

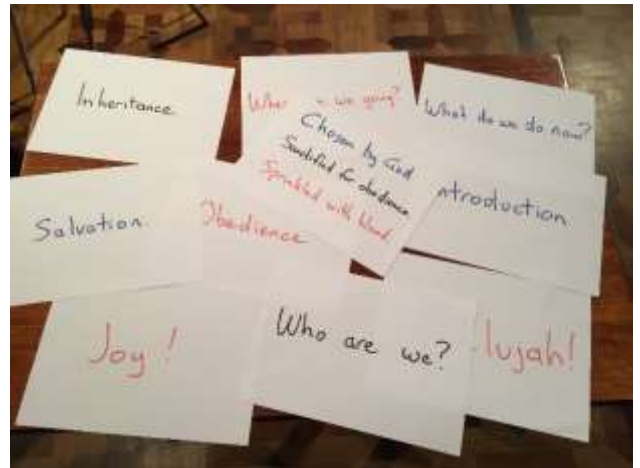
# Living Hope 1Peter 1:1-12

Heavenly Father, we bow in your presence, may your Word be our teacher, your Spirit our guide and your greater glory our supreme concern. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

That is my usual prayer before preaching and it is nice to do something that is normal when so much has changed.

This is very clear as I look around me. It's the Sunday after Easter and perhaps for the first time in the history of the Cathedral there are same number of people here as last week.

Professionally things have changed. Preachers have become producers, intercessors become internet whizzes, spending more time in technology than theology. For some of us that's harder than others. I know there are all sorts of interesting things you can do when editing with subtitles and graphics but I don't know how to do that so I've made my own to keep us on track  
So this is the.



Introduction

(This makes more sense on the video!)

Things will have changed for you as well. And with these changes can come dislocation and uncertainty, particularly if our identity has been strongly tied to the life as we knew it. We want to know what the future holds, and with that information make decisions as to how we should behave now.

Our reading from 1Peter is helpful here for we find answers to these three questions.

Who are we?

Where are we going?

What do we do now?

And all of the answers to these questions of indemnity, destiny and activity are centred around the resurrection of Jesus, our living hope.

## WHO ARE WE? THE REBORN PEOPLE OF THE TRIUNE GOD

### 1Peter

Peter is writing to a mixed group of Christians in what we would now call Turkey, who are suffering various trials and Peter is writing to encourage them.

After a Christian greeting, Peter starts his letter. "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." (v3)

Peter encourages his readers to praise God. Not just any God, but the God that they now understand through Jesus, the God who is the Father of Jesus. Also we praise the God who through Jesus and his resurrection we have been given a new birth.

### New Birth

When we hear that phrase of "new birth" we may think of being born again, an emotional experience of being grasped by God's love in Jesus. This is certainly

something to praise God for but there is a much more complex theological idea being expressed here.

The Old Testament, that part of the Bible before Jesus looks forward to a time when God's people, Israel, would be resurrected by God's Spirit (Ezekiel 37). This was an image of renewal when God would act to restore and transform his people.

What the early Christians realised was that in Jesus resurrection and giving the Spirit to his followers this renewal of God's people had taken place. This transformation meant God's people were no longer defined by natural birth, national boundaries, or ethnic origin.

God's people had been given new birth in Jesus' resurrection and it was open to all who believed in Jesus.

### **God's elect**

Peter has actually being a similar point in his introduction. He spoke of his readers as

Chosen  
Sanctified for Obedience  
Sprinkled with blood.

All of these are descriptions of God's people in the Old Testament particularly at the birth of the nation at Mt Sinai. But now these ideas have now been re thought, reimagined, reborn in terms of the Trinity:

Chosen by the Father,  
Sanctified by the Spirit,  
Sprinkled with the blood of Christ.

Peter is using these images so that this diverse group of scattered Christians realise who they are, the reborn people of the triune God: Father Son and Spirit. Can there be any greater heritage or dignity than that.

It is a dignity that we believers in Jesus share.

I wonder how you think of yourself. How do you define your identity?

Perhaps you have a low view of yourself or see yourself as of little significance. Well because of Jesus resurrection we Christians are part of the renewed, reborn, resurrected people of God.

God out of his mercy has given us new birth, not based on our natural origin but on his love for us, he has chosen us, has cleansed us by the Spirit and restored us in relationship to himself through Jesus.

He has called us into his family by giving us new birth, he has done everything for us. No wonder Peter says we should praise God.

## **WHERE ARE WE GOING? A LIVING HOPE, AN IMPERISHABLE INHERITANCE**

Peter has answered the first question, who are we, but he also has started to deal with the second, where are we going?

### **Living Hope**

We have been given new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus. Peter expands on this idea of a living hope with two other words, inheritance and salvation

#### Inheritance

Firstly "an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you" (v4)

We should note the secure language used here. Imperishable, undefiled and unfading." My parents have passed away in recent years and I have received my inheritance, and sad to say much of it is perishable, defiled and fading, and gathering dust in the garage. And in current circumstances any inheritance my children may be looking forward to is fading.

But here we have a cast iron guarantee of what is coming. After all think of this new family that we have been born into, the family of the creator of heaven and earth, think of that inheritance.

Again, Peter is picking up Old Testament imagery where the inheritance is the promised land of Israel. God's chosen people lost their home so that they lived dispersed, as strangers, scattered in many countries, yet longing for their promised land.

This is exactly the kind of language which Peter has used of his readers, they are the elect, the true Israel, strangers in the world, scattered. We too have a promised land. Until we get there, we are strangers here.

#### Salvation

Peter also describe this hope as" salvation", a salvation longed for by prophets and angels, but it is for us, the salvation of our souls. This may sound rather spiritual, but the biblical hope is that God will bring a new creation, of which the resurrection is a foretaste. This is about creation restored not abandoned. It is the salvation which we pray for when we pray "your kingdom come", it is a salvation which God guards us for.

Both the idea of inheritance and this idea of salvation points us to God's coming future. Peter encourages this new reborn people of God by looking forward. It is that which will help them to through their many trials.

Surely that is what we need, we need to look forward. Many of us our hope is our old life back but will such a hope really encourage us. Yes, the current trials will pass, but our old life had its issues and struggles.

Perhaps this time of being forced to be at home will help us truly long for our eternal home, to remember that we are ultimately strangers here? Is that something you ever feel?. C.S. Lewis said. "Has this world been so kind to you that you should leave with regret. There are better things ahead than any we leave behind."

That is our great hope. The Christian hope is going to an eternal retirement home but resurrection home.

#### Living

This then is the hope, an inheritance kept in heaven and salvation. It is a living hope because it is not a vague hope, it is not even a promised hope, it is hope that has already been shown to be true in Jesus. What has already happened for Jesus will be our future. It is like the difference between going for surgery with no idea of the outcome, and going for the same surgery having met someone who has had it.

Jesus is the working model of salvation, it works. God will keep his promise, it is a living hope, a hope as alive as Jesus.

This then is our destiny, again closely bound up with the resurrection.

### **WHAT DO WE DO NOW? REJOICE DESPITE SUFFERING**

Peter then has answered our first two questions.

Who are we? We are the children of God by new birth. That is our identity

Where are we going? Our destiny, as seen in Jesus is to be with God in a new creation.

And we move to our last question, what do we do now? What is to be our activity? Well as we will follow Jesus in the resurrection, so we are to follow him now.

There are two areas that come out of this passage.

Firstly following Jesus will mean being obedient to him in all areas of our life. You might like to read through 1Peter this week and you'll see that discipleship of Jesus covers family life, work life, relations with the government and living through trials and

suffering. All our activity, especially in times of trial should be shaped by our identity and destiny.

Secondly, and most prominently in this passage is rejoicing, praise.

Peter's answers to the first two questions should lead to a life characterised by joy. All that Peter has said has been done by God, it is secure, it is in the bank. We have been chosen by God, born anew by God, given an inheritance in heaven by God, shielded by God till the day of salvation we just need to celebrate it. And all this is true despite what may be going on around it.

This is not a message of rejoice because you are suffering, it is not saying the trials and difficulties are not painful, and a trial, but if we really believe in all that the resurrection carries with it we can still rejoice in what God has done and will do. It is in the difficult times that our faith will prove genuine. We should be blessing our God for all he has done for us.

You may think that this sounds all to heavenly minded to be of no earthly use but this is not the case. C.S. Lewis' wrote "If you read history you find that Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this." (Mere Christianity). This is a living hope to be lived out.

Who are we – the reborn children of God.

Where are we going – God's promised reborn creation

What do we do now – rejoice as followers of Jesus.

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.

Hallelujah.