

## WELCOME 14<sup>th</sup> May 2023 – 6<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN EASTER '23 A

1 Peter 3:8-22

**Welcome!** AND Happy Mother's Day! *If you haven't bought your present by today...*

It's great to be together again today! **Bible Study Qs** are there to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word/work in your life, & so you can share that "w"/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups on Friday @ 1p.m.**

**As we move into this week** "Aim small. Miss small." In HS, I was a competitive marksman & that was our coach's motto. A.S.M.S. If we kept our focus on the little dot in the middle of the middle... bullseye...we could miss & still get points. But if we focused on the target, (*aim BIG*) we might miss & hit nothing.

Today, Peter sharpens our focus in our missional calling as the people of God... How we concentrate our time...focus our attention...direct our efforts is important. **But** more critical than "How" is "Who" - Who is the focus of our attention & devotion? Who calls the shots/guides our days? Who has the final word about us both now & forever? Who determines our identity & destiny? Who is the centre of our lives? Knowing the answer to these questions prepares us for living with hope/joy in every circumstance especially times of struggle.

**So** *don't worry or be afraid of their threats.*

*Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life.*

Remember...Our call is always to **'reach'** not just **'resist'** those around us who are not yet part of the family of Christ. Only when Christ takes the centre of our hearts & lives do we have or live the hope that offers the future certainty grounded in the present reality of his victory over sin, death, evil & the trials & chaos of this world. Only when Christ is the centre of our lives...when we aim to be like him & focus to make his life visible...can we offer to others the hope we have in him **within us**.

*Christ suffered for our sins once for all time.*

*He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God.*

That assurance is our sure hope so we live knowing that in struggle & suffering Christ is still for us so we can live the resurrection life God has given us.

We'll experience & share that today...Let's pray...

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

*Transforming God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ you have taken the world's darkness & re-created a world filled with the joy of light & hope...you have turned defeat into sudden & complete victory, & re-created a world filled with joy & peace in your presence... Loving Father bring the good news of your grace & mercy to us all. You alone are God! Glory, honour, power & dominion belong only to you. Through Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.*

*Let's sing To God be the Glory...*

## FAITH CHAT:

1. It's Mother's Day...What do you appreciate most about either your mother, &/or someone who has "mothered" you in a significant way?
2. Have you ever met someone whose response to suffering surprised you? How did they respond? Why was that so striking?
3. How has suffering in life or opposition to your faith opened up opportunities to share your hope in Jesus?

**Hope** - *being grounded in the fundamental truth that God will have the last word about me/you/the world & that word is a word of grace & abundance & joy & love & life...hope is a future certainty grounded in the present reality of Christ is risen.*

**Peace** - *a living sense of & confidence in the presence, purpose, & promise of God in the midst of WHATEVER'S going on in life.*

**Joy** - *the deep abiding confidence in God's presence, power & purpose even contrary to how you feel. Joy anticipates what God will do next...Joy expects God's grace & goodness & abundant blessing just up ahead & rushes to live in that abundance...*

## 6<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN EASTER '23 A – THE NEW NORMAL: LIVING WITH HOPE (& JOY)

The text from a local real estate company hit my phone the week before Easter. They *REALLY* want us to sell the home we have & buy a house they're selling. Not gonna happen but the text was interesting. **Hi** John, Wishing you and your family a safe and enjoyable Easter break. The best Easter present of all is that interest rates are finally on hold for the first time in 10 months. If you need any real estate help or advice please reach out; we would love to help you. Best Regards, \_\_\_\_\_ Real Estate *before anything else*

What do you see? Why does that matter? What could (& in fact *did*) happen?

If **you** had received this text, what would **you** have done? What do you think *I* did?

So...How did I reply? **Thanks** y'all! But the BEST Easter gift for all times is that Jesus rose from the grave denying death the last word on our lives. Join me to celebrate this gift of life & joy despite the interest rate at 10 a.m. Sunday morning at the Koorngal Girl Guides Hall. See more at [www.livingwaterwagga.org.au](http://www.livingwaterwagga.org.au)

You know as well as I do, there is a difference <sup>b/t</sup> the hope/joy you find in that which is fully fleeting & fully self-interested & the hope/joy which is truly eternal & is big enough & powerful enough to transform the world. That right there is what Peter has been writing about when he refers to you & me (followers of Jesus...living to make Christ's life visible to the folks around us) **as** "*strangers aliens foreigners & weirdos*" in this world. That right there is what Peter knows is happening to those who have been *born again into a living hope because God raised Jesus from the dead & into an inheritance (certainty) that never fades fails or passes away...who are now chosen people, royal priests, holy nation, God's very own possession so that we make the face of Jesus visible to the world...* We see & we live in the world differently from everyone else...or at least we're supposed to.

The world & most folks in it, live from the perspective that everything in life is to be manipulated for our ends (safety security enjoyment pleasure...) "best sense of self." Cars we drive schools where we send our kids phones we use homes we live in holidays we enjoy medical care we seek gov't we elect & the budget they pass all have to pass the "*What's in it for me?*" test. That's our world...everything in life is to be manipulated for our ends (safety security enjoyment pleasure...) "best sense of me/self." Our world genuinely believes that if we can just "fix" things...if we can just fill the gaps in our social structures, cap prices, stall interest rates, tinker <sup>w/</sup> education, master science, build technology, pour out enough \$\$\$ we will create some exceeding human greatness. How's that working **out?** Honestly...we see more disillusionment more distress more confusion more distortion more deception more depression for more people at an earlier age than in any of our lifetimes. Manipulating the world for our ends...ain't working

So throughout his letters, Peter repeatedly calls the church to integrity, consistency, <sup>b/t</sup> what we **know to be true** (Christ crucified/risen/ruling) our new normal & **how we live that gift** under the power of the Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead & fills us <sup>w/</sup> **HIS** newness of life. As those who live out of step <sup>w/</sup> the world...march to the beat of a different drum...exhibit Christlike values attitudes action in a world that does not... When you've done your best & you still took the hit...bore the blame: **Do** GOOD. Peter assures us that when people treat us badly, we do good. His wisdom is this... followers of Jesus are supposed to be such fervent doers of good...that we work so hard to add value to our families, enrich our schools, bless our workplaces, enhance our neighbourhoods/cities that we are above reproach...folks won't find anything to condemn. *It is God's will that your honourable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you.* -1 Pt 2:15. When people treat us badly: "**pay them back with a blessing**" As much as it depends on us, no one should be able to find fault <sup>w/</sup> our lives...or at least see us accept responsibility & try to make things right when we do mess up...church rightly bears blame when we don't admit/clean up our mess...

Under that large umbrella...Peter declares that our lives lived in the power of the re-aimed/focused/targeted @ replicating/imitating the life of Jesus right where our feet are planted stand out like a beacon: **Good** Lives – Good Deeds – Demonstrate God's Glory. How does that work? Followers of Jesus...Live for an Audience of **One**. Your life is not a performance so the world applauds your goodness. God has taken hold of you in the love/life/death/rez of His Son so you can live for God's pleasure & will...so you can show to the world God's goodness & grace through your words & deeds. If I'm depending on my goodness to elevate my standing in the world...I'm sunk. Leonard Ravenhill...20<sup>th</sup> cent evangelist... "**If** we displease God, does it matter whom we please? If we please Him, does it matter whom we displease?" "No"

The Father, who is the final judge of all things on this earth, knows my situation/my circumstances. He knows my struggles/failings. He has not abandoned or forgotten me & has released his Spirit to dwell <sup>w/in</sup> me equipping me to serve his purpose throughout my life *irrespective of how the world acts in reply*. Our purpose is to live his goodness & grace for his glory alone. **But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it.** *So don't worry or be afraid of their threats. Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life.* Our lives are ultimately & finally in the Father's hand. We can't fear what humans might do in their working of evil. Jesus said the world hated him & it would hate us. If we're wear ourselves out doing good & the world hates us for it & hates the faithfulness that proclaims the Father's plan to make all things new through Jesus; then my sole/great reward is the Father's pleasure at my

meager effort. Ravenhill again: "Nobody stood by Jesus. Maybe nobody will stand by you. It can be a lonely life but it's a glorious life." Good Lives – Good Deeds – Demonstrate God's Glory.

In so many ways we can get trapped watching the world around us the cultural swamp for our cues on how to live & relate to the people around us. That's a scary proposition You never know what it's going to take to keep up w/ the Kardashians. Fads & fashions, trendy & trending change like the weather. Which is why I love this part of Peter's letter... **So** *don't worry or be afraid of their threats. Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life.* Permeate your life w/ the working of Christ by his Spirit in you. Marinade your heart in the life character & saving love/grace of Jesus. In place of fear keep your heart focused on what you already are in Jesus Christ (2:9) *chosen people...royal priests...a holy nation...God's very own possession* 1 Cor 3:16 Paul writes, "Don't you realize all of you together are the temple of God & that the Spirit of God lives in **you?**" Christ is the bullseye

Only when Christ takes the centre of our hearts & lives do we have or live the hope that offers the future certainty grounded in the present reality of his victory over sin, death, evil & the trials & chaos of this world. Only when Christ is the centre of our lives...when we aim to be like him & focus to make his life visible...can we offer to others the hope we have in him **within** us. Jesus gave up the glory of heaven to die on this earth & now lives to shape my life like his. His work in me is ongoing & his work in me will not fail. When doing good does no good & people still treat you badly or reject/ignore your offer of grace...Christ is still the goal – object – aim of your devotion affection worship life. Christ still calls the shots & leads you toward his destiny for your life. Christ by his Spirit lives in you shaping your life to be like his granting you the fullness of his blessings his love his status <sup>1/4</sup> the Father...in spite of the roughshod treatment of this world.

My Bible reading/daily devotions included Acts...Acts ends w/ Paul under arrest in Rome. <sup>1/4</sup> he gets there he's arrested in Jerusalem undergoes a kangaroo court in front of local Roman authorities & is plonked on a ship under guard heading for Rome & a trial <sup>1/4</sup> Caesar. The ship gets hammered by a storm & everyone on board thinks they're going to die...except Paul...*No one had eaten for a long time. Finally, Paul called the crew together & said, "Men, you should have listened to me in the first place & not left Crete. You would have avoided all this damage & loss. But take courage! None of you will lose your lives, even though the ship will go down. For last night an angel of the **God to whom I belong & whom I serve** stood beside me, & said, 'Don't be afraid, Paul, for **you will surely stand trial before Caesar!** What's more, God in his goodness has granted safety to everyone sailing with you.' So take courage! For I believe God. It will be just as he said. But we will be shipwrecked on an island."* – **Acts 27:21-26** ship will sink/shipwrecked...the danger turmoil & chaos are part of the vision...they are significant but are **not decisive**...last word

Living for an audience of one w/ Christ @ the centre of his existence, keeps Paul *always ready to offer the reason for the hope within him...The God to whom I belong & whom I serve*...Like Peter, Paul knows his identity & destiny are lodged solely in Jesus...*crucified/risen/ruling...you will surely stand trial <sup>1/4</sup> Caesar*...storm or calm prisoner or free, Christ's mission to the world Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, ends of the earth proceeds w/ interruption. *God in his goodness has granted safety to everyone sailing w/ you.* God's provision & protection includes the enemies & unbelievers who would be happy to throw Paul into the sea or stick a sword in him. Living for an audience of one w/ Christ @ the centre of your existence, means you need to be **always ready** to declare the grace you have received - the *living hope* into which you have been reborn - the assurance that empowers you to live knowing in struggle & suffering Christ is still for you so you can live the resurrection life God has given you.

So...**How** would you describe your "hope" to someone unfamiliar with Jesus? Could you share the heart of the gospel simply? Peter shows us...**Christ** *suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. God comes personally to us, to rescue & renew all things by Christ's life, death & resurrection.* Jesus lives the life responsive to God we were designed for. He poured out love/hope/joy/restoration offering life at its best fullest most abundant to any & all...Showed us the very heart of the Father who is love. Suffered this world's darkness/brokenness to destroy it. He died, like we do, but rose from the grave to demonstrate once & for all that God is going to have His world & His people made new & filled w/ love - life - joy - hope - peace...**FOREVER.**

Our call is always to '**reach**' not just '**resist**' those around us who are not yet part of the family of Christ. Only when Christ takes the centre of our hearts & lives do we have or live the hope that offers the future certainty grounded in the present reality of his victory over sin, death, evil & the trials & chaos of this world. Only when Christ is the centre of our lives...when we aim to be like him & focus to make his life visible...can we offer to others the hope/joy we have in him **within** us.

#### **TAKE IT HOME -**

What do you need to do this week to be better prepared to share the reason for the hope that is in you, when the opportunity arises?

Let's pray *together* with that in mind...

**O** God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.