

Easter Day 20-04-2025
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Acts 10: 34-43	Peter testifies about Jesus God accepts all through his death and resurrection
Easter Anthem	Jesus conquers death, All made alive in Christ
1 Corinthians 15:19-26	Our faith rests on the resurrection
John 20: 1-18	Jesus is risen from the dead and appears to Mary Magdalene

Introduction

Today, on Easter Day I would like to talk about “Hope”.

Hope I believe is something that we cannot live without. In fact, when we as human beings lose hope, we can also lose the will to live.

I know that is a bleak statement to make, but I believe it is true, and I believe that the events surrounding the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, 2000 years ago, have provided us with the greatest source of hope that the world has ever known.

So let us look at the Easter story, and how it provides us with “Hope” today.

What is Hope?

Firstly, what is hope? Two of the definitions in the Macquarie Dictionary are:- “To have an expectation of something desired” and “Confidence in a future event”.

As we can see from these definitions “Hope” is more than just wishful thinking. “Hope” is based on confident expectation, and this is not something we generally just make up.

“Hope” and “Faith” are sometimes used interchangeably, although I think “Faith” has a more present and active sense about it, whereas “Hope” is about our expectations for the future. The writer to the Hebrews (11:1-3) uses them together well:-

“¹Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. ³ By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.”

Christian “Faith” is the belief that, even though we are cut off from God by our fallen human nature, God loves us, and through Jesus we can be reconciled to God.

Christian “Hope” is that this oneness with God cannot be taken away from us. It is something we can hold onto, and live into. Christian “Hope” gives our lives meaning and purpose, beyond our own selfish desires, to a place where true fulfillment can be found. Christian “Hope”, goes beyond the good or bad things that will happen to us in this fallen and broken world, and enables us to live the best life that we were created to live.

“Hope” for the First Disciples

But let us go back to the first Easter, and find the source of this hope.

In his short earthly life Jesus called disciples to himself. Jesus travelled around the small area of land we now know as Israel for about three years. During this time, he had twelve close followers, but spoke and provided signs and miracles, that he was from God, to thousands of people. Despite this he had no earthly power, authority or prestige. He was condemned and crucified like a common criminal, by the Roman Authorities of the day.

What gave those first disciples “Hope”, was that Jesus rose from the dead.

In the aftermath of his crucifixion, they were scared and confused, and utterly without hope. But after witnessing the resurrection, the disciples of Jesus became bold and fearless in declaring Jesus as the Messiah. They found that by accepting Jesus their relationship with God could be restored.

It was the resurrection of Jesus that gave them “Hope”. In the Jewish faith at the time, there were some who believed in the resurrection, and some who didn’t.

At the first Easter, the disciples witnessed the resurrection of Jesus for themselves. It gave them a “Hope” that they had never experienced anything like before.

After they witnessed the resurrection, they had “Hope” because Jesus promised that if they put all of their faith in him, they would rise again like him.

Their experience of the resurrection made them believe that this was the best “Hope” that the world had ever known. In the resurrection, they found a “Hope” that they needed to share with others, because they knew how good it was.

“Hope” for us today

This “Hope” that those first disciples found in Jesus is still available to us, right here, and right now.

Worldwide estimates of Christianity in 2025, are that about 2.6 billion people in the world today identify as Christians. This is approximately one third of all people alive today.

I have known about this hope my whole life, and personally grabbed a hold of it as a teenager. As an adult, I have known other teenagers in youth groups come to this hope. I have prepared children and even a woman in her 60's to be baptised into this hope. I once met with a lady in her 50's who was dying of cancer, and she was able to find "Hope" in knowing and accepting Jesus. Her death was of course, a tragedy for her family, but it was one she faced with the hope that it was not the end, and she was secure in God's Love.

The "Hope" that we find in Jesus is real. The "Hope" that we find in Jesus is something we can have now. I believe it is a "Hope" that the world around us is desperately seeking, even if they don't know exactly what they are missing. St Augustine put it like this,

"Your have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You."

As Christians today, we are the bearers of this "Hope". It is up to us to find new ways to share this "Hope" with those around us, and to build a better world.

That is why Anglican's in Australia have established the initiative "Hope25".

Conclusion

Just two days ago we commemorated the death of Jesus on Good Friday. We had a very solemn service tracing the steps of Jesus' death on the cross. If this had been the end of the story, I believe Jesus would have been smaller than a footnote in human history, a death like so many others which came with Roman occupation. But Good Friday was not the end of the story. On the third day the Gospel writers tell us that Jesus rose from the dead. Christians down the ages have come to believe this, and it has enabled them to live with great "Hope".

In Paul's letter to the Romans (6:3-4), we hear how Christian baptism is inextricably linked to the death and resurrection of Jesus:-

"³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."

Christian "Hope" gives us something to look forward to. It gives us a newness of life which surpasses anything we might find on our own.

I pray today, that as we celebrate the resurrection, we will be enabled to live with this great "Hope", and we will be enabled to share this "Hope", with those around us. Amen.