

A Living Hope – Late Service

1 Peter 1:3-9

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer

various trials, ⁷so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, ⁹for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

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This week, a troubled young man took the lives of 32 classmates and teachers.

Today, we baptize 6 infants and children.

These two events don't seem to fit easily together. Does baptism deny the pain and sorrow for what happened on Monday? Does violence and death deny the promise and hope of baptism? How do we make sense of these two realities?

We begin the sermon today with a conversation that could happen

between a father and his young child. I invite you to listen in.

Daddy, into what kind of world have I been born?

There are many beautiful things in this world: hearing you sing, seeing a robin's egg in its nest, and eating chocolate chip cookies.

There are also sad things: a deer killed by a car, the hurt you feel when a friend is mean, or seeing people suffer.

Just as there is the light of day and the darkness of night, there are times of joy and times of sorrow.

Just as there is spring and winter, there are seasons of peace and seasons of trouble.

Is there more light or darkness?

Everyone would say that no matter how much joy you have in your life, there is more sadness that we would want.

Jennifer's pet rabbit died.
Jason lost his compass.

Jodie's grandmother is sick.

I don't like the sad things, Daddy. I don't want to feel sad.

Remember when our dog Laddie ran away? We worried about him. You asked "what if he never comes back?"

Sadness tells us that Laddie is important to us.

But Laddie came back. He barked at the door!

He did, and we were happy!

We hugged Laddie and said
“don’t ever run away again!”

No one wants to be sad, but
in our lives we will be
sad...and we will be happy.

Do big people get sad too?

Yes, adults also get sad.

Remember when Jesus died?

On the cross?

Yes. All of his friends were
sad.

*When grandpa died, grandma
was sad. She cried.*

What made her happy again?

Grandma still misses pap,
but...God has promised that
one day, all the sadness and
pain in the world will be
gone.

On the days that it’s raining
and you can’t go outside to
play, you’re sad about that,
but you know that, soon, the
sun will shine and you will be
able to play with your
friends.

Whenever we're sad, we remember that, one day, God will take the sadness away.

Remember you didn't want your baby tooth to fall out, but then you learned that a new tooth would grow in its place.

Sometimes thinking about what comes after the pain helps us to get through the pain.

Cleaning your room is not so bad when you know that you're going to see a friend when you finish.

I don't like cleaning my room.

What is really special is that God promises to be with us when we're sad.

Jesus told us that he would be with us always.

Jesus lives in my heart. Does he take the sadness away?

No, but he knows what it is like to be sad so he wants to help us when we're sad.

We can pray and he'll give us strength to help us to do what we need to do.

Daddy, why is there sadness?

Sometimes we cause it.

Like when you ran over my bike.

That's right. You left your bike behind my car and I ran over your bike. Both you and I caused that sadness.

But lots of times, we don't cause it. It just happens and we don't know why.

God has promised that one day we will understand.

What we do know is that God helps us to make something good come out of what is bad. God helps us to grow.

Remember when you were riding your bike without using your hands?

I fell.

Yes and it hurt.

Did you learn something from that?

*I did: only ride without hands
when you're on the grass.*

*What did grandma learn when
grandpa died?*

She learned that she needed
people's help in this life –
even Jesus' help. And
grandpa's death reminded her
of heaven.

Sometimes, when I ask
grandma how she is doing,
she says, "I'm thinking of
heaven today." That means
she's having a hard day, but
remembering that one day

God will take away all the
sadness.

*So I have to have suffering in
life?*

Yes, but God will be there to
help you get through
whatever comes. And
eventually, God will take
away all the suffering.

*Will you be there Daddy if I'm
sad?*

Yes, dear, I'll be right there
helping God help you.

This hope that is ours in times of suffering is not a wishful fantasy. It was Peter's joyful experience.

Remember that Peter had denied ever knowing Jesus. So when Jesus approached Peter, he forgave him, and called Peter to work for Jesus in the world.

That was a second chance for Peter. And soon when the Spirit came to all the followers of Jesus, Peter began to preach and thousands of people responded.

Peter not only had a second chance, he realized that he had a new life.

This was his insight: if a person is given a new birth by God (sired by God) then that person is an heir of God.

Horrible things can

Punch us

Knock us down

Kill us

But they cannot touch our inheritance which is guarded by God in heaven.

We make sense of this tragedy and today's baptism by saying: by the mercy of God, we are Easter people who still live in a Good Friday world. We are IN this world and affected by the chances and changes of life, but we are not OF the world. Our true home is heaven.

We are encouraged by the security of our future. And, in the present, we know that God reshapes what has been hurtful so that the curse becomes a blessing.

Painful though such trials may be, we grow in our faith and we become stronger people,

until that day when God will do away with sorrow, sighing, suffering and pain and even death will be no more.

We grieve for the great tragedy that happened at the hands of one troubled young man. But, in our grief, we thank God for God's presence and promise of a secure and blessed future. In our Good Friday world, we are bold to live and work and even die in the hope of our resurrection faith.