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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
April 5, 2015  
Easter Sunday

Scripture Lessons: Job 19:23-27, 1 Cor. 15:1-11, Matthew 28:1-10  
Hymns: 167:1,5; 188; 189; 200; 728; 730; 188; 207

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 1:3-9

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, Our Crucified Risen and Ever-living Lord, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: How do some among you say that there is no Resurrection?

We began this morning's Easter service in a rather unusual way. We sang a mournful hymn accompanying readings that reminded us of how it would be for us if Jesus had remained dead and in the grave. The women were grief stricken as they walked out to the grave that early Sunday morning. They were mourning the loss of the Lord, and wondering how they were going to move that great big stone that served as a door to the sepulcher. The disciples were even worse off. They were locked away in a room with no windows, scared and confused, and also very much stricken with grief because they knew Jesus was dead. They were more ready to believe that someone had stolen Jesus' body than they were to believe that Jesus had risen, as He said He would!

The idea of resurrection goes against all human experience. Human reason is not ready to concede that such a truth actually exists. We have all seen plants, or animals, or people die, and intellectually we know they stay dead.

A few years later this was still a problem in the Corinthian congregation. Some of their members were saying that there is no resurrection of the dead. Paul said if there is no resurrection then Jesus did not rise. What a sad place we would find ourselves in if Jesus had not risen and all we had was a dead Jesus! **We would still be in our sins!**

And yet that is exactly what people say yet today, people who claim to be presenting the real, historical Jesus. There are many voices in the visible Christian Church that say it is not necessary for salvation to believe that Jesus literally rose from the dead. Indeed, a large percentage of Christian theologians now hold to this position. The resurrection is celebrated as a revival of Jesus' spirit of love and His teaching. Then what salvation are they talking about? What hope would we have? If Jesus did not rise then there is indeed no resurrection. If our faith in Jesus is all about making this life a nicer life, this world a better world, then indeed we are of all men the most to be pitied.

But then we read another Scripture, and we left that sad state of mind quickly behind, and we shared in the joy of hearing, “**But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep**” (1 Corinthians 15:20).

And that is where our Easter joy is found! That is the truth that leads us to rejoice with joy unceasing, for it is not only that the One who loved us is alive again, but that in His resurrection we have the evidence that all Jesus said and all that He was to accomplish, and all that He was to secure for us **is real**, as real as His resurrection!

### **THEME: We Possess A Living Hope through Jesus’ Resurrection.**

It starts with life. Of course resurrection is about life. It is about life coming to those who were dead. In our text Peter begins with the life we have now because Jesus rose.

#### **I. A New Spiritual Birth is ours through Jesus’ Resurrection.**

**1 Peter 1:3** “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

We bless God the Father because everything He desired for us and our salvation has been successfully secured for us. He has assured us that this is the case by raising Jesus from the dead. Even as life has been secured for His Son by His resurrection, so also new life is **ours** by Jesus’ resurrection. He has begotten us again to a living hope by Jesus’ resurrection. “*Begotten us again*” may seem like an awkward expression but it expresses a glorious truth; it tells us of a wonderful spiritual blessing that has come to us because Jesus rose from the dead. To be “begotten again” means to be reborn. Peter is talking about spiritual rebirth.

We have this truth presented to us in other scripture passages as well. Jesus told Nicodemus that one must be born again. Jesus taught him that this had to happen through water and the Spirit. The Spirit works through the means of grace, which is the gospel in

Word and sacrament. The gospel is this glorious truth that Jesus died for us to take our sins away. The gospel also tells us that God announced the reception of this sacrifice by raising Jesus from the dead, thereby declaring the whole world justified. The gospel of our salvation is complete and in place with a **resurrected Jesus**. So it is that we have new life, spiritual life by the Spirit breathing life into our souls by the gospel of a **crucified and RISEN Savior!**

We are begotten again to a living hope! Hope is a wonderful thing that is treated so poorly by us when we think of it as a mere chance that something might happen if we get really, really lucky. That is not a living hope. The hope that we have in Christ is living because Jesus is alive. The hope that we have in Christ is that we shall be raised to life again with the Lord at His coming. He is the firstfruits! Afterward those who are Christ's shall be raised to everlasting life, to everlasting glory at His coming.

Life is no longer about merely muddling our way through this poor existence that we have here, and maybe making it into our eighties or nineties in reasonably sound health. That's what the world hopes for! We have so much more. Because Jesus rose from the dead --

## **II. We Possess the hope of an Eternal Inheritance.**

He has begotten again --

**1 Peter 1:4-5** "to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

Peter is explaining to us just how much better things will be in the eternal future which Christ has secured for us by His death and resurrection. We will be given something wonderful, not because we have earned or deserved it, but because we will **inherit** it. We are heirs of God's grace in Christ. Jesus died so that the dying testament, as in "Last Will and Testament," of our Lord would be in force. All the beneficiaries of that "will" are recorded in the Lord's book of life.

We are going to inherit some really good stuff! Better than all the things we know in this world. Better because everything in the life

to come will be incorruptible. Everything, everything in this world, in this life has been subjected to corruption. Everything gets old, wears out, and eventually becomes junk. Scientists say that everything is subject to “heat death.” That includes us. We get old just like our stuff does, wear out and break down, and finally end up on the ash heap. All of our worldly treasures have also been defiled. They are contaminated by sin and sin’s ill effects. It all fades away. We very glibly say, “**Here today, gone tomorrow!**” And we get excited about such inheritances?!

In Jesus’ resurrection we possess the hope (again not a wish, or a maybe, but a certainty) of an eternal inheritance that isn’t flawed in any way by sin, but is forever perfect! It isn’t temporary, growing old and then wearing out, but remains forever true and good. This inheritance is reserved for each of us in heaven. We have something wonderful to look forward to after this life.

The catch is, (and we are told that there is always a catch, aren’t we?) the catch is that we have to make it to heaven. If that depended upon me and my strength that would be a problem. I don’t want it to depend upon me and my strength. And it doesn’t depend upon me or you and our strength, unless we insist on that by ignoring the Word of the Lord and shunning His grace in the gospel, and turning away from His truth in preference for the lies and deception and fleshly pleasures of this world. But that isn’t the Lord’s way. He created new life in my soul by the working of the Holy Spirit through the gospel, and He preserves me in true faith through that same gospel of a crucified and risen and ever-living Savior. That same message that assures us of God’s love and forgiveness also keeps our faith alive and well against all the pressures of the devil, the world and our sinful flesh. We are “**kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**” It can’t get more sure and certain than that!

And so --

### **III. We Possess Hope and Joy even in Life’s Trials.**

**1 Peter 1:6-7** “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that

the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

So we do rejoice in the good news of the resurrection and how the Lord so richly blesses us through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this we greatly rejoice no matter what comes our way in this life. Of course there will be times when we are sad. There will be times when we are struggling with issues in life. What the Spirit is conveying to us is that even on our worst days we have something that brings us joy, and that is the hope of everlasting life which cannot be taken away from us for we are secure in faith and everlasting life. We are secure in the Father’s hands.

In actuality the various trials that come our way in this life demonstrate for us exactly how real and genuine our hope in Christ is. It is life in this world that lets us down. It is this temporal life that brings us grief and sadness. Jesus, our Risen Lord, promises us deliverance from all sadness and all pain. And when our faith is tested, and the Lord is once again faithful in delivering us in this life, and then **from** this life, we discover that the one true treasure we have in this life is our faith in a Savior who died for us and rose again.

Ah, but then we have never even seen the Lord! Neither had the recipients of this epistle from Peter. Does it really matter? Do we, like Thomas, have to see to believe? Our Risen Lord told Thomas, **“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed”** (John 20:29)! We are the blessed and extremely privileged recipients of God’s grace that we have been born again to this living hope! And so Peter describes how this impacts our hearts and lives.

**1 Peter 1:8-9** “whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.”

So, we haven’t seen Jesus, but we love Jesus. Not only are our hearts filled with this love but it is expressed in our lives, and in our attitude toward life. So we have not seen Jesus our Risen Lord,

but we rejoice in the glory of our Savior. We know the joy of our salvation and the everlasting life that is ours through this faith in Jesus. We are confident that we shall receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls. On that last day we shall stand before the Lord, our Living Savior, and we shall rejoice at His gracious invitation, **“Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”** (Matthew 25:34).

All of this is ours because on the third day Jesus rose again according to the Scriptures. **He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!**

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.