



New Life in Christ: A Living Hope

A service of worship to guide
reflections on 28 June 2020

1 Peter 1:3-9 & 13-21

Introduction

Following the theme of 'New Life in Christ' we focus on today's Bible reading from 1 Peter 1:3-9, 13-21 and consider what it means to possess a 'Living Hope.'

Hymn – StF 295 Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord.
*Chorus: Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord,
Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to his name.*

1. Jesus is lord of all the earth; he is the King of creation.
2. Spread the good news oer all the earth; Jesus has died and has risen.
3. We have been crucified with Christ; now we shall live for ever.
4. God has proclaimed the just reward; new life for all! Alleluia!
5. Come let us praise the living God; joyfully sing to our Saviour:

We Pray

Lord God, we come to worship you.

May your love teach us and guide us as we gather in your name.

Lord, forgive us:

When we choose to ignore your calling to love you and our neighbours as ourselves.

When our thoughts and actions are not worthy of your call to be holy: 'You shall be holy, for I am holy,'

We give thanks that you have forgiven us our sins through Jesus, who lived, died and rose again to bring forgiveness of sin and enable a new life of faith and love.

Lord God, we pray that we will find in you 'A Living Hope' that will enrich and encourage us to proclaim your love to our world.

We ask these our prayers in your name. Amen.

Reading – 1 Peter 1:3-9 and 13-21

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, ⁷ so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

¹³ Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. ¹⁴ Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. ¹⁵ Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; ¹⁶ for it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." ¹⁷ If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. ¹⁸ You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. ²⁰ He was destined before the foundation of the world but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. ²¹ Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

Comment

In the midst of the continuing threat of Corona virus, the world reaction to continued attitudes to racism and the Black Lives Matter campaign, and the tragic news from Reading this past week, we may feel weighed down with despair and a lack of hope. Yet, despite what the world may inflict on us, we have a 'Living Hope' to see us through troubled times.

Christians have proclaimed a Living Hope in Jesus. This, Living Hope is 'Essential,' 'Eternal' and 'Enduring.'

The context of the First Letter of Peter is interesting. 1 Peter is sent, 'To the exiles of the Dispersion' (1 Peter 1:1), either transient foreigners or resident aliens of the area – below citizens but above slaves in society. They were non-citizens, excluded from voting, owning land or civic office. As obvious foreigners, due to language, clothing and customs they were on the margins of society and prime targets for ridicule and resentment by the resident population. The recipients were a suffering people, in the sense that foreigners were mistrusted, and they lived in a xenophobic world. They were verbally attacked and humiliated. The writer could say, 'Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear his name.' (1 Peter 4:16) The name 'Christian' was seen by some as a derisive title of those who followed a failed leader of the Jews. Christians were persecuted for their faith, but they did not lose hope.

The author of this letter spoke to the context and life situation of his readers, maybe his words can give us a Living Hope in the 21st Century!

1. The Living Hope is Essential

Our hope is based on Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. One thing that many have found in these troubled days, is a re-evaluation of what is important and essential in life. The kindness of strangers or speaking to neighbours reminds us that we need each other to make this world a better place. Throughout history our nation has faced many testing times and looked forward, with hope, for better days to come.

The early church looked forward with hope, a hope built not on themselves but in Jesus. As Peter made clear, 'Blessed be the

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.’ (1 Peter 1:3)

The living hope, the essential hope, begins with God as we are all made in the image of God. Everyone matters to God, as everyone is made in God’s likeness. This essential hope is made effective through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus has brought about a new birth through salvation from sin and enables us to live a new life of hope.

The Essential Hope we have is based upon Jesus and all he has done for us.

2. The Living Hope is Eternal

The Living Hope we have is not just for today, but for all time. I can remember an old gospel song (sung by Jim Reeves) ‘This world is not my home, I’m just a passing through.’ As a Christian I am a citizen of heaven and I am just passing through this world and looking to be welcomed into God’s eternal presence. My destination is to be with God, that is my eternal hope.

So I rejoice that Peter can say, ‘and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.’ (1 Peter 1:4) I may be imperfect in many ways, but ‘in Christ’ I am forgiven and free to be a citizen of heaven. With such an assurance I have the strength to live each day as a child of God.

The Eternal Hope is given to all who trust and believe in Jesus

3. The Living Hope is Enduring

The Living Hope we have is based on Jesus and is for all time, yet at the same time is present with us today – Enduring!

“Who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time.” (1 Peter 1:5) The Living Hope is a present reality – ‘Who are being protected by the power of God.’ Our hope is seen in the past and looked for in the future but a ‘Living Hope’ is also an everyday hope. God is with us and we can rely on his love and power to see us through difficult times.

The Enduring Hope is with us always.

We are all called to 'A New Life in Christ' and this includes having 'A Living Hope.' So can that hope in Christ, whose love is the same yesterday, today and forever, permeates every aspect of our life? I hope it can.

In 1 Peter:13-21 we have a call to holy living and that, for me, reminds me of 'A Methodist Way of Life,' produced by Revd Dr Roger Walton. It is a helpful guide to enable us to fulfil that call to holy living which encourages us to embrace 'A Living Hope' fulfilled in 'A New Life in Christ.'

A Methodist Way of Life

As far as we are able, with God's help:

Worship

- We will pray daily.
- We will worship with others regularly.
- We will look and listen for God in Scripture, and the world.

Learning and Caring

- We will care for ourselves and those around us.
- We will learn more about our faith.
- We will practise hospitality and generosity.

Service

- We will help people in our communities and beyond.
- We will care for creation and all God's gifts.
- We will challenge injustice.

Evangelism

- We will speak of the love of God.
- We will live in a way that draws others to Jesus.
- We will share our faith with others.

May we be a blessing within and beyond God's Church, for the transformation of the world.

Hymn - StF 508 Purify my heart.

Purify my heart

Let me be as gold and precious silver

Purify my heart

Let me be as gold, pure gold

Refiner's fire,
My heart's one desire
Is to be holy
Set apart for You, Lord
I choose to be holy
Set apart for You, my Master
Ready to do Your will

Purify my heart
Cleanse me from within
And make me holy
Purify my heart
Cleanse me from my sin, deep within

Refiner's fire
My heart's one desire
Is to be holy
Set apart for You, Lord
I choose to be holy
Set apart for You, my Master
Ready to do Your will

Refiner's fire
My heart's one desire
Is to be holy
Set apart for You, Lord
I choose to be holy
Set apart for You, my Master
Ready to do Your will

Prayers of Intercession

We pray for our world, our community and those we love.

We pray for those, known to us and to you alone, who are suffering today, the sick in mind and body. We especially pray for those who are, or have, experienced suffering due to contracting Covid-19 and those at risk today in contracting or caring for those affected.

We pray for those who are, and have, experienced pain and loss due to extremist attacks and war. We pray especially for those caught up in the Reading knife attack, for family, friends, colleagues of the victims and the community of Reading as they come to terms with what has happened.

We pray for an end to inequality in our society. May we always seek to fight against injustice and prejudice. Lord, help us to recognise that all people are made in your likeness, regardless of colour, race, faith or no faith.

We pray for ourselves, that we may be assured of a living hope in your love for us and for those whom we have prayed.

We ask these our prayers, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. **Amen.**

Hymn - StF 345 And can it be

1. And can it be that I should gain
An int'rest in the Saviour's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain—
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

Refrain:

Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

2. 'Tis myst'ry all: th' Immortal dies:
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.

3. He left His Father's throne above—
So free, so infinite His grace—
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race:
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For, O my God, it found out me!
4. Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray—
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.
5. No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th' eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

Blessing – Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Now and forever. **Amen.**

Service prepared by Rev. Alistair Newton, drawing on material from *Singing the Faith*, CCLI 5560 (reproduced with permission).