

Easter 3 4/23/23
1 Peter 1:17-25 A

WHO THROUGH (CHRIST) ARE BELIEVERS IN GOD, WHO RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD AND GAVE HIM GLORY, SO THAT YOUR FAITH AND HOPE ARE IN GOD.

From June 12, 1942, to August 1, 1944, Anne Frank kept a diary. She and her Jewish family were hiding from Nazi persecution in a small, secret room in an Amsterdam warehouse. When daytime workers were in the warehouse, the family had to maintain absolute silence. At night, when everyone else was gone, they could listen to the news being broadcast from London.

On June 6, 1944, they heard the official announcement, "This is D-Day. This is the day. The invasion has begun." That night, with guarded enthusiasm, 16-year-old Anne wrote in her diary,

"Is this really the beginning of the long-awaited liberation, the liberation we've all talked so much about but still seems too good, too much of a fairy tale ever to some true? Will this year, 1944, bring us victory? We don't know yet, but where there's hope, there's life. It fills us with fresh courage and makes us strong again."

By the time the Allied Armies liberated Amsterdam, someone had betrayed Anne and her family and they were arrested. As the European conflict was coming to an end, so did life and hope for Anne Frank. She died at a concentration camp, mere weeks before the war ended.

Where there's life, there's hope. And yet, how easily and readily sadness and sorrow, despair, depression, and discouragement all work to rob us of that blessed hope the resurrection.

Watch the kids playing on the toys at the playground. They smile, giggle, and just have a zest for life. But, it only takes one bully to wipe the smile from their angelic face. The world will tell them that zest for life is

found in alcohol, drugs, and pre-marital sex.

Watch the young family. They hope for healthy, intelligent children, a beautiful house and forever friends. But keeping up with the Joneses is a burden that never brings contentment. They once said to one another, "I do," but now, they don't, and that other man, that other woman, understands them so much better than their God-given helpmate. Instead of love for one another growing in their days together, there seems to be only daily shouting matches.

And take a look at those so-called Golden years. One by one, they've seen their friends march into the sunset. They ache in places they didn't even know they had. Memory, mobility, eyesight and hearing vanish faster than yesterday's dreams.

Where there is life, there is hope. Yet, how often it can seem to us in the darkness of this valley of the shadow of death, that there is no hope.

In our Gospel today, Luke tells us about two men, two followers of Jesus, who had hope snatched away from them by death. After Christ's crucifixion, they were walking along the road, and as they walked, they talked about recent events. No doubt, they spoke of the high hopes all of Jesus' disciples had felt only one week before when He made his glorious entry into Jerusalem.

That Palm Sunday, the future had been bright. It was filled with the wonderful things everyone hoped would happen. Jesus had cleansed the temple. He'd straightened out his critics. It appeared there was nothing he couldn't do. Then came his betrayal, his trial, the lies, the beatings, the trumped-up charges, and the mob which called for Jesus' death. One indignity after another led to a crown of thorns, a whip, a cowardly judge, and the agonizing trip to Golgotha. The week which had begun with great

hope was filled with deep darkness and despair. But, Jesus had breathed his last, and had been hastily buried.

As the two men walked and talked, they were joined by a third. After listening for a bit, the stranger asked them to share what had happened. This the two travelers did. After they were finished, they summed everything with these words, "But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel" (Lk 24:21).

Did you hear those words? "We **had hoped**." Their words reflect the sadness and sorrow, the loss and loneliness Jesus' followers felt after Christ's death. "Yes, we had hoped that once, but not anymore. Our hope ended when the chief priest and our very own rulers delivered him up to our enemies and delivered Him over to be crucified. We had hoped a great many things, but our hopes died when Jesus died." Without a living Lord, there was no living hope.

Quite rightly, these two followers knew that having a dead messiah is the same thing as having no messiah at all. That, my friends, is the sum and substance of Christianity. If Jesus is dead, Christianity is dead. If Jesus is dead, we are still in our sins and are helpless to change our eternal destiny. If Jesus is dead, there is no hope.

But, as those two Emmaus travelers found out, Jesus was alive -- really, actually, physically alive.

"In fact Christ has been raised from the dead," St. Paul writes, "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep". That means our greatest enemy, death itself, is defeated and the grave has lost its sting.

We are baptized and live in Him who is the resurrection and the life. That means for you and me, My Friends, we will rise to eternal life.

That's the great hope Job had, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and

at the last He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God" (19:25-26). Yes, Job knew his earthly life and his earthly body were subject to decay and corruption, but could not rob him of the hope He had in Jesus. Job was certain not only of Jesus' glorious resurrection, but that his own body would rise from the dust on the last day.

Yes, as long as we live in the tent of his earthen body, sadness and sorrow, despair, depression, and discouragement will work to rob us of that blessed hope the resurrection gives us. But, the life of Christ is at work in you. Through the hearing of His Word and the eating and drinking of Christ's Body and Blood, He enters into you, to give you His very life -- a life that has no end.

That's why we can boast with Paul,

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh (2 Co 4:7-11).

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. And that's why, My Friends, our faith and our hope are in God.