

1 Peter 1:3-9 Christ crucified and risen is our living hope! Festival of the Resurrection, Sunrise service, April 4, 2010  
By Rev. Kenneth Mellon, Pastor, Trinity Ev Lutheran Church, 1268 Pleasant Valley Road, West Bend, WI

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our crucified and risen Lord and Savior. Amen.  
God word of life is written in 1 Peter 1:3-9  
These are Your words, dear Lord. Sanctify us by Your Word. Your Word gives life in Christ! Amen.

Dear Friends in Christ who is risen! He is risen, indeed!

This is the day the Lord has made! Let us rejoice and be glad in it! And how can we not join in using the words of praise with the Apostle Peter who, on that first Easter Sunday ran to the entrance of the empty tomb of Christ. He bolted inside to examine the evidence of our eternal salvation! Although this letter of Peter was written more than 30 years after that first Easter morning, yet the message of the resurrection was as fresh in his mind as that first Sunday.

### **Christ crucified and risen is our living hope!**

**First, the living hope offers forgiveness to sinners.** Peter wrote, *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”* (v3) Peter had his reasons for praising God. He had brought curses on himself when he denied knowing Jesus. Later he wept bitterly, spending three days in despair until the risen Lord appeared to him and forgave him. Throughout the season of Lent and Good Friday we have seen the agonies and heard the loud cries of our Savior as He took our sins and punishment so that we could receive the blessings of forgiveness from His rich grace!

Peter reminded his readers that they had had a new birth! Once, under the cover of night, Jesus told Nicodemus that that was exactly what he needed. We needed it too because we are *“flesh born of flesh.”* We have a gruesome eternal birth flaw. Though we may have entered this world as very healthy babies, all of us were born spiritually dead. Like fallen Adam, by nature we have no true fear of God and can only desire what God hates. By nature we were glad to be away from the saving presence of God even though it made us lost and would bring eternal suffering.

We needed a *“living hope” from God.* That hope is contrasted with the hope of a fallen world. Unbelievers hope that better things will happen to them in life. They try to do good hoping that it will be enough to please God. They put their hope in riches or in other human beings. But these hopes are temporary and without certainty. They are empty of power to help them. They are deceptive and leave people disappointed for eternity. For Peter they had a dead hope.

So, what is a living hope? It is a firm conviction of faith based on God’s promises, looking to the future through His past accomplishments. We have an unshakable certainty of our resurrection from the dead because it is guaranteed by Christ’s bodily resurrection. When we read and hear the promises of God, the Holy Spirit is working and He plants a new spiritual life inside us as we believe that Christ has saved us.

The Gospel message is not just that Jesus has risen from death, but also what it means. God’s Son became a perfect man. He gave His life as a sacrifice to pay for all sins. The fact that God raised Jesus from the dead is living proof that He accepted the payment that Jesus. Nothing more needs to be done for our salvation. One commentator wrote, Death took Jesus as an innocent victim. Therefore, death owed our Lord a debt that it could not pay. What did our Lord demand of death for that injustice? That you and I be set free from sin, death, and hell. Because death could not hold Jesus, we are certain that our sins will not hold us in the grave. God’s justice has been satisfied, and Christ’s resurrection guarantees our resurrection to eternal life. This is *“the living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*(v.3) Through this message of Jesus the Holy Spirit has created faith in us which receives all

that Christ won.

**Second, Christ's resurrection offers an inheritance.** Peter describes it as *"an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you."* (v.4) What is our inheritance like? Due to our sinful nature and our sinful world we cannot imagine the glory that awaits believers in Christ. St. Paul once described his experience of heaven. (2 Cor. 12:1-4) He said that he heard things there that no human voice can speak. If the sounds of heaven are beyond us, how much more the sights, the inexpressible joy, the complete health of body and mind, the perfect harmony with those around us, the thrill of knowing that Jesus fulfills our every need! His resurrection is the guarantee of that inheritance.

Earthly inheritances can be squandered, stolen, or lost. Our Lord's resurrection gives us a place that *"moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal."* (Matt. 6:20) It cannot be spoiled because it is pure and unfading. Around us this morning are flowers to remind us of the resurrection glory. But, these flowers will fade and eventually fall. Our inheritance in heaven will never wear out. It will never lessen in giving us delight for all eternity. What is more, the almighty Savior himself stands watch over it so that no human or fallen angel can rob us of it. That's why Peter assures us it is *"kept in heaven for you."* (v.4)

We share in the inheritance with Christ now. We hold the deed to heaven today through faith in Christ. And we rejoice in our new status before God, even though we don't see or feel it. Peter wrote, *"Through faith [you] are shielded by God's power until the ... salvation is... revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice."*(v.5-6)

As pleasant as this world can be with family, friends, happy events like today, we know that this is temporary. We are but travelers going through this world on a journey home. You all know by now that Gladys Hoerchner passed away last Sunday. A few days before her death, she was awake for a few moments and after we said the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm and the Lord's Prayer, we said "Aufweidersehen" to each other, "until we meet again." She was saying, It's time for me to go home. And in the future in God's timing, as believers, we will rejoice in saying the same thing.

Having our hope in Christ will not make life in this world any easier, but we can remain confident in our Lord's promises. One of the reasons Peter wrote this letter was that the Christians were suffering. Peter wrote, *"Now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold..., may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."* (v.6-7) People in the world see no benefit to being a Christian. They see Christians give up sleep to come to an Easter sunrise service. They see Christians give of their talents and treasures, but they don't see any benefit. They see us with problems, pains, and heart-aches just like non-Christians. Since the world only counts things that are seen, they cannot understand why the resurrection of Jesus moves us to rejoice even in our afflictions.

But, God knows why. He has revealed to us that this world can become a vexing temptation to us so that we can lose sight of the great inheritance of heaven. If our sinful nature had its way, it would rob us of eternal life. When we have problems, sickness, pain, persecution, or when we are in distress over our nation, these afflictions take from us all the earthly props that we might depend on instead of God. If wealth or friends desert us or health gives way to disease, we are left with nothing but the Word of promise from our almighty God which points us to Christ and resurrection. There alone we find the everlasting arms of the Father, holding us up when everything else fails. That is why Christians accept their crosses in life. It drives them to the Bible and to Christ. Nowhere else can we find indisputable proof of God's love for us!

So Christ's bodily resurrection has given us a sure hope in His promises so we see the wealth of heavenly glory ahead for us. And by faith we will speak the same words as Peter concluded, *"Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and*

*glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”(v.8-9) Amen*

Luke 24:5-7 The empty tomb is a place of life! Festival of the Resurrection 10:00 a.m. service April 4, 2010  
By Rev. Kenneth Mellon, Pastor, Trinity Ev Lutheran Church, 1268 Pleasant Valley Road, West Bend, WI

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our crucified and risen Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.  
These are Your words, dear Lord. Help us to remember truths of the resurrection for life! Your Word is truth. Amen

Dear Friends, in Christ, our risen Savior,

Throughout history many people have believed in an afterlife. Egyptians mummified bodies of the rich and famous and made pyramids or lavish golden burial sites so people could enjoy the afterlife. Others in the past at their death planned to be reincarnated into a new body and begin life again on earth. Others become generous near the end of their lives hoping that if God does have a judgment day He might go easier on them. What confusion there has been in the world about death and what is to follow! It cannot be so for us! The tomb of Jesus is not surrounded by a pyramid. No one takes trips to the Holy Land to make homage to Him at His burial site as people do for other famous leaders who have died. There is not monument in Israel with words of praise for our dead Savior. God declared that the sacrifice of His Son on the cross was an acceptable payment for all sin by raising Jesus to life. Easter morning gives us assurance that Christ's empty tomb was God's final statement to a questioning world. Our theme for today speaks of this truth.

### **The empty tomb is a place for life.**

**First, the empty tomb speaks of a life filled with hope.** On the first day of that new week, the day that Jesus rose from death, the sunrise was waking up their area of the world. Several women were already on their mournful way to the tomb of Jesus. These women were emotionally drained from the events of the crucifixion that had snatched away their Savior from them and put Him in the tomb. Think of their emptiness.

Their arms were full of spices to anoint His dead body. Their eyes were full of tears. Their hearts were full of disappointment. They had followed Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus and saw where Jesus was buried on Friday. They saw them roll the large stone in front of the mouth of the cave. But, Sunday morning on the way to the tomb they thought of the obstacle ahead, *"Who will roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb?" (Mark 16:3)* Those women were even more shocked when they arrived after the earthquake and found that the stone, which may have weighed up to 1,000 pounds and been hurled aside to show the open tomb *"but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus."* (v.3) Mary Magdalene immediately went to Peter and John and exclaimed, *"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put Him!" (John 20:2)*

While the other women who stayed at the tomb were wondering about this, *"suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?(v.4-5)* The women were not looking for Jesus, the conquering Lord of death, but Jesus, the defeated Messiah. They came not looking for Jesus, the Lord of Life, who had already shown power to raise the dead, but Jesus, the victim, unjustly killed.

No matter how much Jesus had told these women and all His followers beforehand that He would die for the sins of the world, but that death couldn't hold Him because He was the innocent Son of God, they still expected much less. The angel's message lifted their heads and hearts with truth pointing them to the place where a dead Jesus had laid. He said, *"He is not here; he has risen! Remember how He told you, while He was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" Then they remembered his words.* (v.6-8) There was nothing to be alarmed about, nothing to be afraid of. Jesus Christ was risen from the dead! Empty hearts and lives were now filled with certainty and hope! The women no longer needed their spices. They were to run and announce to the world that their Savior conquered sin, death, and the grave. Satan

was defeated, just as Jesus promised. His empty tomb showed that in Him was life.

Do we ever have a lack of faith about what our great and mighty God has done for us? He has removed a mountain of sin that we have committed and that kept us from knowing our God of love. Do we focus on Christ's victory or on our weaknesses and sins? We do turn to His Word of promises in Christ or do we just give in to the devil or our sinful nature in defeat? Our Savior is alive. He has conquered death and sin by His death. His empty tomb assures us that He has new life for us—a life filled with certainty in what He has accomplished as our Savior over death.

Many people here have been touched by sadness. Someone close to them can't be here today, because they have died. But, Jesus' empty tomb raises our sight to anticipate the glorious reunion we will have in heaven. St. Paul wrote, *"If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men."* But *"in Christ all will be made alive"* (1 Corinthians 15:19,22). The Bible states *"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above . . . not on earthly things"* (Colossians 3:1,2). Jesus' empty tomb guarantees for you and all believers eternal life.

**Second, the empty tomb also shows a life filled with future glory.** A caterpillar spins its cocoon and enters a world of darkness. Its creator then transforms it from a little worm on the ground into a beautiful butterfly in the sky. It's traditional in the Easter season to use the butterfly as a symbol of the physical transformation that our bodies will have on Judgment Day. The Bible states, *"We eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."* (Philippians 3:20-21) Christ's resurrection gives us certainty of glorious things to come, more than that, it gives us a new life now. We are not caterpillars or butterflies. Jesus' empty tomb guarantees that we are the children of God through faith in Christ and that we have eternal life now. That is the good news that we are to believe and proclaim to the world.

The women realized that they had no reason to stay at the empty tomb. Our verses state, *"When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others."* (v.9) Why did the angel tell them to go first to Jesus' disciples? Jesus had a great love for them. In their minds, they were no longer worthy to be called "disciples," rather something more like "cowards" or "deserters." But Jesus had the angel call them His disciples and in the Gospel of Matthew Jesus appeared to the women and said, *"Go tell My brothers"* to go to Galilee. (Matthew 28:10) He took a personal concern for His friends and wanted them all, especially Peter, to know that by His death He had forgiven them. He would remain faithful to them. But it took many more appearances to convince them fully.

The new life we celebrate at Easter is first about our glorified bodies in heaven. *"Because Jesus lives, we also will live."* (John 14:19) But it's also about our spiritual lives now. We all must admit that we haven't been as faithful to God as we should be. All of us have failed Jesus, but we don't need in doubt His love. He died for us while we were still sinners, how much more He will care for us now as God's children! The resurrection of Jesus means that He will remain faithful to us, just like He was for the disciples on that first Easter. It means that each day our sins are forgiven and we have a new life in Christ. We will never be perfect in life. We will go to our graves as sinners - forgiven by the life and death of Jesus. On the final day Jesus will return, empty all graves, and call us before Him. With Him as our Savior He will call us and all believers to His side to live with Him in glory. Can we be sure of this? The empty tomb of Jesus was God's final answer. He has risen. Let nothing stand between you and God's saving message of the empty tomb. Amen.