

**+ 1 Peter 1:17-21 + Living Hope Restored Through the Risen Savior +  
+ Cross of Christ Ev. Lutheran Church – Liverpool, NY + 3rd Sunday of Easter + 30 April 2017 +**

**CIR HIRI!<sup>1</sup>**

Do you ever wonder if there's still hope for humanity? Do you ever think to yourself, "Boy, it seems like things have gotten worse since I was a kid"? No one seems to care about anyone else, except themselves. Violence and sex are common themes all around us from advertising to all forms of media to the news. The concept of community is rarely seen. Even common courtesy isn't so common anymore. People push and shove to keep their place in line. Drivers cut you off in their rush to get wherever they're going. Men don't act like gentlemen and women don't act like ladies. We're all a little too quick to tear down, to criticize, to give our opinions about everything and everyone—even when sometimes those opinions are best kept to ourselves. Do you ever find yourself living in an "echo chamber"? The term is used to describe a common problem, especially on social media, when people only interact with others who have the exact same or similar views. You dare not say that anyone is wrong or incorrect, because they will blast you verbally and socially. Unfortunately, we're guilty of that too. Everything seems to be getting worse in the world around us.

...But then, you go to the store and someone kindly assists you. Maybe it's something as simple as someone holding a door for you or someone lets you go ahead of them or someone is genuinely friendly towards you. Perhaps someone is actually courteous and level-headed in their interactions with you on a hot button topic rather than vulgar and angry. Those unexpectedly kind gestures brighten your day and may even move you to do the same.

Now if someone goes out of their way to help or assist you, you're not going to forget that. For example, what are you likely to do if a store or a company has excellent customer service, if they practically bend over backwards to make your shopping experience pleasant? You're likely to go back. You're likely to recommend them to others. Why? I suppose it's partially due to the fact that we see such treatment from others so rarely. For a brief moment, perhaps you even think to yourself, "There still is hope for humanity..."

Last week we started talking about hope. As we said, hope comes naturally to all of us, but what kind of hope is it? Is it hope based on desire or reality? Is it hope based on what could possibly happen or on what will happen? Is it hope that is absolutely sure of the future or uncertain if it will ever happen? Is it "I hope so" hope or "I know so" hope?

The Apostle Peter wrote to struggling Christians about hope. Those Christians were facing rejection and ridicule from their friends and neighbors and communities simply because they were Christian. They weren't going to the pagan temples anymore to sacrifice to the local gods or goddesses—an act considered unpatriotic, since it was believed that such an act would bring down the displeasure of the gods on the region. The heat of persecution was being turned up. They were losing hope, so the Lord gave them **LIVING HOPE RESTORED THROUGH THE RISEN SAVIOR.**

We all hope for something, but usually that hope is just a wish or a desire based on what we want to happen. We anticipate something happening, but there's no guarantee. We hope for good weather, but rain or snow might fall. We hope for the Orange to win, but it's not unusual if they lose. You hope to save up enough for retirement, but your savings could run out years too early. You hope people like you, but they might not. You hope to live a long life, but it might end tonight. You hope to stay healthy, but sickness strikes. You and I and the world around us think we have a lot of hope.

Yet when you really look at it, that type of hope is empty. It's hopeless. It's uncertain. It's like what Benjamin Franklin once said, ***"In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."*** Well, he's partially right. The truth is, two of the only things we can be certain about in this life are that all things are perishable and God's judgment is coming. Peter explains, ***"If you appeal to the Father who judges impartially according to each one's work, you are to conduct yourselves in reverent fear during your time living as strangers. For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from the fathers, not with perishable things like silver or gold..."*** You and I understand that. Every one of us experiences it.

---

<sup>1</sup> "Christ is risen!" "He is risen indeed!" This is known as the Paschal Greeting, one of the oldest and most widespread traditions in the Christian church. Throughout the weeks of the Easter season, whenever the minister says to the people, "Christ is risen!", they respond loudly and boldly, "He is risen indeed!"

Toys break. Clothes wear out. Promises are broken. Cars break down. Relationships and finances fail. Health fails. So we hope for the best, but don't have the certainty to be sure.

The life that our world promises is nothing more than a few short years spent in this world of pain with no real hope for a better future. It's an **"empty way of life inherited"** from the generations before us. People aren't getting any better. The world isn't getting any better. In fact, they're spiraling downward, while the threat of death and the fear of judgment loom larger.

Every one of us can expect to stand before God, the awesome Judge, who **"judges impartially according to each one's work..."** When you look at who you are by nature, that reality of judgment fills you with fear because you know you've failed to meet God's holy standard. We all have willingly allowed our hands, heads, and hearts to be enslaved to sin. All we're left with is empty wishes and hopeless desires. We hope that fortune or fate or money or success or family or friends will turn things around for us, but in the end they leave us empty-handed with guilt or the troubles of this life or the end of our lives.

Nevertheless, you and I have a real reason for hope! **"For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from the fathers, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb."** To ears filled with the harsh tones of hopelessness, such a statement is pure, heavenly joy. You were a slave to sin, but your ransom has been paid. The price to free you from that slavery was higher than any other ransom price. You were bought not with gold or silver, which will disappear on the Last Day, but with the imperishable, priceless, precious, holy, innocent blood of Christ! You have a reason for hope—not a wish, but confident hope based in reality.

As Jesus did for the disciples on the road to Emmaus, here in God's Word, it's all laid out for you. It all started **"before the foundation of the world..."** Amazingly, God had a plan prepared in case humanity fell into sin and unbelief. "I'm going to send a Savior. He will crush my enemies—Satan, sin, and death. He will break your shackles and be a blessing to all nations. He will restore what we once had—reconciling you and me, but he will accomplish it at a terrible cost, a precious cost. He, the very Son of God, will have to allow his blood to be shed. He will have to allow his life to be taken. He will have to allow the tomb to enclose his cold, dead body, but for your sake, he will be raised and glorified!"

Christ **"was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was revealed in these last times for you."** Like a beautiful Easter lily, that promise started to open after our first parents fell into sin. The petals of the promise began to open as the Lord revealed more and more about his promise over time. Then Jesus was revealed to us as a child, born of a virgin, and placed in a manger. Jesus grew and the promise reached its full beauty as he preached and healed and then suffered and died on a cross, only to be raised to life three days later. With that plan, God ransomed you!

God's plan, however, did not end at the empty tomb. **"Through [Christ] you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."** When the Lord carried out his plan, when he sent his Son to the cross and from the empty tomb, he was thinking of you! The Lord in his grace knew when your life would begin, when you would hear his Word, when his Holy Spirit would create faith in your heart through that Word. He knew how you would become his child through the water and Word of Holy Baptism. He knew how he would feed you with himself in his Holy Supper. You are now marked with the ransom price of the blood of Christ. You are precious to the holy God, and one day he will bring you home to be with him in heaven. That's all reason for hope!

Suddenly hope is no longer some wish or desire, but confidence guaranteed with the blood of Christ, the spotless Lamb of God, and recorded for you on the pages of Scripture. No more of that old, empty, "I hope so" hope! You are holy because of the blood of Christ. You are holy in the sight of the holy God, because he, who raised Christ from the dead and exalted him to glory, is your Father, your God, your Redeemer.

For that reason, you believe in that God. You trust in him through that Spirit-created faith in your heart. Hope for you and me is something far different than it is for the rest of the world. You don't find hope in yourself or your desires or even your faith. No, hope for the Christian is faith looking forward to its object—your Savior Jesus, who lived and died and rose again for you!

Humbly aware of your position before the holy God, you now live as his chosen people, as his children who have real "I know so" hope in him. You now live as strangers and travelers in this world of sorrow and pain and death. You don't put your hope in the empty things, the futile things, the perishable things of this life—all those things and people and wishes that pass away.

No, you live with the confident hope that someday you're going to go home to heaven. You live in reverent fear—not terrified of the holy God and his judgment, but humbly aware that apart from God's grace, you and I deserve an eternity separated from his love, yet humbly thankful because God in his grace bought you with the precious blood of Christ. The holy Judge has become your loving Father, so one day you'll be home with him in heaven.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, don't go back to the empty promises and hopeless hope of this world. Instead go back to the empty tomb! You have been purchased with blood and that makes you holy before the holy God. You don't have to be uncertain about that. A death had to happen to set you free, but so did a resurrection. Now you can live with a hope based in reality and focused on what will definitely happen. Jesus lives and you will too! His cross, his tomb, and his Word guarantee it. With living hope restored by our risen Savior, we travel with hope towards our heavenly home! **CIR HIRI!** Alleluia! Amen.