

Introduction to Series Easter 2020

This six-week bundle of resources for messages, bible study, puppet shows, home activities, and devotions is based on the letter of First Peter. The series aligns with the Epistle readings for the Easter season (April 19 through May 24) but could be used at any time.

The series is in development from volunteers from the Missouri District of the LCMS. They have produced these materials with the desire to support churches in simple ways with a message of hope and generosity as followers of Jesus. Recognizing every church has different needs, these materials are provided in a format that will allow pastors, small group leaders and homes to adapt, print, post and use them in ways that best meet their needs.

We encourage you to make these materials your own! This permission is given to you with our blessing! None of these materials, however, may be adapted, or published for sale (or the promotion of any product or service) without the written permission of the Missouri District LCMS.

A special thanks to Pastor David Smith and Becky Hohenstein for their contribution to the sermon studies and puppet show videos. These materials remain a work in progress. Updates will be posted online and available for download as available. The folder for all materials can be reached at <https://cutt.ly/molcms-hope>. If you would like to contribute additional ideas and materials to this series, please contact Bill Geis:

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Description of Online Resources

Sermons: The sermon could be used as a brief devotion read in the home or as a tool to assist pastors in preparing their own messages. The sermon paragraphs have section headings provided to aid preachers, teachers, and family leaders see the overall outline and teaching points of the message.

Bible Study: The Bible study provides an opportunity for further discussion of the topic of the week drawing upon the sermon themes and puppet show. The Bible Study also engages homes in practical activities as stewards of our Hope in Jesus (see below).

Household Activity: The household activity is included in the Bible study and also as a separate sheet so that it may be used in homes or small groups. First Peter powerfully challenges us to respond to suffering with Hope that is sanctified in “doing good.” This is a tremendous opportunity for churches and homes to teach Biblical stewardship as they engage the mission of God.

Daily Readings and Reflections: These daily reading sheets offer the parts of 1Peter not covered in the sermon or regular readings over the six-week series. There are some daily questions and exercises.

Puppet Show: We value supporting faith formation in the home intergenerationally. These videos are available on our website.

Hope Tested in Suffering

Sermon

Week 1 1 Peter 1:3-9

Introduction

We have all heard people say, I sure hope I can go on vacation this year? I sure hope this work week goes fast so we can get to next weekend? I hope I have time to go shopping for a whole day? Unfortunately, our hopes have changed of late. I sure hope this pandemic and quarantine ends soon. I sure hope I don't get sick. I really hope my grandparents don't get this thing.

Wishful Thinking

When we make statements like that it is like we are expressing a wish, a dream, an aspiration. That kind of wishful thinking makes us more helpless than hopeful because we can't make any of these things come true on our own. Our pride is hurt when we have to admit that we are quite helpless in this old world.

Hope from God is Different

When God talks about hope in His Word it is entirely different.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope." (v. 3) This living hope is quite different than our hopes and dreams. For this hope is from God and based on what God does. For this hope comes from, *"the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading kept in heaven for you who by God's power are being guarded through faith for salvation..."*. (vv. 3-5)

Hope is a Gift from God

This is a living hope because Jesus Christ has been raised from death. He has conquered for us. He not only conquered death, but He conquered all our enemies including sin, death, hell, and suffering. The important thing here is that hope is a gift from God.

God's Hope is Certain Victory

God is never helpless. He can always bring about and work in this world what He promises us. The hope that God gives is not a wish or dream, but certain and sure. It is victory over all evil. His Son brought this to us as a gift by His death and resurrection on the cross.

God's Hope Makes Us Victors

We are the victors. We have the victory over sin, death and Satan. Yes, we have the victory over all evil in this world even illness and death.

We Don't Feel Like Victors

Today as we sit here, we don't feel like victors. Confined to our homes, bored, unable to go and do what we would like because of coronavirus. We are afraid to go out. Will we get sick? Will our loved ones get sick? Might we even die? How long will this last? Why can't someone figure out a treatment now? What about our homes, jobs, our financial security? How will we pay our bills? Victors? Conquerors? We don't feel like that today.

Let's look back at God's Word for a moment. He also tells us,

"In this you rejoice (referring to God giving us hope but then He says), though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ!" (vv. 6-7)



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THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD

Hope Tested in Suffering

Sermon

Week 1 1 Peter 1:3-9

There's Only One Place to Go-To

Trials are going to come. This time they have come not just to us, but to everybody. Trials are meant to strengthen our faith. But we feel so helpless and without hope. We can't do anything to change this ourselves. No, we can't. And when we can't, what do we do? Well, usually we worry and fret. We are afraid. We can't sleep. We watch more news hoping some human being will give us a little something to hang on to. What do we really need? We have only one place to go-to God, the God of hope.

One Substitute for Hopelessness, Sin and Death

He is here today for us—His people. He gives us a living hope because Jesus Christ is a living Savior. We celebrate His resurrection this Easter Season. This day you do not sit there as people who are without hope even in this time of trial. We are people of hope because of our God. He knew our helplessness and hopelessness at the hands of the evil of this world, yes, the sin, the death, the sickness that brings death. So, He sent His Son to take our sin-our doubts-our fears and worries upon Himself. He came to suffer Himself. He came to die for us to suffer death itself and to conquer all this for us. He became our substitute to take sin, death and suffering and nail them to the cross. When He rose again the third day God accepted His sacrifice for us. God declared us forgiven and alive forever.

Nothing Can Steal Our "Living Hope"

As Jesus Christ suffered in this world, so do we. Only here is the difference. We are guaranteed the victory. We will conquer in Jesus Christ. God is with us if we get sick or a loved one does. He is with His children in their time of suffering. Even if the sickness brings an end to our lives in this world, we are still the victors because an inheritance awaits us imperishable, undefiled, unfading. Nothing on this earth can destroy the hope God gives us in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. To destroy our hope, you would have had to kill Jesus and Christ and keep Him in the tomb. But God raised Him from the dead and therefore nothing can steal our living hope away from us.

No Human Being is Really in Control

Our hope is found in our God. There is no hope on the news, from any elected official, from any doctor or any statistic. For the things of this world change. No human being is really in control of anything. Human beings are powerless even though we hate to admit it.

Hope Believes God has All Power

Our God has all power. Our God can work good in the face of evil. Our God raised His Son from death for you and me. He loves us and will strengthen us in times of trial. We were baptized, born again, to a living hope. The hope we have in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Our Hope is Eternal

Today, we sit in our homes and we know our God of hope is with us. We know and believe that in Jesus Christ we have the victory over all enemies. We know a glorious inheritance awaits us no matter what happens in this world.

Jesus is... Our Hope for Years to Come

We of all people can have hope. God has revealed it to us. He is our hope always. As the hymn says, "O God our help in ages past, Our hope for years to come, Our shelter from the stormy blast, And our eternal home."

And all God's people say, "Amen."



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Hope Tested in Suffering

Bible Study

Week 1 1 Peter 1:3-9

Note: Anticipating that social distancing may be necessary, this Bible Study can be adapted for a variety of settings. Whether you live alone or with others, be creative with ways to read and reflect on scripture with people intergenerationally in a broader community. Consider how a Bible verse, a question, an insight, or illustration can be a bridge to spiritual conversations.

Introduction

First Peter is a short, powerful and challenging letter of HOPE in suffering. In just five chapters, Peter refers to “suffering” at least 15 times. Peter takes a firehose to our typical reactions to suffering like fear, doubt, defending, or fighting back. Then he pours the waters of Baptism with Jesus all over the letter. Baptism saves (3:21) because it connects us to the Savior. Peter pours water over a wishy-washy Christianity (2:2). He challenges us to be stewards of our baptismal grace, especially in suffering (4:16-17). Repeatedly, he splashes hope over us with a resurrection view and eternal perspective on suffering (1:3-6). This “living” Hope is refined in suffering. In these “last days” we carry our baptismal water around as God’s stewards doing good because we know, “our Hope for years to come!”

Checking In

1. How was Holy Week and Easter Sunday different for you?
2. Having some time to reflect after Easter: What did you hear, see, learn, or receive as a blessing from God in unexpected places?

Word: 1 Peter 1:3-9

Read the Bible verses and reflect on the following questions.

3. Give examples of ways where the word, “HOPE” is used everyday conversations.
4. How is the word, “HOPE” used in the context of the Bible reading above?

Questions to consider in your thinking...

- a. Find and discuss as many words or phrases that you find in the passage which add meaning and insight into a Christian understanding of HOPE.
- b. How is HOPE used differently here from some of our everyday conversations?



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Bible Study

Week 1 1 Peter 1:3-9

Video

St. Paul's Lutheran (Des Peres) H.I.S. Puppeteers have produced a video puppet show to compliment this study. Youth and adults will enjoy watching it.

Simply visit: <https://mo.lcms.org/our-hope-for-years-to-come-week-1/>
And select the "puppet show" button.

The girl in the video shared a "different kind of hope," and specially described what that means to her. Later in his letter, Peter encourages you to think about and prepare your own response, "to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (3:15).

The next questions ask you to think through a response in your own words. Let everyone try out a sentence or two. Help one another. Encourage children to participate. It's also an opportunity to practice online with friends or on social media.

In a sentence or two describe your "living Hope".

Briefly share a memory where your faith in Jesus was tested and strengthened through suffering.

Prayer Journal

It can be helpful to keep a prayer journal during these days of "sheltering in place." Writing down requests, prayers and promises of the Bible will help you see God at work in the testing of your faith.

With our prayers for one another we can bring our griefs, our sins and our concerns for others before our "living Hope" and under the "shield of God's power." Throughout the letter, Peter shows hope is more than a feeling. Hope is living, real and indestructible. Hope is a gift from God. Prayer cries out to our living hope (Jesus).

Take time to pray with and pray for another person. This is a time where we need community. Praying in front of another person can be uncomfortable, but we have an opportunity while we "shelter in place" to be intentional and to get comfortable praying with other people. Whether as a family or calling a friend, you can do this! You might begin an invitation to pray like this, "How can I pray for you?"

Then listen, take some notes, and finally speak a simple prayer. You don't need answers to the problem in your prayer. You don't need to pray a sermon. In fact, the simpler you pray, the more likely you will help someone else pray too.

Here's a very short way to pray over the phone or at the kitchen table.

**"Jesus, I pray for {name}. I know You heard us talking about {the concern} just now.
We believe You are our hope. Please help."**



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Hope Tested in Suffering

Bible Study

Week 1 1 Peter 1:3-9

Household Activity

Yes, hope is more than a feeling! But Peter also shows that suffering is more than a feeling. Suffering does not need to be passive. With Jesus, suffering is active. It embraces a living hope (Jesus) and honors Him by doing good. Where we put our hope is tested by how we respond to suffering.

We have an opportunity to honor Jesus by “doing good” during this time of suffering for so many.

How have you been blessed by someone reaching out to you in these extraordinary days? (e.g. with a phone call, a card, a gift at the doorstep, the service of a “essential worker.”)

Identify one person or household you can show generosity to this week.

- a) What specifically will you do to appropriately and safely bless them?
- b) How can you share your “living hope” with them through this activity?
- c) How can all the members of your household share a part in this activity?
- d) When will you do it?

Blessing

Take turns using verses 8 and 9 to bless one another. An example of how you can modify it to be a blessing might go like this:

{Name} Jesus is your Hope!
Though you have not seen Him, may you love Him.
Though you do not now see Him, may you believe in Him and rejoice.
May your joy be filled with glory.
May the Father, Son and Holy Spirit bless you with the outcome of your faith,
the salvation of your soul!



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Hope Tested in Suffering

Household Activities

Week 1 1 Peter 1:3-9

Household Activity

Note: This activity is also included in the Week One Bible Study.

HOPE is more than a feeling! It is the reality of knowing Jesus and rising with Him to new life! Peter also shows that suffering is more than a feeling. Suffering does not need to be passive. With Jesus, suffering is active. It embraces a living hope (Jesus) and honors Him by doing good.

Where we put our hope is “tested” and “refined” by how we act in suffering. Right now, we have an abundance of opportunities to honor Jesus by “doing good” in this time of suffering. This activity is intended to help your home put your hope to the test by expressing grace and generosity.

How have you been blessed by someone reaching out to you in these extraordinary days? (e.g. with a phone call, a card, a gift at the doorstep, the service of a “essential worker.”)

Identify one person or household you can show generosity to this week.

- a) What specifically will you do to appropriately and safely bless them?
- b) How can you share your “living hope” with them through this activity?
- c) How can all the members of your household share a part in this activity?
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Daily Bible Readings Week 1 1 Peter 1:3-9

Introduction

You are beginning a journey reading the entire Letter of first Peter. It can be read in just 15 minutes. This process is much slower, meditating on short sections each day. This is a six-week, daily journey (omitting Sundays) to read and reflect beyond your worship times.

Set aside at least five minutes for the daily exercises. This can be done as individuals or a family group. In groups make sure everyone has time to meditate before talking together.

Read the Bible verse one or more times. Before you go to the reflection questions, ponder what the Spirit of God is saying. The Word of God is powerful! Expect the Spirit to inspire you, teach you, and grow you with new insights into the love of God in Jesus.

The “Reflect” segment asks questions and/or provides an activity to follow you throughout the day. Keeping a journal can be helpful for later review. “Taste and see the Lord is good!” May you grow deeper in Hope through the resurrection of Jesus (c.f. 1 Peter 2:2-3).

Monday

Read: Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. (1 Peter 1:1-2)

Reflect: What are all the connections you see for these people scattered in several cities? How do these words encourage, support, and strengthen your connection to other Christians scattered in these days?

Tuesday

Read: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3-5)

Reflect: What are the blessings you have through the resurrection of Jesus? How will these gifts empower you to bless your Heavenly Father today?



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Daily Bible Readings Week 1 1 Peter 1:3-9

Wednesday

Read: In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:6-7)

Reflect: Reflect on how your faith has been tested in previous trials. How was God at work then... and now? What offering of praise and glory and honor can you practice today?

Thursday

Read: Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:8-9)

Reflect: Since you cannot see Jesus, what reminder of His inexpressible and glorious joy can you position around your daily activities? (Some examples: a card or memory verse, Christian art, music, photo)

Friday

Read: Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. (1 Peter 1:10-12)

Reflect: Angels envy you, because God inspired the Biblical writers to make sure you always see Jesus! How do you take the Word of God for granted? How is the Word of God treasured in your life?

Saturday

Read: Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:13-16)

Reflect: How is the resurrection of Jesus changing your thoughts and actions? Where are temptations and sins pulling you back? Turn to your Hope: Jesus! Ask for His forgiveness and grace to train you in holiness.



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