

PRAISE GOD FOR NEW BIRTH INTO A LIVING HOPE

1 Peter 1:1-4 (key Verse: 3)

“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.

Let us thank God for blessing our Easter Bible Conference, through the conference we have learnt about Jesus’ power to forgive sins. Jesus suffered greatly while being led to the cross where he was crucified and died. When Jesus breath his last, he said *“Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”* Jesus was sinless, but because of love, God sent him into this world to take our place, we sinned greatly before God and deserving to suffer on the cross. But when Jesus prayed, *Father forgive them*, everyone could receive redemption, not the just the rich or poor but everyone. Through testimony writing we could acknowledge our sin, repent, and receive forgiveness from our sins and be renewed as children of God.

Furthermore, through the Easter conference we could learn about Jesus’ power that conquered sin and death, through his resurrection from the dead. Through Jesus’ resurrection we could fully receive joy and peace in our hearts, we were moved for just as the Father raised him from the dead, in the same he could raise us from the dead. We were moved to surrender our lives to Jesus, renew our faith in him and follow him anew.

Now in today’s passage we are going to learn from Peter. When Jesus was captured to be crucified, Peter denied him 3 times. When word came out that Jesus has risen, he was filled with unbelief. When he first saw that Jesus was not in the tomb, he wondered to himself what had happened and never thought that Jesus has risen, just as Jesus had told them many times when he was with him and the other disciples. But by the grace of God, Jesus revealed himself to Peter and the other disciples, and when Peter realized that indeed Jesus has risen, his life was completely changed. He no longer lived in fear, he no longer lived in hiding afraid of being killed because he followed Jesus. But with courage he went out into Jerusalem preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, challenging the teachers of the law and the pharisees. Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, Peter’s life could be transformed.

In **Mathew 16:21-23** Jesus told his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. When Peter heard this, he rebuked Jesus saying: *“Never, Lord, This shall never happen to you.”* Peter had in mind human concerns, he was concerned about earthly things to be beside Jesus on an earthly throne, he had worldly hopes, he did not have the concerns of God. But now, when he experienced the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, he was transformed into a man after the concerns of God. A man of courage, and since then God used him to raise many faithful servants of God, through encouraging and planting the risen Jesus in people’s hearts.

Now in today’s passage Peter wrote a letter to the early Christians in Asia Manor who were scattered all around because of persecution. Peter referred to them as *“God’s elect, strangers in the world.”* It means to God they were precious, but because they believed in Jesus, they were rejected and scattered all over the world by persecution. They were outcast from their own societies and were living as foreigners in their own land because of Jesus. Because of all this, the early Christians could be very discouraged and live with sorrows. In the same way, after experiencing the power of Jesus’ death and resurrection, making a decision of faith to follow Jesus at the Easter conference, we too are likely to encounter challenges. We can encounter rejection from our friends because of Jesus, we can encounter intense temptations. We can encounter great pressure from our schoolwork and life at work, be hindered from spending time with God, leaving us in discouragement. When Peter saw this from the early Christians, he encouraged them, and gave them assurance that they are God’s elect, precious to God. We too are precious to God, that is why he sent Jesus to die for us.

Peter further encouraged the Christian believers in our **key verse 3** saying: *“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”* Here Peter reminded the Christian believers about the power of Jesus’ death and resurrection; he is also reminding us once again this easter Sunday about Jesus who died for our sins and now is risen. And so, Peter encouraged the Christian believers to give praises to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy we

are given new birth, a new life. What does this mean? Why is this great mercy for us? It is great mercy because due to our sins we were cut off from God, our source of life. We were destined to die and suffer eternal punishment. But through his mercy, God sent his one and only Son Jesus Christ into the world, to die on the cross, for our sins. Through this we were born again as new beings. God did not do this because we did something for him; he did it only by his mercy and grace. When we remember God's mercy, we can overcome our temptations, we can overcome our challenges and hold on to our faith and become courageous like Peter. That is why Peter is encouraging us to give praises to God for this great mercy today, we should praise God daily for his mercy so that we can overcome.

Furthermore, we have been given new birth, a new life into a living hope. Because of Jesus death and resurrection, we have been given a living hope. What does it mean that it is living hope? It is living hope, because Jesus rose from the dead, proving that he has power, power to raise us as well. Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we can live without fear, we can overcome all kinds of hardships because we know that death is not the end, Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Basically because of the resurrection of Jesus, we can have life; we can go on without any despair or sorrow. It is living hope because it is life giving.

Furthermore, it is living hope because it is real hope, not dead hope or false hope. The early Christian church could have given up on Jesus and return to their communities and live a so called peaceful life without being on the run. We too can choose to live a so-called peaceful life, avoid conflict with our friends and family because of Jesus. We can put our hope in friendships, our work and school and compromise our faith. However, such decisions and hopes end up leaving is empty, wondering around and tormented by sin. They result in this way because they are not living hope, but temporal hope, they are false hopes, dead hopes for they perish, spoil, or fade away. True hope is the living hope, hope in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When we have this hope, we can be joyful and be at peace, even though our circumstances are unfavorable, even though we are going through persecution, even though we have challenges at work, and at school, challenges in our family. We can have eternal joy and hold on in the suffering for Jesus because we have living hope, a life-giving hope in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is living hope for it is hope in the heavenly inheritance, inheritance in God. In John **14:1-3** it says:

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God[a]; believe also in me. 2 My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Conclusion:

From today's passage we have learnt once again that indeed Jesus died on the cross and rose, he defeated the power of sin and death. Because he rose, we too will rise again when we believe in him. Through Jesus resurrection we have been given new birth, we are renewed into a new form that the world will not understand, because of our new form we may suffer persecution, rejection, we may be labelled, we may experience elevated temptations. But Peter is encouraging us today to take heart, to hold on to the faith, for we are God's elect, we are precious to him. Furthermore, we are encouraged to keep the faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus, for there is power in the risen Jesus. When we have the risen Jesus in our hearts, we have a living hope.

Many young people today, including Christians are wondering around, they are being tossed around by sin. They are like this because they do not have the living hope, they do not want to look upon Jesus, instead they look upon worldly hopes, such careers, academics, family, pleasure and social media. These physical things, though they can temporarily satisfy us, they are not the living hope that our souls and being yearn for, it takes moments for them to spoil, perish and fade away. What our being needs is the living hope in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord, assurance that our sins are forgiven, that sin has no power over us anymore. An assurance of an inheritance in heaven for you and me.

Peter's physical circumstances before and after experiencing the resurrection of Jesus were no different. But his inner being was completely transformed, before he was filled with fear, doubt, he was hopeless and lost in hiding. But when he finally met the risen Jesus, he was filled with courage, he was filled with the living hope, joy, peace and great love for God's people. Let us pray that through this Easter we may unshakably receive the death and resurrection of Jesus, be filled with the living hope.

Amen.
Key verse.