

Pastor Shaun Arndt
April 26, 2020
Sermon Text – 1 Peter 1:17-21
Easter 3

HOPE THAT WILL NEVER DISAPPOINT

My soul, rest quietly in God alone, for my hope comes from him. Amen.

Dear Friends in Christ, the Risen Lord,

Hope. It is a word we use often. I hope it doesn't rain today. I hope our team wins the big game. I hope things will work out.

It's also a word often filled with uncertainty and disappointment. I hope it doesn't rain today as the sky grows dark and thunder rumbles. I had hoped our team would win, well maybe next season.

Sometimes those disappointments are devastating, and the uncertainty clenches our hearts, especially in the time of this pandemic. I had hoped Grandpa would get better. I had hoped to walk across a stage at graduation. I hope things will go back to the way they were before.

Dear friends, God knows the pain, the hurt, the loss we go through when our hopes are dashed. He had these words written down in the Bible: **Hope delayed makes a heart sick.**

But more than knowing this, God does something about it. The Lord so desperately wants you to have something so much better, something only He can give: **Hope that will never disappoint.**

You see hope is always based on something. And hope is only as good as what it is based on. I can hope that flapping my arms will make me fly up into the sky, but that hope will disappoint because it's a silly idea based on the impossible. On the other hand, if I hope that throwing a brick into a lake will make it sink, that hope is quite certain.

Hope is uncertain if it is based on things that are not reliable or where there is no promise from God. "I hope it doesn't rain today" is hope based on Wisconsin weather that can quickly change and disappoint.

So where will we find ultimate hope? With these words from our lesson, the Apostle Peter tells where it is *not* found: **the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers...**

You can do as many before you have done and put your hope in yourself and what you can do. You do as many others have done before you and you can put your hope in other people, in money, in career, in the identity you try to give yourself; you can hope in man-made religions and philosophies, you can hope for government and science to fix everything. But if your ultimate hope is in any of these things that come from this imperfect world, then that **way of life** is going to prove **empty** in the end.

Since this world and all in it has been ruined by sin, it cannot give us lasting satisfaction, peace, purpose, or meaning. Nothing it offers is perfect. Nothing it gives is guaranteed. All it takes is a tiny virus to shut down businesses, nations and flip lives upside down showing us how uncertain life in this world always is.

Plus, Peter calls our life in this world a **pilgrimage**, that is a temporary journey in a place that is not your home. We only pass through this world for a brief time, then comes all eternity with only two options: heaven or hell.

Since the things from this world can't give us a rock-solid hope in this brief life, they certainly can't give us life in the world to come. They will come up **empty** when it comes to setting us right with God.

We can hope all we want that there won't be a judgment, but that doesn't change the facts Peter writes about: **the Father who judges impartially, according to the work of each person.**

The Judge of all can't be fooled, bribed or escaped. And since He requires absolute perfection by His holy standards, all we have earned is eternal disappointment.

But that all changes if your hope is built on the One who is not temporary, but eternal, the One who is not unreliable, but all powerful and entirely trustworthy, the One who is not limited, but is limitless, the One who always keeps His Word. It all changes when as Peter says: **your faith and hope are in God.**

God who made this world is greater than anything in or outside of this world. As imperfect sinners born from imperfect sinners all we could end up with is an **empty way of life** of disappointed hopes followed by death and hell. But the One true God **came** to our rescue so that as Jesus says we **may have life and have it to the full** (John 10:10).

Or as Peter puts it: **you were redeemed from your empty way of life.** To **redeem** is to set a captive free by paying a price. Our sin—like our putting our hope in all the wrong places rather than relying on God and His Word—our sin imprisoned us to disappointed hopes, to death and hell's punishment.

But you were rescued from that. **You were redeemed...** This is not something we could do, it does not say we **redeem ourselves** but **you were redeemed**, it was done for us by God, who in unimaginable love for the loveless chose to rescue us from the judgment we well deserved!

You were redeemed...not with things that pass away, such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. You were rescued and freed by Jesus Christ, the Son of God who joined Himself to our human race to bring us real hope.

As true man, born of Mary, Jesus had blood to shed on a cross where He chose judgment and death in our place to set us free from death and hell. As true God from all eternity, His holy life and blood is **precious** beyond price.

Nothing in this world could give us the hope of life with God. But the life of God given for us on the cross, the blood of Jesus Christ is infinitely greater than all creation and all eternity and He willingly paid that price to save you.

You were redeemed...not with things that pass away such as silver or gold. We've seen how quickly money, jobs, careers and stock markets can fall and pass away. So, thank God the saving blood of Jesus is not something that **passes away**, but stands forever to forgive you.

Do you think you've sinned one time too many? Do you think you have blown it too badly this time? Do you think you could not be forgiven?

Then consider this priceless treasure, the blood of Jesus poured out on a cross for your forgiveness. Since the blood of Jesus does not **pass away** like the things of this world, this price stands forever to remove all your sin, it stands to remove all your guilt this very day. This is the **hope that will never disappoint**: Jesus' blood washes you clean and sets you right with your God.

Yes, God judges **impartially according to the work of each person**...but for those who trust in Jesus, all who rest their hope on His saving life, death and resurrection are judged by Christ's perfect **work**. Since, God your dear Father through faith in Jesus judges you according to the perfect work of His Son, you will not be disappointed, not for all eternity.

But what about the troubles we face right now in this world? Well, God has never promised His people a life free from difficulty in this world. Instead, Jesus said: **In this world you are going to have trouble** (Jn 16:33).

However, what God has promised and therefore you know is an unfailing hope, is that He will with us, to help us through every difficulty, give us peace through Word and Sacrament and even work all things out for our eternal good. That is a **hope** you can count on, that will **never** disappoint!

Let these words reassure you: **(Christ) was chosen before the foundation of the world but revealed in these last times for your sake.**

God loved you and planned to save you before we were born, before we could mess it up, before this world was made. He ruled all human history to send Jesus to save you and to bring you to believe it. He who planned all that most certainly knows how to plan even the ups and downs of life in this sin-ruined world to bring you safely to the heavenly home He has prepared for you.

But how can you be sure that this not a false hope that will end in disappointment? You can be sure because of this: **Through him (Christ) you are believers in God, who raised him from the dead.**

The hope for a sunny day depends on changing Wisconsin weather. But the hope of forgiveness and never-ending life depends on the God who turned a grave into a place of hope when Jesus's body returned to life that first Easter. Jesus risen from the dead is the ever-living proof God will do the same for us!

This hope is solid, based on the empty tomb, verified by more than 500 eyewitnesses as well as the unfailing Word of God in prophecy made and fulfilled. In Jesus, **raised from the dead**, we have the **hope that will never disappoint!**

I hope it won't rain today. I hope things go back to normal soon. Such hopes are uncertain, we cannot know, for God has not given us a promise about them.

I hope God will be with me every day through it all. I hope on account of Jesus' saving work He will bring me to that place where there is no sorrow or pain, but endless peace, perfect life and undying joys. Such hope *is* certain and will not fail, for it is hope created by God's amazing love, paid for by Jesus' precious blood, guaranteed by the Risen Savior—**hope that will never disappoint.** Amen.

Now may the God of hope fill you with complete joy and peace as you continue to believe, so that you overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.