

EASTER SUNDAY SERMONS AT ST DAVID'S CATHEDRAL

6:15am, 8:00am, 10:00am April 8 2012 by Bishop John Harrower

HOPE

Acts 10:34-43

1 Cor. 15:1-11

John 20:1-18

HOPE. The revelation of the resurrected Christ is a movement towards us which defines a resurrected people, a people of hope: their lives impacted for the world.

INTRODUCTION - Think of the word hope: how would you define it? What is hope?

All too often HOPE IS PESSIMISTICALLY defined as the small boy did when he said,

“Hope is wishing for something you know ain’t gonna happen!”

Mind you FALSE HOPE is common: Probably nothing in the world arouses more false hope than the first hours of a diet!

Yet, HOPE WITH FOUNDATIONS is vital for living well.

In his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, Victor Frankl, successor of Sigmund Freud at Vienna, argued that the “loss of hope and courage can have a deadly effect on man.”

As a result of his experience in Nazi concentration camp, Frankl contended that when a man no longer possesses a motive for living, no future to look toward, he curls up in a corner and dies.

“Any attempt to restore a man’s inner strength in a camp,” he wrote, “had first to succeed in showing him some future goal.”

But where do we find hope?

In the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we find HOPE coming TOWARDS US.

HOPE COLLIDES with us!

Revelation in the garden – to Mary Magdalene. (“I have seen the Lord!” - Jn 20:18)

Revelation to Peter

(“God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.” - Acts 10:40,41)

Revelation to Paul

(“...he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve... to more than five hundred brothers and sisters... then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.” - 1 Cor 15:5-8)

Revelation to the Gentiles

("I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him..." - Acts 10:34-35)

The POINT OF COLLISION – hope collides with OUR world.

The hope of resurrection is PERSONAL.

The Easter Sunday greeting is,

“Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!”

Yes, you agree?

and because Christ is risen his promise is sure:

“Because I live you also shall live.”

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the proof that those who are in Christ are also risen with him.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the proof that I have been, am being and will be made new.

This is not just a message of self-esteem and encouragement but the ASSURANCE of a foundation.

It's not just “you can embrace a healthier you” which actually puts the onus back on the person to 'hope it up' for themselves!

Resurrection life means that

- “no matter who you are,
- what you've done, or
- where you are at,
- Christ has made you new.”

Resurrection hope

- is NOT that “we hope this is true”
- but that we HAVE a “hope that IS true”.

Something or Someone outside of us gives the foundation for this assurance.

Now I imagine that commencing a new religion is no easy matter.

I am reminded of the account of the originator of a new religion who came to the great French diplomat-statesman Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord and complained that he could not make any converts.

“What do you suggest I do?” he asked.

“I should commend,” said Talleyrand, “that you get yourself crucified, and then die, but be sure to rise again the third day.”

Our hope in Christ has a sure foundation: his death and resurrection.

This is no wishy-washy hope, but rather a sure confidence, an assured hope.

Paul's 1st Letter to the Christians in Corinth (1 Cor. 15:1ff) spells this out in some detail.

The historical facts surrounding and telling of the resurrection are must reading. See for example some new evidence concerning an Edict of Caesar:

http://www.instonebrewer.com/visualSermons/ResurrectionEvidence/_Sermon.htm

and

<http://www.tyndale.cam.ac.uk/index.php?page=Resources2>

The hope of the resurrection is for COMMUNITY

Christ has begun a new community of hope.

There is much that tears down community – hate, selfishness, oppression, xenophobia etc. Take your pick of your favourite problems with this world!

Facing such things is difficult at best, break-down inducing at worst – especially when we realise how impossible the task is, and how much we contribute to the problem ourselves, even if inadvertently.

The hope of Christ assures us that things will be made right, that good will last, that righteous living will be vindicated, that evil will not.

And so we have HOPE to speak truth and live in FAITH and TRUST in our risen Lord.

Recently the Anglican community at Pontville stood for generosity and hospitality for the stranger in the face of opposition from people in the wider Brighton population.

Asylum seekers were housed at a detention centre at Pontville and the Anglican Parish visited and hosted events for the asylum seekers.

This is the hope of the resurrection demonstrated in loving community.

The hope of the resurrection is lived out in community in times of joy and of sorrow.

The resurrection community of hope gathers around a loved one dying.

Early this year a dear friend, a university professor, died. We had been praying for him that in his dying he would experience Jesus' promise, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

My friend, from his bed one evening, commented,

"I am very thankful for the prayers. Jesus was truly with me last night. I knew the comfort of his presence in my pain."

Jesus is with us in the pain, sorrow and suffering of life.
In the deepest pit of despair, he is there.

Wherever we are, whether in a slum or a death bed, Jesus is with us.

Our hope is in the God who cares for us, is with us, everywhere and always.

At Christmas we remember the promise of the angel, “Emmanuel, God with us” and at Easter we see that God is with us on the cross.

Where is God? God is with us everywhere, in every condition and every time and always.

And, hope?

Yes, hope is found not just in Jesus’ presence with us but in his resurrection and his rising from the grave. God defeated death for us. Do you accept this gift of life he offers?

This is our hope, our faith, our reason to be.

I am awed and humbled by Easter’s victories, challenged to keep going when the going gets tough and rejoice in living out the Resurrection faith.

The following quote from Martin Luther King Jr is at the front of my ‘Easter’ file.

“There is something at the very center of our faith which reminds us that Good Friday may reign for a day, but ultimately it must give way to the triumphant beat of the Easter drums. Evil may so shape events that Caesar will occupy a palace and Christ a cross, but one day that same Christ will rise up and split history into A.D. and B.C., so even the life of Caesar must be dated by his name.”

CONCLUSION

Hope is not a theological construct just as much as Easter is not a mere remembrance of an historical event (although it is that).

Hope chases us down across the centuries and defines Christ’s followers as resurrection people because in Christ we are a new creation.

As we joyously affirm in the Thanksgiving Prayer at Holy Communion:

- ❖ Christ has died.
- ❖ Christ is risen.
- ❖ Christ will come again.

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