

Joshua Willadsen  
The Sixth Sunday of Easter  
Sermons  
May 29, 2011

## 1 PETER 3:13-22 - "RISEN FROM THE DEAD, THE REASON FOR OUR HOPE"

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Four weeks ago on May 1, I spoke to you about hope, our Christian hope of the resurrection of the body on the Last Day and the making of all things new. Our Christian hope is certain and guarantees the very best possible future for us. The reason Christian hope is certain and the very best awaited future is because Christ Jesus who was crucified for our sins was raised from the dead. Christ is Risen; He is Risen, indeed, Alleluia!

Christian hope is not the same as my still hoping that there will be a 2011 NFL season or that the Packers will repeat as Super Bowl Champions, that may or may not happen. The Holy Scriptures bear witness that Christ died for our sins and was raised on the third day, that He ascended to the right hand of God the Father, and that He shall return to raise those who have been baptized into His death and resurrection, who believe in the name of Jesus. You too have been baptized into Christ, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; you have died and risen with Christ to a life of faith and hope now, and you shall die and rise with Christ, bodily never to die again. When Christ returns all things shall be made new; our bodies shall be raised and made new; we shall live in a new heavens and a new earth; all will be made new and good.

All this shall indeed come to pass! Why? Because Jesus died for our sins and was raised from the dead to new resurrection life; His death and resurrection has changed everything. And because through baptism Jesus' death and resurrection have come to us and for us; Jesus has washed our sins away and given us the appeal for a clear conscience before the Father. This is the promise of Jesus Christ who died and was raised just as He said. St. Peter puts it this way: <sup>20</sup> formerly they disobeyed when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being constructed in which a few, that is eight lives, were saved through water. <sup>21</sup> Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not by the removal of dirt from the body rather by an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> Who is at the right hand of God, Who went into heaven and subjected to Him angels and authorities and powers.

Our need for hope, the hope we have in Christ, has not changed. Nor has the worlds' need for hope. Wars and rumors of wars have not ceased. Bin Ladin is dead, but the War on Terror, the War in Afghanistan, and conflicts and uprising in Libya and the rest of the Middle East continue. Natural disasters did not cease with the

earthquake and tsunami in Japan but continue to happen, just look at Tuscaloosa, AL and Joplin, MO two places recently destroyed by tornadoes. Economic challenges continue stateside and abroad. Crime and evil of all kinds continues. Sickness and disease persist. Death, death, and death still come to all.

Things seem rather hopeless in the world today. The more things change, the more they stay the same. As the Ecclesiastics says, "there is nothing new under the sun." People are turning toward all kinds of things for the promise of hope, for the promise of salvation from this present evil age.

Since the dawn of the 19th century many people believe that the best hope for tomorrow is to be found in humanity; that through the advance of science and technology and the evolution and enlightenment of mankind, we will one day be able to stop wars, predict and prevent natural disasters, bring about economic stability and prosperity, eradicate crime, cure sickness and diseases and even prolong life indefinitely. We might call this "the Star Trek hope" (in the Star Trek universe humanity has advanced so much in science, technology, knowledge, and morality that peace has not only been established on earth but through much of the surrounding galaxies through the United Federation of Planets etc.).

What we call World War I, was once called the War to End All Wars, but then World War II happened. Science, technology, and general knowledge of things have advanced in the world and in some respects produced a better quality of life, but human morality has not improved. Wars and crime have not ceased; now we have the ability of killing more and more people at one time. Yes we can better predict natural disasters and warn people, but they still take us by surprise and take an alarming amount of human life.

Other people believe that humanity's hope is to be found in great and dynamic leaders. If we just follow the right leader, elect a president with true vision and charisma, then hope and change can be fulfilled. The media today seems to be ever looking for such would be leaders and superheroes, men and women who can assert their will and effect change, "for the better" of course; "Hope and Change" were the campaign slogans for President Obama. The German people were looking for such a dynamic leader and super hero in 1930's; they got a dynamic leader who turned out to be a super villain instead of a super hero.

This is not to say that leadership or dynamic leadership is somehow bad or evil. Leadership is good and important, however all human leaders are flawed and sinful. Dynamic leaders are capable of influencing others for good, but they are just as capable of influencing people for evil. Leaders can intend to be a force for good and despite their best intentions set things in motion that cause great harm to others.

The collective wisdom, knowledge, and strength of humanity nor dynamic leadership can ever definitively deal with the pain, suffering, sin, death, and evil in the world and in our hearts. There is no hope, but in Christ Jesus alone.

In Christ Jesus there is certainty that sin, death, and all evil shall cease, certainty that all things shall be made new and good, because Jesus who died for our sins is risen from the dead. Jesus' resurrection is the reason for our hope that St. Peter instructs us to be ready to give a defense for to whomever may ask us. St. Peter writes: 13 Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? 14 But if also you suffer on account of righteousness, then you are blessed. And do not fear the fear of them nor be troubled, 15 but the Lord Christ regard as holy in your hearts, always be prepared toward the defense to all who ask you for the reason concerning the hope in you, 16 but with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that when you are slandered those who are reviling your good manner of life in Christ might be put to shame. 17 For it is better while doing, to suffer, if that is God's will, than to do evil. 18 Because also Christ once for all died for sins, the Righteous for the unrighteous, in order that you might be brought to God by being put to death in the flesh but by being made alive in the spirit; 19 in which also He went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison,

What is the defense for Jesus' death and resurrection? First, the apostolic witness, the witness of the Holy Scriptures. The eyewitness testimony of the apostles has been recorded for us in the Holy Scripture. St. Peter gives witness to Christ's death and resurrection in his pastoral letter and so too does the St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8: *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.*

The apostolic witness of Jesus makes historical claims. Jesus of Nazareth is a real person who lived and was crucified by the Romans under Pontius Pilate. Jesus was buried in a tomb but did not stay dead, but was raised by God. Now if Jesus was not raised from the dead, and if He were still dead, then all of Christianity is a shame; then we have no reason to be here in Worship; then we are still in our sins, without hope, and the most pitied of all people. But we have evidence, eye-witness testimony that Jesus is risen! Christ' death for our sins and His resurrection from the dead are the heart and focus of Christianity and of the Scriptures; they are the reason for the hope that is in us.

If we are to be ready to give a defense for the reason of our hope, then we need to know the Scriptures and how they give witness to Christ. We need to be able to articulate in conversation the teaching of the Scriptures and how they focus and come together is Christ crucified and risen. We need to know the content of the Scriptures. Sadly, many Christians today do not know the Scriptures well and are biblically illiterate. This is because they don't gather for Worship weekly where God's Word is proclaimed; because they don't go to study the Bible formally with other Christians under the teaching the pastor; and because they do not spend much time reading the Bible for personal study or in family devotions. Are you one of these Christians? Are you ill prepared to give a defense for the reason for your hope? Then get in the Word!

Those baptized into Christ also a defense for the reason for the hope that is in us by living a good moral life before others. Being kind, generous, hospitable, and hard working in each and every one of our vocations in good times and in bad times demonstrates to others that our hope in Christ is not empty, but makes a real life difference. Christ the righteous One has given His life for the unrighteous to bring us to God, as those baptized into His death and resurrection we now give our lives in service our neighbors. It is through our daily service as husbands and wives, parents and children, teachers and students, business owners and workers, doctors, lawyers, milk men, farmers, etc. that God provides for the daily needs of people. Christians are to be diligent in our vocations, ever seeking to do good before others. This gives a good witness of deeds, of action, of service to our neighbors, especially when we do this through times of suffering, tragedy, and loss. Then people will ask us about our hope in Christ, then we will have opportunity to give a defense in words from the Scriptures. If we do not do good to others, then no one will care to hear anything we have to say.

The world needs the Christian hope of the resurrection of the body and all things being made new in Christ. We need this same hope. Jesus' death and resurrection are the reason for our hope; because He died for our sins and now lives, so we who believe and are baptized into His death and resurrection shall also live. Because Jesus died and rose as He promised, we can be assured of the forgiveness of our sins in the present time that He gives through His Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Jesus died for your sins. Jesus is raised from the dead. His promise to you in Baptism is certain, your sins are washed away and you have an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, Amen!