

Sermon Title: "Because He Lives"

Biblical Passage: 1 Peter 1:1-9

April 18, 2021

Passage Background and Summary

The passage begins with the writer introducing himself and addressing the audience, Christian exiles in a time of persecution and destruction. The purpose of the passage seems to be to offer those in exile "a living hope." After blessing God in verse 3, Peter writes, "By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (v. 3). Thus, in the resurrection, they can find "new birth, "living hope," and the promise of an "inheritance." This is cause for them to be able to "rejoice" despite the suffering of their present circumstances. They can have faith in the salvation that is found in Jesus Christ.

Sermon Points

This is the second Sunday after Easter or Easter 3, and we are living on the other side of the resurrection. Nevertheless, although we are people who believe in the resurrection, we live in a Good Friday world, characterized by death, destruction, and disaster. It was the reality of the saints even in that context. They were in exile. Similarly, we've been in exile for some time now in this pandemic. How do you keep the faith when you've been pushed out your comfort zone? How can you trust God when you cannot see God? The question for today: Is the resurrection real? And if it is real, what difference does it make? In a society where Black bodies are being killed with their hands up, like 13-year-old Adam Toledo, what difference does it make? Or in the case of 20-year-old Daunte Wright, what happens when a veteran police officer can't tell the difference between a Taser and a gun? There are Black boys dying like Jesus in public with their hands up, and we are still waiting to see what will happen with George Floyd. If it were a Black man's knee on the neck of a white man, would we need all this expert testimony?

We are living in a Good Friday world where tornados tear through homes. Sometimes we're so caught up in what we have that we miss out, yet if you press rewind in your own mind, you will have a testimony. What do you do when brought face to face with that which makes us human, our vulnerability? You ought not to take anything for granted for whatever you have is God's gift, and you're living on borrowed time. You better have an anchor; someone you can hold onto in the midst of life's trials. We are living in a Good Friday world with death, devastation, and disappointment all around us; death of friends and loved ones, death of innocence with a child seeing too much too soon. What does the resurrection mean when we're living in a Good Friday world?

Bill and Gloria Gaither wrestled with this question. They were living in the turbulent days following the death of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It was 1969, and the country was in trouble. A year after MLK's death and they were confronted by their own unexpected trouble; they had a new baby and a sick husband, and they wondered what type of world they were

bringing this child into. We've been singing their testimony. "How sweet to hold a new born baby and feel the pride and the joy that he gives, but greater still that calm assurance we can face uncertain days because He lives." You are a child of the living God and have to capture the faith of a child in the arms of another. "Because He lives, I can face tomorrow. Because He lives all fear is gone. Because I know He holds the future, and life is worth the living just because He lives."

Jesus has given us:

1. **A new birth** – In Christ there is new life. God has cast our sins in the sea of forgetfulness. Don't let anyone hold your past against you. In God we can have a new way of life, old things have passed away.
2. **A living hope** – Because Jesus is alive, my hope is alive. Hope looks at the facts and chooses to trust God anyhow. God has provided for you a living hope. Hope is the activist's way of saying, "We shall overcome someday." Hope is the Christian's way of saying Jesus got up from the grave and my hope is in Him. Life is worth living because He lives.
3. **An indescribable joy** – He promised never to leave me, so I have joy. Happiness is fleeting, but joy is everlasting. There is a river of joy that flows through my soul, a joy that only God can provide. Because He lives I can face tomorrow.

I know that whatever I go through, Jesus is walking beside me. Thank God we have a new birth, a living hope and an indescribable joy. Hold on to hope. A new birth belongs to you. A living hope belongs to you. Indescribable joy belongs to you. "Because He lives, I can face tomorrow. Because He lives all fear is gone. Because I know He holds the future, and life is worth the living just because He lives."

Reflection Questions

1. What does it feel like to live in a Good Friday world?
2. How do you realize/experience the indescribable joy Pastor Warnock talked about and not just settle for happiness? How do you know you are experiencing joy rather than happiness?
3. What does the resurrection mean to us today, how has it impacted your life, amid this Good Friday world?
4. How do you respond to death, destruction, and disaster as a person of faith?
5. What does it look like to practice having a living hope?
6. Are there any areas of your life in need of resurrection, living hope, and new life?