

SERMON: "A LIVING HOPE"

**TEXTS: NEW TESTAMENT
NEW TESTAMENT**

**JOHN 20:19-31
1 PETER 1:3-9**

April 12, 2026

Dr. Dave Kivett

INTRODUCTION

Most households can identify this person, the person who usually answers the often-asked question which is phrased in one of two ways. One way is, "Have you seen my glasses, keys, phone (fill in the blank _____)?" Or straight to the point, "where's the (again fill in the blank)?" Or the guest in your home version, "where do you keep the _____?"

I'm that person in our house. My wife and daughter call me "the quicker, picker upper" which I hear as the compliment they surely intend.

So to speak to that person in your house, inside you, I would ask, "Where do you keep the hope? Where is it? Have you seen it around?"

I could use some hope. I could really use some hope bout now. I'm looking for it. Don't think I'm alone in looking for, yearning for, needing some hope. Where is the hope? Where might hope be found?

The image that comes to mind for me about that shared search for hope is the airport ... during bad weather. The lines get longer, voices are raised, the airport bars are full, people are scattered across the floor trying to get some sleep. All round people look at one another shrugging, looking around as if to ask, "what are we going to do?"

So I ask, "where do you keep the hope? Where is the hope?" Peter in his first letter gets straight to that question after a brief greeting.

Blessed 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 and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Where's the hope?

It is in Jesus, it is through him (a gift), and it is a living hope.

We have that hope because God gives it to us by 'his great mercy.'

We don't find it ourselves because we're the ones who knew where to look

We don't buy hope like it's a \$12 beer at crowded airport bar. It is a gift.

LIVING HOPE FOR REAL LIFE

Hope is a given. Given in mercy, given through Christ and his resurrection. It is such a given that we can't really lose it. Hope as a given is something we don't have to look for. It's here. We can lean into it. It is given so that we might lean into it. Peter knows that we are going to need this living hope to face the challenges before us. He writes.

In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith - being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire –

Hope is what we pack (actually as a given, God packs it. God makes sure hope is in our carry bags). God packs hope knowing the journey ahead will not be easy. It will include suffering. The Christian faith is not an escape, not a by-pass. It is a living hope, built for life – real life.

Peter speaks to that reality. God's people will suffer various trials. We will be tested by fire and like gold be refined by it, through it. Most of the rest of his letter will be advice and encouragement on how to live in and through those trials. He's not preaching a health and wealth gospel like some TV preacher who sells us on how prosperous we will be if we just send him \$500 (rather twisted logic when you think about it).

The people to whom Peter writes, then and now, will suffer because they follow, we follow a leader who leads us in a different direction than either Caesar (with all his muscle) or the religious authorities of the day (with all their rules).
A leader who keeps reaching out to expand the definition of neighbor.
A leader who shows his power in service and in sacrifice

That leader, Jesus of Nazareth, after his resurrection appeared to his disciples. And he spoke directly to their suffering, to their fears, to their doubts. We heard that in our reading from John's gospel.
It was that first Easter evening, the day of Jesus' resurrection.

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

The Risen Christ came and stood among them. He said "Peace be with you." That is how a living hope works – Christ with us, peace with us. He shows them his hands and feet, clear signs of his suffering. And he says it again "Peace be with you."

WITH US

There is a quote from a French reformer, Paul Claudel, that I have often used at Good Friday. He wrote, "*Jesus did not come to explain suffering nor to take it away; he came to fill it with his presence.*"

Jesus stands among us in (and through) our suffering
He does so as one who has himself suffered

The Risen Christ is with us in and through our suffering
Both our unique and personal, to the point of painful, suffering
And in our suffering together because we follow a Savior
who saves us not with a sword, but with his suffering

I really like how the scholars who put together the lectionary put these verses together – Peter telling us we have a living hope, one that we be with us through our various trials, through our suffering and the Risen Christ coming and standing among a frightened group of his followers and saying twice, "peace be with you."

The living hope is the Risen Christ with us,
all that death-defeating resurrection reality with us.
I like how Fred Craddock describes that living hope

The hope into which we are born is a divine hope; that is, a hope which does not simply wait for the end time, but is active and vigorous, fueling the life and activity of the believer ... This hope is not whistling in the dark nor is it activated only by spring flowers. Rather it is grounded in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That is the living hope I am looking for and will lean into (as I have many times before). It is an active and vigorous hope. Have you seen that kind of hope? I have. I've seen in you, particularly in your togetherness
I've seen it in and through your suffering and supporting each other

I've also seen it in your solidarity and support of your neighbors
In how you take that idea of being 'a place for everyone'
and stretch it out into your lives, stretch beyond the corner of Rainbow and Rownd, stretch to the point of not only challenging yourself but to the point of agitating the Pharisees and Herods of our day

That kind of stretching the boundaries is helpful
It helps those who are looking for a living hope find it
It helps people look beyond the easy off ramps of tuning it all out or pointing fingers or giving into a sedated cynicism

SUMMARY

Now about that looking for things ...

Maybe some advice on finding what we are looking for – three quick ideas

One, for those of you who are the person usually asked the question

“Have you seen my (fill in the blank or where’s the _____)?”

I’d recommend you not answer this way (even though it makes sense)

“You know, if you put it in the same place every time, it’s easy to find”

I know a guy who answered that way once. It was the wrong answer.

Another more useful approach. You’ve heard this one before.

A question in response to the question ... “where did you have it last?”

This one actually helps people find what they’re looking for

They retrace their steps, “now where was I?”

That approach also makes sense theologically, when looking for hope

You might think back to how God got you through the last trial

You might remember the cards people sent, the casseroles, the cookies

You might remember a bible story or verse or the refrain from a hymn

You might remember something a preacher with a Southern accent said

That approach works practically and theology. So too does this one

Can’t find something? Getting a bit frantic? Maybe stop looking for a bit

Change your focus. Take a break. I’ve done this several times

And you know what often happens. After a while, I remember where it is

I think that is the way it is with naming and claiming the hope we have

It’s a living hope, in and through the resurrected Jesus ... on the loose.

That living hope has been there with us all along! With us!