

**Christ's resurrection gives you hope**  
**A hope for the future (vs3-5)**  
**A hope for the present (vs6-9)**

So my parents called me from Milwaukee two weeks ago. A little girl in their congregation by the name of Clara Trotter died after fighting for just four days against an unknown virus. She was 23-months old. What would you say to the parents of little Clara?

Let's imagine for a moment you live in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, just outside of Birmingham... your neighbor down the street just lost everything, even the life of a family member, while your home and family remained untouched for the most part. What do you say to them?

A young Soldier returns from his third deployment and decides that this is enough. He gets out of the Army. Finds himself jobless, living off of unemployment, staring at the walls of his apartment and the bottoms of countless empty booze bottles. He doesn't talk to family because he feels that they won't understand. They weren't there. They didn't do those things or see those things. What do you say to this young man?

In his hymn, *A Mighty Fortress*, Martin Luther wrote, "Take they our goods, fame, child and wife, let these all be gone, they yet have nothing won, the kingdom's ours forever." In our lesson this morning, the Apostle Peter says that even if all is gone, you have hope, because Christ is risen from the dead. Today the Holy Spirit, speaking through the Apostle Peter teaches us that Christ's resurrection gives you hope; hope for the future and hope for the present.

Peter begins his letter by teaching us that Christ's resurrection gives you hope for the future. But before we can look ahead, we have to look at the past. He says, "**According to his great mercy, [the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ] has caused us to be born again.**" Why would he do that? I don't know about you, but if I were a Soldier in the United States Army, deployed into a combat zone, and I happen to capture an enemy soldier who was hell-bent on destroying me and my country, I would have a difficult time saying to that man, "I'm going to give you a second chance, a chance to start over. You will be part of my family." We cannot even fathom this! Yet this is exactly what our Father in heaven has done for each and every one of us. Conceived in sin, born with a sinful self, we came into this world as enemies of God, hell-bent on rebellion. To God, we were dead. Why should he give us any chance? But because of his great love for sinners, love we don't deserve, because of his great desire that we not be dead forever, he took us into his family, as Peter said, **he caused us to be born again.**

Jesus once said, "**No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.**" This rebirth took place at your Baptism. In Holy Baptism, we died to sin; we died to our old life. In Holy Baptism, we were raised to new life. For in Baptism you became connected to Christ's death and resurrection. In Baptism, faith is created and faith clings to Christ's death for forgiveness of sins. Faith clings to Christ's resurrection for eternal life. And it is through this new life, by faith, that we have a "**living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.**"

What is a living hope? It is not the skeptical wish that pines, "I hope it doesn't rain again this week!" That is no hope at all! That kind of hope leaves room for doubt! Since I have faith that Christ has most certainly risen from death and is now my living Savior, I have a sure confidence and I can say, "My hope is in Christ. He died and was raised to life. His empty tomb is proof. His resurrection gives me hope for the future."

Peter describes this future hope. He tells you that your Risen Savior has promised you **an inheritance.** Typically an inheritance is money and/or an estate that someone worked for all their lives and now that they

have died, they are passing on their hard work to the living, usually someone from their family. Peter says that Christ has left you an inheritance. What wealth did Jesus save up for you? He worked for your salvation by living a perfect, sinfree life; he died so that his blood would cover over your sins; he rose from death to give you the guarantee that you, too, will rise from your graves; he made a promise when he ascended into heaven, that he was going to prepare a place for you there and that he will come back to bring you there, to the mansions and gold paved streets of heaven and gates of pearl. This is your inheritance. Earned by Christ; given to you through faith.

What's so awesome about this inheritance is that it is not subject to our government's inheritance tax. Peter says that **it will never perish**; it will not run out, like money so often does, but it will last forever. **It will never spoil**; unlike a home that eventually needs repair, your inheritance won't rust or break or become rotten and moldy, because it's pure and holy. **It will never fade**. Just think, the jewels the Duchess of Cambridge wore on her wedding day this past Friday, the glamour and splendor of the British royalty, the pomp and fanfare, the excitement and parties, all the sparkle and glory of that event will fade away, just like a new car smell. But not your inheritance in heaven. Every day in heaven will always be WOW! This... is... awesome!

The greatest part about this inheritance, Peter says, is that **it is kept in heaven for you**. A tornado can level your home, but it cannot level your inheritance. A flood can destroy your household goods, but it cannot sweep away your inheritance. A fire will destroy and a thief can break in and steal, but not your inheritance. It is guarded by the most highly sophisticated, most technologically advanced security system this world has ever seen, more secure than Fort Knox gold depository. Kept in heaven, in the very presence of God, for you. This is what we hope for, what we are certain is ours, because Christ rose from the dead. We know that we have this inheritance now. This is our hope for the future.

So what do you say to little Clara Trotter's parents? You say, "Clara has taken possession of her inheritance. She will rise again. There will be a joyous reunion in heaven. And she will thank you that you, as her parents, had her baptized." To the Wounded Warrior you will say, "You have hope. You may not ever find true peace on this earth, but you will have the hope of real everlasting peace in heaven." To the victim of disaster, "Though your home is destroyed, heaven is your real home. This is temporary. The mansions of heaven are eternal." You have hope for the future through Christ's resurrection.

## II. Hope for the present (vs6-9)

What about now? What about the fact that I'm suffering, that I'm having a difficult time dealing with this? Peter answers that question, "**In this (that is, your inheritance) you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials.**" (vs6) The recipients of Peter's letter were suffering greatly from persecution. Most likely their homes and property were being confiscated; their spouses and children and friends were being arrested and thrown into prison and executed; friends and family were turning on them, all because they had put their faith and hope in the resurrected Lord Jesus. Not exactly the life you would expect from people who possessed an inheritance worth more than Donald Trump.

A question these Christians may have asked, "These trials and sufferings are necessary?" That's what the dear apostle said. The grief over a 23-month-old's death is necessary? The pain and torment of a Soldier is necessary? The devastation wrought by natural disaster (which is really the hand of God) is necessary? And what trials are you going through? What kinds of griefs are you suffering? Are they necessary? Even the Apostle Paul and his travel companion Barnabas said, "**We must go through many trials before we enter the kingdom of God.**" (Acts 14.22)

Peter has an answer to that question, too. **Vs7 These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold – may be proved genuine.** "Why," we ask? **Because your faith is worth more than gold.** In Peter's day, there was not much worth more than gold. Today, 24K gold is worth over \$1,500 an ounce. While my wedding band is not pure gold, it could probably fetch a decent price. But would I trade it in? No way! What

this band of gold symbolizes is priceless. In the same way, Peter tells us that gold perishes. On the last day when Christ comes to judge, it will be worth nothing. But your faith is worth far more. Because faith trusts that Christ was crucified for your sins and was raised again. Faith is worth more than gold because if there is no faith, there is no inheritance. If there are no trials and hardships then we have no reason to look to Jesus for salvation, for strength. If everything in our lives is good and well and we have no needs, then we have no reason to look to Jesus for salvation, we have no reason to look ahead to the inheritance that is ours.

This is a hard teaching. It is difficult to accept this truth. And God tells us that his ways are not our ways, his thoughts are not our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9). But he knows what is best for us. He knows what is best to allow to happen to us. Because he sees the big picture of our lives.

These trials are necessary so that we are forced to run to God and his promises. We joke about people who hear the tornado sirens and run outside to see the storm. In the same way, when the tornados of life strike, people run away from God, instead of running to him. When the tornados of life strike, we will run to God because he promises to protect us, in spite of what we see. Peter says in vs5, **you, through faith, are shielded by the power of God until the last day, when this inheritance will be revealed to you.** Wouldn't it be nice to see God and know his power was there to protect us and see us through the difficult times in life?

A Radcliff police officer often parks his squad car in the next door neighbor's driveway (his parents live there). I can feel safe, because I see that squad car and know that a police officer is there. His job is to protect and serve. I may not be able to see God, but I know that his power still protects me and my faith. He protects my faith with something I can see and hear, with what I can touch and taste; his gospel in Word and Sacraments. As long as I continue to remain faithful in study of God's Word and remember my baptism, and approach the Lord's Table as often as it is offered, there God protects my faith, because his Word and Sacraments are powerful, more powerful than my neighborhood police officer, more powerful than all the Abrams tanks and Apache helicopters on Fort Knox. God's Word and Sacraments will keep your faith until the last day, when he will reveal his inheritance to you. God's Word and Sacraments will keep your faith grasping tightly to your Father's promises, even though everything else around you would try to convince not to. God's promise of Christ's resurrection will give you hope in the present.

Clara Trotter's father sent an email out to friends and family the day she died. Two of the sentences he wrote in the email struck me, "Today, Clara was called to eternal glory. We will look to Scripture for consolation." This is the kind of confident hope you and I will have for the future and for the present, because Christ has been raised from death. And because of that hope we will say with confidence, "Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed! Amen!"