

Title: **“Living as witnesses to the Hope of Easter”**

Text: 1 Peter 3: 8 – 22

Season: 6th Sunday of Easter

Date: May 21, 2017

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, CO.

May the grace and peace of the Living Hope of Easter be with you, from God, our Father, our RISEN Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today as we continue our study of the first letter of the Apostle Peter we move into the third chapter and we hear about how wives and husbands are to treat each other with respect and humility as co-heirs of the living hope of Easter. The living hope of Easter is the special blessing and inheritance that we have received from the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that we are to proclaim in this world by the way that we live as Christians. The Apostle Peter then goes on to address all of us, as Christians, living in the hope of the resurrection of Jesus Christ by says to us, **“Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. ⁹Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.”** (1 Peter 3:8-9)

Martin Luther’s comments about these verses by saying, *“Here you see what true brothers are. They cling together much more closely than any friends do. We Christians should also do this, for we are all brothers through Baptism. After Baptism even my father and my mother are my brother and my sister, for through faith I have the very same blessing and inheritance from Christ that they have.”* As Christians, we are brothers and sisters in Christ, which is quite a bit different from being brothers and sisters in this world, because our Father is righteous and Holy and our mother is His Church. How I don’t know how each of you grew up in your family, but let me tell you that in my family of five brothers and sisters along with my parents there were very few times when we were united in mind and love for each other. In fact I would have to admit that if it wasn’t for the uniting influence that my parents had on us and our church we would have had no sympathy, brotherly love, tender heart and humble mind for each other because we were looking out for ourselves. That’s our sinful human nature controlling our minds and not being controlled by the loving hope of Easter given to us by God.

That same sinful nature can often be seen right here in God’s church and right here at

Shepherd of the Rockies and that's my fault and your fault and all of our faults because though we have been made brothers and sisters of Christ by our baptism we have sometimes let our self-centered nature be the force in our life that rules our words and action instead of the living Hope given to us on Easter. The blessings of Easter that we were given in our baptism is what we come to be strengthened in as we come to church to hear God's Word and receive His Sacraments. These blessings give us the living Hope of Easter that is opposite of our sinful nature and that causes us to look at the world in a different way, in the way of Love, Grace and Mercy given to us by the living Hope of Easter.

The Apostle Peter talks about this as he tells us, **"Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit ¹¹ let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. ¹² For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."** ¹³Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed.' (1 Pet. 3:10 – 14)

Here the Apostle Peter uses the words of King David found in Psalm 34. King David wrote these words and possibly sang them as a song as he was fleeing for his life from the wrath of King Saul. It's not easy to be sympathetic to others, have brotherly love for them or being compassionate and humble when you are under stress for your own life, yet King David knew through God's love, grace and mercy for him, that was just how he was to act and live his life towards others. That's what the Apostle Peter is asking us to strive for also and especially with those whom we are connected to by our baptism in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. As Christians living in the Hope of Easter we are asked to live in unity as God is united as one with us, in compassion for others as God has been compassionate for us and in humility as Christ humbled Himself and gave His life, death and resurrection for us.

The goal of living in harmony with one another, in the love and hope of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is not to separate ourselves from those who have offended us but to grow in the blessings of God's love and forgiveness given to us by His Word and Sacraments. Our goal is to be a witness to the living hope of the resurrection that Jesus Christ

has given to us. To bring our brothers or sisters to the forgiveness of Jesus Christ and the living hope given to us as we live in this world and for all eternity with God.

The Apostle Peter says it this way: **“Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.”** (1Pet.3:14b – 17)

Four high school boys made it a habit of getting on the school bus by staring at the driver in a challenging way and then taunting all those that they passed. One day the driver stood at the door and refused to let them on the bus because they had been expelled from riding the bus because of their behavior. The boys responded by dragging him off the bus and beating him up, leaving him bleeding and near death as they fled. At the trial they were found guilty, but their lawyer pleaded with the judge, saying that these boys would not be able to graduate and they would have a record that would mark them for life.

The judge turned to the driver and said, “You are the one who suffered the most. What would your judgment be?” He looked at the boys and said, “The thing that would make me happy would be to serve their sentence, to go to jail on their behalf so they could finish school and change their lives.” The judge said, “That’s ridiculous, absurd, impractical. Nobody has ever done that.” The driver replied, “Yes your Honor. Jesus did.”

Why should we seek to live in harmony with our fellow believer and all our neighbors in this world? Why should we live our lives as a witness to the love and hope given to us through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, in the living hope of Easter? The Apostle Peter tells us this: **“For Christ also died once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,¹⁹ in which He went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison,²⁰ because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels,**

authorities, and powers having been subjected to Him. (1 Pet. 3:18-22)

In your baptism your sinful nature was drowned just like all the sinful people of the world in the flood were drowned. In your baptism you were given a new life in a new world, just like Noah and his family were given a new life after the flood waters had dried up. You now are saved from the sinful ways of your nature because of Christ blood, shed on the cross has washed them all away. You now stand in the new life given to you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the living hope and inheritance of Easter. You have a life that can grow and flourish in God's love as you remain in His Word and Sacrament. You have a life that your parents hoped that you would have as they brought you to be baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Today we live in harmony with one another not because we have been perfect, like our heavenly Father, but because God has made us perfect through Jesus Christ life, death and resurrection. It is as we dwell in the forgiveness given to us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ that we are nurtured in the living hope through God's Word and Sacraments so that the Holy Spirit can continue to develop a stronger bond of harmony between us and our fellow believers.

Today we come together in this worship service to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the living Hope of Easter. We come in harmony as one voice and as one heart to praise all that God has given to us through the life, death and resurrection of His Only Son, Jesus Christ. We come together in one faith as we confess our faith in Jesus Christ through the Nicene creed. The faith given to us in our baptism, nurtured in us through God's Word and Sacraments and prayed for, by all those who brought us to hear and take part in God's Church. Today is a good day to receive God's blessings so that we can continue to live our lives as witnesses of the living hope of the resurrection of Jesus Christ given to each of us. We have a faith that needs to share the living hope of Easter in harmony with all those who are here today and as we are a part of this congregation and God's Church we live as a witnesses of the living Hope of Easter to others in this world. Amen.