

**Easter Sunday-12 April 2020-“Christ The Living Hope” –
1 Peter 1:3-5; Luke 24:1-8**

Introduction:

**THE LORD HAS RISEN! YOU RESPOND-HE HAS RISEN
INDEED!**

What do we hope to find on this Easter Sunday, celebrating Christ who has overcome death and live forever more. Maybe you hoped to be in church with fellow brothers and sisters, singing some of those beautiful Easter hymns. Maybe you hoped to find some peace, some answers, some inspiration or some direction for a life that at times seems to be spinning out of control. What do we hope on this Easter Sunday? So here we are, with all those hopes. Well, I've got some good news. No matter what you wish for, **today is a day of hope, because a living Jesus gives living hope.** Strangely enough this living hope takes us to a place of death, where hope normally appears to end.

We go to a cemetery. This cemetery is located just outside of the city of Jerusalem. It's Sunday morning more than 2000 years ago. This relatively small city was packed full of people who had travelled to Jerusalem for the annual Jewish festival called the Passover. But this year's festival was underlined with controversy. There was a man who some people had claimed was the

Messiah, the Deliverer of Israel, who had been performing miracles, healing people and even raising dead people back to life. He even had claimed to be the Son of God. His followers was growing larger and larger, and in the eyes of some Jewish religious leaders more and more threatening. This man Jesus had been arrested Thursday evening and crucified on Friday and that evening his body quickly placed in a tomb in that cemetery outside of Jerusalem.

It was day three of Jesus' death and some women went to the cemetery. What did they hope to find? Their past experience had taught them that you do not go to the cemetery to see IF the person is still there. You go to the cemetery because you KNOW the person is still there. So they went hoping to find Jesus' lifeless body. When they arrived, they saw the stone that blocked the entrance to Jesus' tomb had been rolled away, allowing them to look in and see that Jesus' body was not there. What did they expect had happened? Experience had told them that if the body was missing, someone must have stolen or moved it. That was the only natural conclusion that Mary, one of Jesus' followers, could come to as she asked a man who stood beside her, **“Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him” (John 20:15)**. But the man who stood next to

Mary was none other than the man she was looking for – it was Jesus. The women came to that cemetery hoping to find a dead body, but instead, they found a living Jesus who gave them hope. Jesus was not dead, He is alive!

This man had done exactly as he had promised and repeatedly and specifically predicted. Jesus had said about himself, **“He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.” (Luke 9:22)**. There is nothing cryptic about those words, is there? It is as simple and straightforward as, **“I am going to work on Tuesday.”** What Jesus said may have been hard for people to **BELIEVE**, but it was not difficult to **UNDERSTAND**. What Jesus had said, Jesus had done! The one who once was dead, now was alive!

That is the **“living hope”** that Peter, one of Jesus’ disciples who saw Jesus after He rose from the dead later wrote about. Peter wrote, **“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3)**. Dear friends, this is the living hope of Easter. Jesus has risen from the dead so that you may know that sin’s payment has been made, salvation is yours. This is the living hope that a living Jesus gives to you! What does this living hope mean for you? When you think about it,

hope and trust go hand in hand? We only have hope when the basis for that hope is trustworthy, solid, certain and faithful.

Jesus kept His promise and fulfilled it on Easter Sunday. He said that he would rise on the third day and did exactly what he said. As impossible and hopeless as it may have seemed to those who saw his lifeless body taken off the cross and placed in the tomb, Jesus still did it. And dear friends, Jesus will never disappoint us either. No matter how impossible and hopeless the situation may seem to us, He will absolutely do what He has promised – I am with you till the end of time. Easter assures it to you! A marriage that seems hopelessly irreparable, a relationship with an adult child that has been stressed, health that continues to deteriorate, a job that brings frustration, a world that seems to become more and more violent and uncertain – look to what the Lord promises you in the Bible and know that God will do what he says. That is the living hope that allows you to even stand in a cemetery at the graveside of a fellow Christian, and stand with hope-filled grief, that while the separation is hard, it is only temporary. Jesus has transformed death, to be the doorway to life eternal for all those who believe in him.

Under normal circumstances, unless you prepared-There will be a lot of kids and a few adults that get an Easter egg or a chocolate bunny. I remember as a child getting one of these and looking forward to enjoying it for a long time when I bit into it and suddenly realized that it was hollow. How disappointing. It looked so good from the outside, but really wasn't much there after you got through its thin chocolate shell. This world holds out a lot "chocolate bunnies" that promise to provide hope – relationships, careers, recreational activities, new car, bigger home, more money, optimism based on optimism. While the things of this world may bring some temporary satisfaction and joy, they are hollow, inevitably leaving a person looking for something more, for the next "**chocolate bunny**" if you will. Dear friends, the risen Christ has given you a solid and living hope, a hope that is not based upon the ever changing things of this world, but a hope that is based upon a powerful and faithful Savior-God, a Savior who gave his life for you, a Savior that not even death could prevent him from doing what he promised. That is the living hope that is yours because, **Christ has risen! He has risen indeed! Amen.**

