

The Impact of “Good News!”

Dear Friends in Christ:

“*Good morning*” or “*good afternoon*” or “*good evening*” people of Hope! Welcome to worship! No matter what time of the day you choose to log on to Hope’s website, this is indeed “*the day that the Lord has made so let us rejoice and be glad in it!*” (Psalm 118:24) The Lord is risen! *He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

It’s good to be with you again, to be seen and heard by you in this recorded sermon. I miss being able to connect with you personally here in our beautiful and worshipful sanctuary, especially when I want to share today a message entitled “**The Impact of Good News!**” It’s a theme that resonates and leaps from the pages of Holy Scripture when the Apostle Peter concludes today’s Epistle Lesson by saying: “***And this word is the good news that was preached to you.***” (1 Peter 1:25b)

So, how can I talk about this “*good news*” without your being able to see the smile that comes with it; the energy it brings to my voice; the promise and hope it conveys...*even when and even though* these 2020 Sundays of Easter are framed in the backdrop and scenery of life that feels oppressive, stifling and overwhelming - a dark coronavirus cloud hanging over our lives, nation, world and church? While there are lots of “*good stories*” out there of people helping, coping, caring, sharing, serving and surviving, there’s also a bit of the classic country western refrain that we all must feel at times: “*Gloom, despair and agony on me!*” Nothing is quite the same right now, is it?

So, certainly and thankfully, this is a time for “*preaching a word of good news.*” (1 Peter 1:25) In fact, the Apostle Peter writes these inspired words during a time when believers are being tried and tested, experiencing persecution and exile, yet encouraged, as you heard last week, to a “*living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!*” (1 Peter 1:3) Peter, in a sense, is “*rallying the troops*” for they “*have been born again through the living and abiding word of God!*” These relatively new believers and followers of Jesus are called to “*be holy*” - following the will and way of Christ; trusting in His promises even in tough times, for they have been “*ransomed and redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without spot or blemish.*” (1 Peter 1:13-21) And then, to add assurance, the Apostle echoes the refrain from the Prophet Isaiah, reminding the children of God:

*“All flesh is like grass
and all its glory like the flower of grass.
The grass withers, and the flower falls,
but the word of the Lord remains forever.”* (Isaiah 40:6-8)

“*And this word,*” Peter affirms, “*is the good news that was preached to you.*” (1 Peter 1:22-25)

If Easter means anything to Christians in our life journey, it calls upon us to trust and believe and rely upon the Word and promises of our God, fulfilled in the perfect life, sacrificial death and victorious resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. The “*Good News*” of the Gospel of forgiveness and salvation, saved by God’s grace through faith in Jesus is **impactful** - it makes a difference, changing minds and hearts, and by the fruit of the Holy Spirit produces a new perspective of courage, strength, perseverance, trust and hope...no matter what the realities of life fling in our face! It’s the very attitude which the Apostle Peter encourages when writing in verse 13: “*Therefore,*

preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Not an easy battlefield is it...the battle of *the mind*...as evidenced in today's Gospel by the followers of Jesus on the Emmaus Road. Their sadness was so evident, their shock and sorrow so great, the change in their lives so profound that these walkers could not fully comprehend that the Lord they loved; that had been crucified on Calvary's Cross had risen from the dead on Easter morn - "*just as He said*" and just as the Scriptures attested that He would! But "*when their eyes were opened, and they recognized Jesus*" as the Living Lord, they said to each other, "*Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?*" (Luke 24:13-35) That, my friends, is the outcome when the "*word that is the good news is preached to you!*"

So, on this second Sunday of Easter, what is the "*word of Good News*" that you; that I need to have "*burned within our hearts*" today? Are we allowing present day circumstances to "*distance*" us from God and doubt the promises of His Word; our hearts and minds overwhelmed by confusion, sadness and fear, rather than drawing us closer to the Risen Lord in faith and trust? Are we "*masking*" the victory of Jesus Christ over sin, death and the grave, robbed of daily peace and joy because we have not "*set our hope fully on the grace*" of God? Surely, we have not "*quarantined*" the "*good news*" which flows from the "*word of the Lord,*" Jesus Himself declaring: "*I will be with you always, even to the end of the age!*" (Matthew 28:20) It's a promise Peter captures so powerfully and personally in his Epistle, reminding us of the reality and hope, that yes, "*The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever!*"

It is “*this word,*” my friends, of a Savior who loves and forgives us, dying on the cross for our sins, rising to give everlasting life to who believe, that “*is the good news that was preached to you.*” (1 Peter 1:22-25) It is more than a “*good story*” at the end of depressing news broadcast, which seem to be the format of the day, because this message from God’s Word can be transformative and life-changing; paving the way for an alternative attitude, a positive spirit, and hopeful outcomes. This is why Peter writes, “*Love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.*” (1 Peter 1:22-23)

An anonymous poet has written:

A careless word may kindle strife.

A cruel word may wreck a life.

A bitter word may hate instill.

A brutal word may smite or kill.

A gracious word may smooth the way.

A joyous word may light the day.

A timely word may lessen stress.

A loving word may heal and bless.

How I pray today that you have heard, trust and believe in the promise and hope of “*the word of the Lord that remains forever!*” “*And this word is the good news that was preached to you.*” It is the Word of God, fulfilled in His Son Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord, “*providing strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow. Great is His faithfulness!*” May that “*Good News*” impact your life today! **AMEN!**

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