

Introduction: Pg. _____

The resurrected King is resurrecting us, raising us to a different quality of life: a different kind of vision, a different kind of love, a different kind of hope!

I'm coming to you today to speak words of hope, and I first want to pray hope over you before we turn our attention to God's Word.

Pray.

Today, we need another message of hope.

The number of conversations I'm having with hurting people continue to rise. This pandemic has left people starved relationally, taxed mentally, and hurting emotionally. As if that wasn't enough, we still experience the everyday effects of our fallen world: stress at work, the health of loved ones, and perhaps more than any other, the cloud of injustice hanging over our nation as the senseless and tragic deaths of Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor have now been followed by the murder of George Floyd on the streets of Minneapolis.

We're talking about a handcuffed man, suffocating as a white police officer refused remove his knee from the back of the neck of this dying black man. Mr. Floyd struggled and pled for his life: "I can't breathe. Please, I can't breathe."

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." - MLK Jr.

That's why we say, with God himself through the prophet Amos 5:24: "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

And that's why I want to bring you words of hope today. Lasting and eternal hope, comes through the cross of Jesus Christ.

"The Hope of the Cross" **1 Peter 3:18-22**

1 Peter 3:18-22 highlights 3 powerful ways the Cross delivers hope during days that can feel so hopeless. In this text, we will see how the cross brings us: 1) Reconciliation with God, 2) Victory over our Enemies, and 3) Freedom from our Guilt.

Read 3:18-22

1. Reconciliation with God. (3:18)

Verse 18 crystallizes the essence of Christianity in one statement...

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God,"

What happened 2000 years ago on that roman cross?

- Jesus suffered... the physical pain was unconscionable, but it was the spiritual suffering that defined his death and brought his greatest pain. Why?

- Jesus bore the infinite weight of our sin, yours and mine, and the infinite weight of God's wrath against all our sin!
 - Peter explained this in chapter 2: **"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed." (1 Peter 2:24)**
 - Just think about your life this week. Consider all of the times you dishonored God, entertained evil thoughts, spoke unkind words, harbored envy or pride or lust or selfish desires in your heart. Now multiply that by the sin of humanity: past, present, and future. Jesus suffered for our sin.
- And his suffering was unjust. It was "the righteous for the unrighteous." Though he lived a perfect life and never sinned, Jesus died as our substitute, so we could be right in the sight of God, no longer having our sins counted against us.

Why did he do it? "That he might bring us to God."

- This is the greatest news of gospel's good news. Jesus not only died so our sins could be forgiven; Jesus not only died so we can receive that imperishable, unfading eternal inheritance; Jesus died and was raised so that he might bring us to God.
- Isn't it amazing that God actually welcomes us as sons and daughters? Isn't it amazing that God actually wants to be *your* friend!
- Just as our hearts ache to be back together, after such extended separation, there is a deeper ache in every human heart to be reconciled with the God who made them!

Reconciliation with God satisfies the deepest longing of our hearts, and reconciliation with God makes reconciliation with other people possible.

The cross of Christ unites people from different backgrounds, skin tones, and cultures! I love helping lead a multiethnic, multicultural church, and anything that threatens our love for one another, not only should break our hearts, but it most certainly breaks the heart of God.

When you felt anger, sorrow, and weariness this week over the heinous and unjust death of George Floyd, just imagine what is happening in the heart of God!

T: That's why the hope of the cross is so pivotal! It unites us back to God, but not only that, the cross brings us...

2. Victory Over our Enemies. (3:18-20)

We see this in verses 19-20...

I need to ask you to strap on your theological seatbelts. Some scholars say these words are the most difficult to understand in the entire NT.

Here three key questions we want to answer:

1. Who are the "spirits in prison?"
2. What did Christ preach?
3. When did he preach?

The three major views are as follows:

1. Some people believe the “spirits in prison” refer to unbelievers who died in Noah’s day. They would say Jesus, “in the spirit,” proclaimed a message of salvation through Noah, and because the unbelievers in Noah’s day did not obey, they now suffer judgment.
2. Another understanding holds Jesus descended into hell after his death and preached the gospel to the unbelievers of Noah’s day to offer them a second chance for salvation. We can safely reject this view, because it directly contradicts the rest of the Bible.
3. The most persuasive view, says the spirits in prison refer to fallen angels who disobeyed in the days of Noah, as noted in Genesis 6:1-4. In this case, Christ’s message was not the gospel message of salvation but the announcement of his victory over the imprisoned spirits after his resurrection.

Here’s why I like #3?

1. The phrase “in which” following the phrase that Christ was “made alive in the spirit” indicates his preaching followed his death and resurrection.
2. “Almost without exception the word “spirits” in the NT refers to supernatural beings rather than people.”
3. And “the word ‘prison’ is not used elsewhere in Scripture as a place of punishment *after death* for human being, but it is for Satan and fallen angels (2 Pet. 2:4)”
4. It also fits the progression of Christ’s death and resurrection in verse 18 moving to his ascension in verse 22. And finally,
5. It squares with the emphasis on victory in the rest of the passage and the rest of Scripture! As Paul says in Colossians 2:14-15

**“He set aside (the record of debt that stood against us), nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.”
(Colossians 2:14-15)**

Through the cross, Jesus won the victory over his greatest enemies and our greatest enemies: Satan, sin, and death!

And here’s what I love... The apparent defeat of Jesus “being put to death in the flesh” GAVE WAY to his decisive VICTORY: “but made alive in the spirit.”

Do you see how Peter is dropping encouragement right into their situation? He refers to the flood as an example of how God works salvation through times of suffering. He points to the victory of Jesus over his enemies to remind them that they SHARE in his VICTORY

It may look like racism, and hate and injustice and viruses are winning, but they will all be defeated through the work of Jesus Christ.

T: The cross of Christ reconciles us to God, brings us victory over our enemies, and finally (and this is really good news too)...

3. Freedom from our Guilt (3:21-22)

Trans: With this image of life in the midst of death, Peter sees a connection to Christian baptism.

Water baptism is an outward sign of an inward reality symbolizing the believer's death with Christ (and how Jesus took God's judgment for us) and the believer's being raised with Christ as a totally new creation.

Look at verse 21.

Now we have to quickly pump the breaks and ask: "In what sense does baptism save?" "The mere act of baptism does not save because Peter explicitly says, 'not as a removal of dirt from the body,' meaning that the passing of water over the body does not cleanse anyone" inwardly. (Schreiner)

Baptism is not an external ritual that brings salvation. No, baptism "saves in the sense that it represents inward faith as evidenced by one's appealing to God for a good conscience."

In baptism we say: "God, I have identified with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. I have received his gift of dying in my place, so that now, my sins are forgiven and my conscience is clean before you!"

I know so many people struggle with a sense of guilt before God. Their conscience (that moral compass and inner judge) says, "Hey, you blew it. You should pay the penalty for your wrongs. You haven't done enough." But now because of Jesus, our conscience no longer condemns us! Why? Because he paid the penalty for our wrongs. He did what was right in the sight of God, and now his perfect record covers my life!

If you have placed your faith in Christ, there is no condemnation and no more guilt before God! Be freed from guilt through the cross of Christ. Be free to enjoy God and the life he has set before you!

Verse 22 shows us how confident we can be in this current and future hope that comes to us through the cross.

Jesus now reigns over our world at "the right hand of God," and everything, all "angels, authorities, and powers" are under his control!

Conclusion:

As we conclude our time, let me ask you: what's your next step?

Belief?

Baptism?

Prayer?

Text "Jesus" to the number is on the screen. That number is my cell number: 781-866-6095.

I'm praying my phone blows up!

Quick prayer...