

Jesus Christ is the Only Solid Base for Faith and Hope
Sermon for the Third Sunday of Easter
April 26, 2020
(Recorded for Main Street Living, Channel 9—Sioux City, IA)

1 Peter 1:17-25 (ESV)

And if you call on Him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, 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; for 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.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! In the name of Jesus. Amen. Civil War General John Sedgwick died at the beginning of the [Battle of Spotsylvania Court House](#), on May 9, 1864. Sedgwick’s men were engaging ahead of the left flank of Confederate defenses and he was directing artillery placements. Confederate [sharpshooters](#) were about 1,000 yards away, and their shots caused members of his staff and artillerymen to duck for cover. Sedgwick strode around in the open and was quoted as saying, "What? Men dodging this way for single bullets? What will you do when they open fire along the whole line?" Although ashamed, his men continued to flinch and he said, "Why are you dodging like this? They couldn't hit an elephant at this distance." Seconds later a sharpshooter’s bullet struck him under the left eye and he fell to the ground mortally wounded.

General Sedgwick believed his life was not in danger. He had faith in his calculations and he acted upon his belief. He was wrong, and it cost him his life.

It is essential that we base our faith, what we believe, upon what is sure and certain so that we can live our lives with confidence, reliable direction, and a certain hope for our future. We have not been left alone when it comes to matters of life and death and eternal judgment. The Lord God addresses us through His living and abiding Word again today to strengthen our faith and hope in Jesus Christ, the Savior He has given and made known to us.

“I believe.” That is a very powerful statement: “I believe.” Actually, the statement is only as powerful as the object of one’s belief. Some people place great faith in their financial resources. They work and invest to accumulate a sum of wealth they believe will meet their needs. Other people place great faith in themselves. They believe in their ability to think, reason,

calculate, and plan to meet whatever they encounter in life. Still other people get a little mixed up in what they believe and they trust their feelings or what they think is true, even though they have no factual basis for their feelings or thoughts.

What a person believes also then impacts the hopes they have. Hope is always directed toward the future. We have all kinds of hopes for ourselves, our children, grandchildren, our community, our economy, our country. Thinking again about the basis of belief, it becomes even more obvious that the basis of belief needs to be solid; otherwise, hopes are not so sure.

A person may believe they have enough money to retire early, but will those resources hold out hope in the face of catastrophic accidents or economic collapse? A person may be very confident in their abilities, but what if he or she encounters a debilitating accident or injury? You may think you are right and quite sure about your feelings, but reality may bring your world crashing down. Finally, we all face death. It is true, as God's Word reminds us today, "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls."

What hope will you have when you stand before the God and Father of us all who judges impartially according to your deeds? Have you done enough, been good enough, or sincere enough to please God and gain a place with Him in eternity? No. God proclaims to us "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We have no hope if we are left only to trust in ourselves as we stand before the judgment of God, which could come at any time, any day, any moment. What then? Is it all hopeless?!

Left to ourselves, yes, we are hopeless! God's Word declares that also. St. Paul declares that left to ourselves we are "without hope and without God in the world."

The Good News for you and me is that God has come to our world! God has come to our sinful fallen world and He has come to your sinful fallen life with a message of forgiveness for all your sins and to give you a sure and certain hope. The message God proclaims to you and to me is that He has paid a price to release us from the judgment for which we were liable because of our sins. The price God demanded He Himself provided as He gave His own dear Son, Jesus, to live and to die for our sins.

Jesus poured out His holy, precious blood on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins. Jesus is the Lamb of God who was sacrificed for us. Can you be sure that all of your sins are covered by the Christ who died for you? Can you be certain that even that terrible sin you have hidden away in the dark corner of your heart and life have been forgiven?

The Good News God declares to us is "Yes! All your sins are forgiven and this Jesus, your Savior, is the solid ground for your faith! You can be sure because God raised Him from the dead on the third day and gave Him glory.

This is why Martin Luther began his explanation of the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed with those words of sure and confident faith, "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death

and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom.”

Our Father in heaven will receive all, and will receive you, in the judgment to live with Him eternally because Jesus saving deeds have all been credited to you through faith. God’s gift of faith is worked in you powerfully by means of this very message itself! Faith holds to God’s gift of forgiveness and eternal life. Your faith and your hope are in God. This true God, through His Word which is living and abiding, this forever remaining Word declares to you that He loves you and He will bring you to live with Him forever in heaven because of Jesus.

Now, in thanks for this great gift of forgiveness and the sure and certain hope of eternal life, life itself now changes. Jesus has ransomed me, saved me to be His own and live under Him in His kingdom. Living under Jesus, we live to share His love with others. He guides us with His Word of truth to faithful obedience, living, as Peter exhorts us to “a sincere brotherly love, loving one another earnestly from a pure heart.”

A Michigan man chose to live a life of love and integrity over “finders, keepers.” After discovering \$43,170 hidden in a used piece of furniture he had purchased, from the Habitat for Humanity ReStore in Owosso, Michigan, Howard Kirby searched out the original owner to return it, despite a lawyer informing him that he had no legal obligation to do so. Howard found the lady who had donated the furniture, which had belonged to her late grandfather. Her grandfather was a frugal man, who paid cash for almost everything. This past January the store helped Howard Kirby return the money. “I do what I can to be as much like Christ as I can, and this is the moral thing to do,” Kirby said. “This is going to help them. I’m so happy for them.” (posted by Rachel Lynn Aldrich, 1/22/20, for *The Sift*, WORLD).

With undeserved love Jesus Christ gave Himself and gave His all to save us from our sins and to give us the gift of eternal life with Him. With sincere love we now live lives of loving service to express our thanks in all that we say and do. We don’t need to clutch and grab for ourselves. We don’t need to plan and calculate only for ourselves. Our feelings and our thoughts and our actions now reflect our confident faith that Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord.

Trust in Jesus. Jesus your Savior is the solid ground for your faith. Believe in Jesus and you have the new birth by faith into a living hope of the resurrection to eternal life. Live your life in confident faith in Jesus by loving others sincerely in thanks for His love for you. Faith, hope, life, and love—it’s all because of Jesus. In His precious name. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen