

HERE'S HOPING!**1 Peter 1:3-12****(Read 1 Peter 1:3-12)**

INTRO: How do you have hope in a world where you can't even go to an outdoor concert on a warm Las Vegas evening without the fear that a heartless murderer, bent on maximum and indiscriminate terror and destruction might rain death on you? Not a one of the 59 people who died last Sunday night had anything other than anticipation as they enjoyed that music festival. As the evening ended, and the sounds of gunshots and screams faded away to reveal the carnage that remained, those who mourned the loss of their loved ones and those who began the long recovery from wounds, both from bullets and the horrific memory of the terrible experience, began to descend into hopelessness.

It's the hopelessness that comes from any such sudden, mindless, and unexplainable tragedy. It's bad enough for those, who in the words of our text, have ... *for a little while...had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.* (v. 6b). No matter how strong our relationship with Jesus is, we were not designed for such heartbreak. Humanity was created to live and not to die. The Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden ushered death into humanity, but still, death of any kind is unwelcome – especially that which comes in the way it did on Sunday, or with a bomb in a London subway, or a stampede at a Mumbai train station, or with a bomb in a crowded market in Lahore, or when a 19 year old dies in a car accident. In cases like that each person left home that morning with their hopes and dreams intact. Hours later those hopes and dreams had become a lifeless memory.

Where is hope in those situations? Where is the *inexpressible and glorious joy* of which Peter writes? It's there for those who have the living hope Peter talks about when he says *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, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.* (vv 3-4b). But it's only there for them – and that is why, for someone who does not truly know the Risen Lord, hope is fleeting at best. So it's very timely that this passage has arrived in our Little Letters, BIG Message series this week of all weeks.

What is hope?

- It could be seeing the light at the end of the tunnel and knowing it's not a freight train.
- *Li'l Orphan Annie* kept hoping that her parents would show up as she waits expectantly in the orphanage— little does she know it'll never come true because they are dead. Like so many in this world, she was hopeless and didn't know it.
- My friend Paul Keefer, who worshipped here for the three years while he was a student, always hoped to acquire a Corvette – he finally got one. His hope was realized. I hope for a new Ford Pickup – I doubt I'll ever see the day.
- But there is a sure bet, and I already alluded to it. It is the hope we have in Jesus Christ – it is a hope that a hopeless world needs – allow me to describe it and as these weeks go on we will see how to share it.

Peter, who over the years since he was Jesus's disciple, had become the consummate pastor and he uses the verses I read as I began this talk as kind of new convert discipleship. He used the life they were living as way to teach what one commentator says is a "somewhat comprehensive doctrinal statement." And in the process he teaches them how to really own the reality of the living hope all Christ Followers have. The first thing he points out is that...

We have the promise of completely new life.

- The bumper sticker says "God said it; I believe it; that settles it." And it's really true. He has given us new birth. We need to remember that when the struggles come. We have an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. That's the promise.
- It puts us in touch with eternity – the inheritance is kept in heaven for us. You can take it to the bank with a bank like that.
- The new birth gives us a living hope in a despairing and hopeless world. It's a new life that is a rebirth to righteousness—the shield of our new life gives us the power to flee sin. Our new life enables us to realize just what real love is—Peter says, though you have not seen him you love him. And finally, our new life gives us a taste of ultimate victory. We are receiving the end result of our faith – the very salvation of our souls. That's victory! We can have that hope. And as a result...

This hope brings the promise of a great inheritance.

- In is an inheritance that is imperishable. The Titanic was called unsinkable, but when it hit an iceberg in April of 1912, it sank in a mere two hours and 40 minutes. The French built the Maginot Line of fortifications in the 1930s in order to prevent an invasion from Germany. It was strong and resistant to tanks and even aerial bombing, but the Germans still invaded and conquered France – by going around it. So many think they are the master of their fate and invincible – and yet they are only as invincible as their mortal body allows. Not so with the eternal life we inherit – is truly imperishable. It's unsinkable, satan can't get around it – and it's eternal. That's the promise.
- It cannot be taken away. It's protected in time and safe in eternity -- only we can mess it up. God certainly won't and no one else can. And this inheritance brings with it the promise of a glorious eternity. What a hope! No matter what this life dishes out, we have eternity as a promise. And speaking of what life might dish out...

Our hope gives us another promise.

- The secret of endurance is the promise of life everlasting. Our living hope is what keeps us going. As a matter of fact, we can withstand anything because we know it is in stretching that we are strengthened. That's how we build up our endurance – in order to run farther and faster, we stretch to the limit of our endurance, and go a little farther each time. So the hardships we face serve to build our endurance.
- In the end we can withstand anything because of the reward at the end. -- The promise of, *Well done, good and faithful servant.*
- We have...

The hope of the unseen but not unknown.

- Truthfully, we don't believe because of faith alone, sooner or later we experience God and he is no longer unknown to us. If you've not experienced him, hang in there wait for him to show up. He's there – you'll see.
- After Jesus rose from the dead, when Thomas finally believed that he was in the presence of his risen Lord he exclaimed **MY LORD AND MY GOD!** John 20:28 and Jesus said to him in response *Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.* John 20:29 The blessing is awesome as we believe, but the experience begins as we see him at work. Faith births belief, belief opens our eyes and we experience Christ at work. That faith and experience births our hope of the promise of the complete salvation of our souls.
- And here's the cool thing . . .

The hope that the prophets had, and what the angels long for, is now our experience.

- We have great privilege—the prophets spoke of it in the Old Testament and the angels who are in God's physical presence, covet it. But we have the very privilege of possessing it. Now! That is our hope of glory. And that is why, in a hateful and grief filled world, it still fills those who are Christ Followers with, in our text's words, *inexpressible and glorious joy*, or in the King James, *joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*

Conclusion: Here's hoping: We have a hope that the world would die for. We have a hope because someone died for us. Part of what we need to do to carry out God's plan to transform this world we live in, is to tell this dying world that Someone died and rose again to give them hope. A hope that is real, a hope that doesn't fade away with time, a hope that brings victory, a hope that will bring us to glory. Here's hoping we share it. Amen.