

Hope? It's Your Future  
1 Peter 1:3-9

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

From Allan Hart Jahsmann, a parable.

**As the parable goes** there was this scullery maid, a young woman, no family, who as a child had been taken in by the keeper of an inn, the sort you might see in Lord of the Rings. Her job...cauldrons and cooking utensils, pots, pans, potato peelings...you name it, if it was dirty it was hers to do. She was the Inn's Cinderella, basically a slave. No one noticed her. No one paid her any attention unless something got broke, bent, or blatantly too dirty to recognize any longer.

**As the parable goes** there was this prince on his return to the palace after touring the kingdom that was soon to be his kingdom. Circumstances preventing further travel that day his Highness and entourage arrived to spend the night at the Inn.

**As the parable goes** the young prince was so taken up by the young scullery maid that before the evening was out, he had promised that he would return for her soon, they would marry and she would be queen.

**As the parable goes** nothing changed in the Inn. Our young scullery maid still had the worst of all duties to do with all their grubby details. But there was a difference. People could not fail to notice that there was a hint of a smile etched on her lips; her eyes were always bright; her manner unexplainably lighthearted and she could even be heard to hum while scouring the cauldrons. More than a few wondered what was the secret to this quiet, indestructible joy no matter what. She knew. She was a woman living with a promise and that promise bubbled up with hope, a hope that was imperishable, undefiled and unfadingly hers.

Peter says that's the way it is. Only Peter paints no parable. It is fact. The promise of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ inspires Holy Spirit given faith. Faith, for it's part, bubbles up with hope...hope means you have a future. Faith and hope are inseparable. Hope and future are inseparable. Hope and life are inseparable. Dante in His lengthy poem as a traveler through hell, THE INFERNO, posted over hell's gates these forever-words: Abandon all hope you who enter. No hope. No life. No hope is despair. No hope is living death; the kind that doesn't quit has no end even with the grave. That is hopelessness. As Paul said to the Ephesians about people who have bought into this world mind, body and soul: They are without God and without hope in this world. Better keep the parties going; try hard not to think about the future. Better keep running, or try to keep running, away from the thought of death. There's always that sneaky, creeping suspicion that there's more to come after the grave. Without certainty about what comes

next...there's nothing but anxiety, fear for then and futility here and now. Without God, without faith in Jesus Christ, there is no future.

Thanks be to God, Christ is Risen. He is risen indeed. Peter reminds us of our sprinkling...our baptism connects us to Christ through the Holy-making Holy Spirit; all your sin was covered drop by bloody red drop on Good Friday. WE are the redeemed of the Lord. But there's no way you or I could know that without Easter Sunday. The Resurrection is the noisy good news that God the Father has approved and acceptance Christ's death, his own Son's death for you. You are His. He is yours. Baptized you belong to him, period. Nothing you can do...bad, good or ugly can change God's opinion of you as He sees you in Christ. Don't fret over your sin and acceptance, it, you, are covered. Don't toy with the dead and raised Jesus for you like some blank check for you to do as you please... don't trifle with God's grace. Don't try to buy off God with your goodness...Get over yourself. You have been infected with the Gospel...and that's all the way to Christ's return good. Jesus Christ didn't die to perfect people. He died for sinners. Dear fellow sinners...that's only way you qualify for God's future for you with Him. You, me, dear insatiable sinner, Christ is yours. You are Christ's. That's your future, fellow scrubbers of pots and pans. That's Hope!

Why do I, why do we, need to know this from this side of Easter Sunday. Only a risen Savior, of whom even the media speaks in the present tense, can A) Look you straight in the face and say, Because I live you will live also. B) I am going to prepare a place for you that you may be where I am. C) I'm the prince on His way back for His bride, that's us and all believers. When I return I will be king of kings and Lord of lords. The Risen and returning Christ is THE critical component CALLED the future. Our hope, the life here and now sees with the crystal clear eye of faith all the way to Christ's return. He, we, await only the word from the Father.

You'll need that Peter says, that future secured in the Coming Christ. You need hope when you hit the heat and hard rocks, bumps, bruises, the bashings, the fiery trials, the various trials, that are waiting for you just beyond those doors over there. [And, I'm not so naive as to believe there aren't more than a few that followed you right to your pew.] Peter needed to encourage the faithful, Christ's Bride, in light of the clear fiery trials of persecution. Some as real as the human torches Nero made out of Christians in the Coliseum...cheap, live entertainment for the twisted, perverse, crowds of Rome. Not to mention the loss of house and home, splitting families, sold off to slavery, driven from the country like Aquilla and Priscilla...visible heat. Not all that different from our brothers and sisters suffering loss of life and/or property and every thing they own, not to mention Palm Sunday church bombings, in Coptic Egypt; Iraq nearly drained of any Christian presence; horrible, never-ending sentences for being a FOLLOWER

OF THE BOOK [as Christians are known to Islam] in Iran or Syria; at the hands of ISIS who simply slaughtered the children of Christians families. Peter's fellow apostle Paul pokes the false teaching at Corinth right in the eye with the simple truth of Christ raised: IF in this life only, if you are looking for an easy ride through life, as believers in Christ, if all you have is a here and now hope...then our preaching is useless, your faith is empty and you're still stuck in your sins. Peter cast his net farther out than the visible persecutions, you know, facebook, twitter, tweets, locker room, hallway harassment, simply being ignored, overlooked and treated as though you don't exist, uninvited to the party, passed by for promotion...because of Christ, you understand.

Peter also knew that sometimes we are our own worst enemy. Peter was standing right next to Jesus when our Lord said: "Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are the things that defile a person.

In advance Jesus warned that he, Peter, rock like, would come to deny with curses that he even knew Christ. Such things are the battles with our own resident evil. In fact, some of our fiercest trials, our fiery tribulations, are right in the home of our own heart. Ask the chemically-dependent addict for openers. Then realize that we are all addicted to sin both from nature and by our own designs. It possesses us. Our need for our Savior should drive us to our knees in cries of sorrow born out of repentance. And our hope? Our hope lies in Him whom we do not see yet we love. We are those Jesus talked about when He told Thomas blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe. That's us. The very confession of the Apostles' Creed shouts the reality of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead with meaning. The work of the Holy Spirit fuses us to the cross and empty grave of Jesus in our baptism; bringing the body and blood of Jesus Christ right into our arteries and veins at His meal; warms our hearts as it did the once-hopeless Emmaus disciples with "Did not our hearts burn within us while He opened to us the Scriptures." Word/faith/faith/hope/hope/life. Hope is your vital sign. Hope is your future sprouting from faith in the Resurrected Lord. The hope that you have within you is yours...and yours to share in the godless, hopeless world around you. In fact, want to give hope and hence, faith, a good stirring...go to the nursing home, the hospital, veterans home, the street, and pray for a way to share the hope that is within you. Hope is contagious...it expands by infecting others...infecting with a good case of hope. Hope shows. You can't hold down hope any more than our young lady waiting for the king to come for her. And Peter says later for our benefit and this desperate world. **BUT IN YOUR HEART HONOR CHRIST THE LORD AS HOLY, ALWAYS BEING PREPARED TO MAKE A DEFENSE TO ANYONE WHO ASKS YOU FOR A REASON FOR THE HOPE THAT IS IN YOU. AMEN. ALLELUIA. CHRIST IS RISEN INDEED.** Now go take on this hopeless mess of a world we live in. Amen

