

Easter Sermon, April 12, 2020

Text: Matt.28:5-10

Christ is risen... He is risen indeed, Alleluia!... His resurrection give hope to the world. Hope is vitally important. The Apostle Paul called hope one of the three things (gifts of the Holy Spirit) that abide forever. Listen to what some great people have said about hope.

Everything that is done in the world is done by hope

Marin Luther

We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.

Martin Luther King Jr.

I hope to stand firm enough to not go backward, and yet not go forward fast enough to wreck the country's cause

Abraham Lincoln

Hope sustains people. It inspires them to dream productive dreams. Hope enables people to endure, to strive... to live with confidence and joy. Hope is what saves us from despair and gloom.

1 Peter 1:3-9 English Standard Version

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a **living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ** from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in

him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ has given hope to the world... and not just any hope... it is hope for an eternal life that is better both in quantity (eternal) and in quality. Christ's resurrection released the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that transforms our character and Christian culture. I Peter says we are like living stones forming a spiritual temple... a nation of priests to serve God.

- 1.) Hope in Christ is a sure and certain hope.
- 2.) Hope in Christ transforms individual human lives... He's not just the hope of the world... He's my hope and yours.
- 3.) Hope in Christ inspires Easter celebration. Hope in Christ assures us of an eternal home.
- 4.) Hope in Christ requires a response of faith from you and me.
- 5.) Hope in Christ is for everyone, no matter how high and noble... no matter how low and struggling to be decent.

Let's start by considering Christ's resurrection as a certain hope.

-a 2016 Rasmussen poll reported that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the American believe that Jesus rose from the dead & that He died to redeem us from the consequences of our sins.

-here are the facts: a) more historical documented evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead than for many other so-called historical facts (like, for instance that Caesar crossed the Rubicon river) b) His body was never found or produced by the opposition c) the Martyrs were willing to suffer and die rather than deny the resurrection & Christ's divinity; d) the building of the Christian church and the blessing and transformation that she has brought to the world (refer to James Kennedy video "What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?")

Now... the critical thing is not the fact of Jesus resurrection, the critical thing is how a person respond to that fact (faith response). (similarly, it's important how a

person responds to the fact that smoking causes cancer in lung disease and excessive alcohol consumption causes destruction of liver and brain cells)

When the women in our text this morning encountered the risen Christ, they fell down at His feet and worshipped Him. That is an appropriate faith response. They went and told others the wonderful good news.

You have heard how the apostle Peter's life was transformed. Before Jesus' resurrection, Peter was kind of a "hit and miss" witness to Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of the world. Witnessing and confessing Jesus as Savior and Lord is a good response to the resurrection. After the resurrection, Peter was transformed and stood before a crowd of thousands on Pentecost, calling them to repentance and faith. 3000 were baptized after hearing Peter's sermon. He told them and everyone else who would listen that Jesus rose from the dead and promises forgiveness of sins and eternal life to everyone who believes in Him.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ proves that He has the power to deliver on the promises that He makes. He promised that after He rose and ascended into Heaven He would pour out His Holy Spirit on believers like you and me so that we, like Peter would be transformed into His image.

The resurrected Jesus brings us home. In the 14th Chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus tells His disciples that in His father's house, there are many mansions and that He was going there to prepare a home for all who believe in Him.

There is no place like home. That's where we feel secure and loved... nurtured. It's a place where we learn to love others and live happily together. When death takes a person from our home, we are plunged into sadness. We realize how much home and the people there mean to us at a time like that. Everyone longs for a home that will never pass away.

The book of Hebrews in chapter 11 speaks of the strangers and pilgrims on earth... people like Abraham and Sarah and Moses. He says of them that they were looking for another home... a better home. They could have come back to where they were born, but they were looking for something better... something that you could count on eternally... a heavenly home.

The assurance of a heavenly home for them and for us is Jesus Christ's resurrection

Easter gives a reason for everyone who has faith in Christ to celebrate... from the highest of the high to the lowest of the low... (Easter Homily of John Chrysostom)



Are there any who are devout lovers of God?
Let them enjoy this beautiful bright festival!

Are there any who are grateful servants?
Let them rejoice and enter into the joy of their Lord!

Are there any weary with fasting?
Let them now receive their wages!

If any have toiled from the first hour,
let them receive their due reward;
If any have come after the third hour,
let him with gratitude join in the Feast!
And he that arrived after the sixth hour,
let him not doubt; for he too shall sustain no loss.

And if any delayed until the ninth hour,

let him not hesitate; but let him come too.
And he who arrived only at the eleventh hour,
let him not be afraid by reason of his delay.
For the Lord is gracious and receives the last even as the first.
He gives rest to him that comes at the eleventh hour,
as well as to him that toiled from the first.

To this one He gives, and upon another He bestows.
He accepts the works as He greets the endeavor.
The deed He honors and the intention He commends.
Let us all enter into the joy of the Lord!

First and last alike receive your reward;

rich and poor, rejoice together!
Sober and slothful, celebrate the day!
You that have kept the fast, and you that have not,
rejoice today for the Table is richly laden!

Feast royally on it, the calf is a fatted one.
Let no one go away hungry. Partake, all, of the cup of faith.
Enjoy all the riches of His goodness!

Let no one grieve at his poverty,
for the universal kingdom has been revealed.

Let no one mourn that he has fallen again and again;
for forgiveness has risen from the grave.

Let no one fear death, for the Death of our Savior has set us free.
He has destroyed it by enduring it.
He destroyed Hell when He descended into it.
He put it into an uproar even as it tasted of His flesh.

Isaiah foretold this when he said,
"You, O Hell, have been troubled by encountering Him below."
Hell was in an uproar because it was done away with.
It was in an uproar because it is mocked.
It was in an uproar, for it is destroyed.
It is in an uproar, for it is annihilated.
It is in an uproar, for it is now made captive.

Hell took a body, and discovered God.
It took earth, and encountered Heaven.
It took what it saw, and was overcome by what it did not see.

O death, where is thy sting?
O Hell, where is thy victory?

Christ is Risen, and you, o death, are annihilated!
Christ is Risen, and the evil ones are cast down!
Christ is Risen, and the angels rejoice!
Christ is Risen, and life is liberated!

Christ is Risen, and the tomb is emptied of its dead;
for Christ having risen from the dead,
is become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

To Him be Glory and Power forever and ever. Amen!

The Easter sermon of John Chrysostom (circa 400 AD)
