this world; nothing in this world can cause it to perish, to become defiled or to fade. It is held like the purest gold in the Fort Knox of heaven. Ah, beloved, for it is *"kept in heaven for you."* (v. 4) It is not a nameless hope; it has your name on it. Nothing in this world can touch it or diminish it. No sadness. No loss. No disease. No distress. Jesus lived and died and was resurrected and lives again in order to hold that imperishable, undefiled and unfading HOPE for you in heaven, kept safely in heaven, just for you.

Now if we really understand the hope Jesus personally holds for us in heaven, wouldn't we go skipping from the Garden Tomb today like the disciples of old????????

Metaphysics suggests that there are categories of concepts held in a metaphysical world --A world beyond this world. There is the perfect concept of things like justice and truth and love. There are metaphysical categories of just and compassionate nations. There are metaphysical categories somewhere "up there" of laws that are just. The Greeks believed that their task was to appertain to those categories and to endeavor to recreate those categories held in the metaphysical realm here on earth. There may not be a perfectly just law here on earth, but O, there is one in heaven. There may not be perfect truth here on earth, but O, there is one in heaven. Christianity has the same concept but we call it something different. We call it the Kingdom of God. Up in heaven there is a perfect world for which we can desire. It is just and righteous, good and compassionate; it is filled with things like truth and hope. And every now and then there is the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God; that metaphysical world breaks in; "Thy Kingdom" comes, Lord, "as Thy will be done" here on earth.

The moment I knew I could not be an attorney was the moment I asked in my law school classroom, "What is truth?" and a professor I much admired thought about it a bit and said, "What is true is what a judge or a jury declares to be true on any given day." Really? That's all truth is? That's all hope is? There is nothing that is true in and of itself, and was true and shall ever be true? Truth is entirely changeable? It is capable of becoming perishable, and defiled, it can fade as the morning dew when we vote against it? There is nothing that is true forever and held in the heavens just for us? There is nothing really just for a society; it is just however we can manipulate the truth and who can raise the most money and THAT makes it true? Not for me. Never. I cannot and I will not ever believe that.

No, here is the truth. There is a HOPE for every person on the face of this earth. It is not subject to us believing in it; it exists quite apart from us. It requires no judge or jury to vote in favor of it in order to be true. It is not subjective; it is objective. It breaks into our false and dying world every now and then, as the Kingdom of God breaks into our reality, to remind us that there is a place where things like truth and beauty and justice and hope live forever, untouched by the stain of this world.

And EASTER, that first Easter Sunday, was the ultimate inbreaking of the Kingdom of God; the ultimate metaphysical event; God showing His hand if you will; God revealing to us just a little glimpse of heaven; God granting us a glimpse of an eternal inheritance, that we did not earn and we do not deserve; something eternal and everlasting; something imperishable and undefiled and unfading; a hope that will never disappoint us, because it is a LIVING Hope we know in a risen Savior. **It is a living hope Kept in Heaven Just for you...**

I had a discussion with a man not long ago. His son had died prematurely and a great sadness had descended on this strong man. He admitted "just going through the motions" of life. He could not ever see how a loving God could do this to his beloved son. As a pastor I was largely silent in the face of his

seemingly inconsolable grief. I had no good words to share; nothing I had learned in a pastoral care book that could assuage the pain I felt in this man. Nothing on earth I could give him that could give him hope. He was a disciple, just trudging to a tomb, where he thought was only the dead body of his beloved son. Go in and see for yourself. He is not there; he is risen just as Christ said. The tomb is open. The stone, rolled away. He lives and because He lives we shall live also. There is a hope that death itself cannot take away. It is imperishable and undefiled and unfading. And, Don, it is kept in heaven just for you and your son.

This Easter come to the Garden Tomb expecting death but instead discover HOPE. This Easter we have a LIVING Hope in a LIVING Lord and so we have NEW LIFE at Easter! However you arrived at this service today, beloved, in Jesus Christ you can leave this service with a heart full of a Living Hope!

He is risen! He is risen indeed! Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*