

Calvary United Methodist Church  
May 1, 2011

**A NEW START**  
**Rev. R. Jeffrey Fisher**

Children's Sermon

1 Peter: 3-4

All of God's children meet here weekly but we invite the littlest among us to come forward at this time.

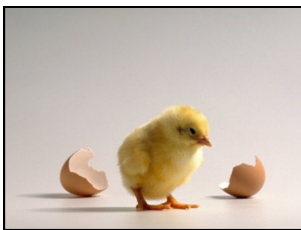
Good morning everyone. It's good to see you this morning. Did you have a great week and a wonderful Easter last Sunday?

If you look at the screen you will see a bunch of folks running. Last week we heard a little about people who were running to tell the good story that God sent his son. People were going out to tell all the great things that Jesus had done, particularly that he was coming back to life. This morning I want to remind you about spring in general. This is a time when a lot of things come back to life. I want to read a passage of scripture for you this morning from 1 Peter.

What a God we have! And how fortunate we are to have him, this Father of our Master Jesus! Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we've been given a brand-new life and have everything to live for, including a future in heaven—and the future starts now!

Anyone know what that is? (There is a picture of a chick on the screen.) It's a chick or a peep. People call them different names. They're not the little peeps that you eat. A lot of times in the spring we see little peeps (or chicks) being born and they go to farmers so they can grow up so they can be big chickens.

In the midst of this there are all kinds of new things growing. How many of you took the plants home two weeks ago? Remember, you planted a plant? Is it getting bigger? Some of those plan whether they give us something to eat or are a flower in the spring a lot of things change.



What are some changes you have seen outside in the last couple weeks? Any changes at all? Leaves are now on the trees. Has the color of the grass changed at all? Flowers are up. Anything else? People sneezing a lot. All of those are signs of spring and of new life. God wants you to know that every day can be like that spring. We have a new chance and today is a new day. You can do things today you didn't do yesterday because as we grow and change God gives us new strength and new abilities.

I pray today that you will have a great new day and receive that gift just like that chick. You have to grow strong and wise and you will do the same thing as a gift from God. Thank you for coming up this morning.



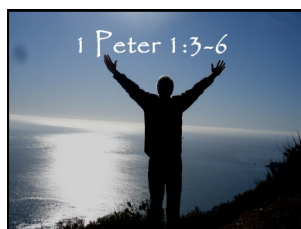
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Message

1 Peter 1 3-6

I would hope that most of us were glad for Resurrection Sunday. I know as one who has lived through many of the holy seasons of Lent that I'm always glad to see the end of Lent come. Not because it can be an exhausting time, but because that time can be so gloomy. Some of you probably remember church days when the altars were stripped; everything was bare for that whole season. And we longed for life and we longed that reminder that without Christ for that reminder that without Christ there is no life and with Christ, with the resurrection, there is new and abundant life.

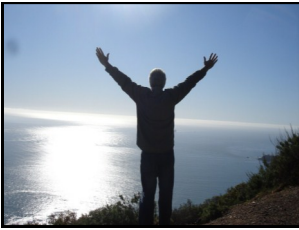
Peter, in the scripture that I will share with you today, is reminding everyone how his life changed. It was changed radically. He believed and wanted to believe before the resurrection, as all of the other disciples, but enough of the history that in the midst of their belief most of them turned and ran for many different kinds of reasons and fears that existed in their life. In this lesson today Peter tells us how blessed we are to be the children of God.



What a God we have! And how fortunate we are to have him, this Father of our Master Jesus! Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we've been given a brand-new life and have every-

thing to live for, including a future in heaven—and the future starts now! God is keeping careful watch over us and the future. The Day is coming when you'll have it all—life healed and whole. I know how great this makes you feel, even though you have to put up with every kind of aggravation in the meantime.

That scripture would have been so wonderful if he hadn't put that last verse in. That we are life healed and whole except from some of the aggravations we must face.



Last week as we met on this morning and had the sun rise and occur I was reminded of how great my life is because of meeting the Master, Jesus Christ. I know that I need new life not just once but daily.

When I was a young man, and especially starting some thirty years ago in ministry, it was not uncommon to have people, at least in my country churches, always asking the question *Are you saved?* Some of you have heard that. I believe in salvation. I believe in making a commitment to Jesus Christ but I believe I have been saved about every day this week and I will hope to be saved again tomorrow. It's not just about a date and a time and an hour but it is a new experience. It is coming to life anew. It is letting parts of me go away that should have gone away a long time ago. And it is allowing me to be filled with the spirit of God that I might have new life and find it abundantly. That word of being full and becoming filled is a part of a daily experience for those of us because as we walk the journey of life, which at

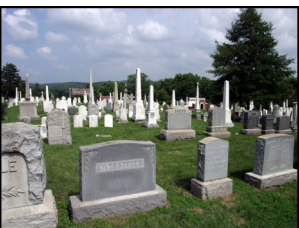
time is filled with aggravation, that you know that, you aren't everything that you could be. That Jesus Christ would want more for you than just a daily walk that seems at times to be dull. When we meet Jesus Christ there are times when we really lift our arms in praise. We are so thankful that we aren't who we were yesterday. And tomorrow I hope I'm not just the same Jeff that I am today. That God is working something new in me day by day if I will just allow God to be the ruler of my life. And some days that's not an easy thing to do.

The whole idea of wanting new life sounds good. There is a word that we don't like a lot—it's called change. We say we want a new life but to have that it might mean that some parts of my life, of my being, of who I am, of my identity might need to change because I can't stay in that old shell. Sort of like that peep, I've got to hatch out from where I was and become a new creation. For the ways in which I can't do that to help me, God sends you to help me. He sends the sisters and brothers around to help become agents of change in our life. But more so it is the spirit of the Living God who speaks to me and lets me know the desires to change me to be more Godlike in all that I do.



There is probably nothing we enjoy more than seeing a new baby and to know that new baby can be molded and shaped a lot of different ways between the parents, grandparents, the friends, neighbors and teachers around him. I believe when God looks at us he still sees us as this little child. For all the days of our life we are molded and shaped by the many forces around us. Those forces can be for the good or they can be for the evil. It is up to us to take what is around us and put before us and allow God to work in through that.

Some years ago when I was out at my Grantville Parish a wife of a man who was somewhat active in the church came to me and said, "I'm really concerned about my husband. I know he believes but he doesn't believe in the resurrection and I'm a little concerned about that." I thought if you think I'm somehow going to convince him of it he's got a problem because I can't. I believe in the resurrection wholeheartedly but I have been a pastor who has conducted many funeral services. As much I have prayed through my years especially for those on their deathbeds to come to life, it hasn't really happened. I've not



seen someone rise up from the grave and yet I believe what has taken place because of the disciples.

This can't be a story that's passed on because of the heck of it. The disciples that went that day saw new life. Not only did they see that the stone had been rolled away, they saw the Savior himself. Otherwise they wouldn't have fun back and told the world. Their lives were transformed in such ways that they were never the same again. Oh, that you and I could simply say that of our lives today: that I will never be the same again because of meeting Jesus Christ. I will take my life, like those early disciples, and commit every ounce of who I am into the leadership of Jesus Christ and to bring his kingdom. But most of us get hung up on that last line of what Peter said; that all of this is good news, the resurrection is wonderful, you have new life, except that during this journey you will have some aggravation.



As I look at this gentleman on the screen I think he has known more than aggravation. He has probably known heartbreak. He has probably known disappointment. He has probably known trials when he has wondered; can I go on and face everything that I have to face?



Everyone in here is on this balance. A part of the balance is time and a part of it is where we spend it. If you are young and you have children you are wondering where to place your priorities and where do I place do I place all of my time. The church is demanding and everyone else is demanding and the work around me is demanding. At some point we have to make a decision that Jesus Christ is going to be one of the top priorities of my life and for my children and for my family and that others around me will know that I can be a living witness and testimony.



Of all the things that gentleman needed that you saw a few moments ago, it is the word hope. When people have come to me through the years, and others have come to you, whether they have had loss in their life or they are struggling with family issues or financial issues or issues of getting through school or getting through some relationship, what they are looking for is to simply say: "When today is over can I still go on? Will there really be hope for tomorrow? Will tomorrow look any different than today? Is it really worth awakening again?"

And those of us who know Jesus Christ know the answer is yes to all those questions. Tomorrow is another day that we will live in Jesus Christ.



There are people all around us who are looking for that same message of hope. There are those who are growing older and those who are wondering who will be by my side in my time of need.



There are those, of course who are hungry. This January when I was in Africa were probably the worst hunger conditions that I have ever witnessed. We had chicken one night. Most of the chickens are fairly anorexia when we get to eat them. They look like skin wrapped around bones. When we were finished and took our trash out there was a group of about twelve young children and they were all fighting over the bones. We don't realize here in America and around the world how many hope for a better day and maybe they will have food tomorrow.



And we don't realize what goes through the mind of someone who is abusing drugs or addicted to so many things in this life. Not just drugs and alcohol but the additions of life that pull us down and don't enable us to be all that we can do and all that we can do for Jesus Christ.



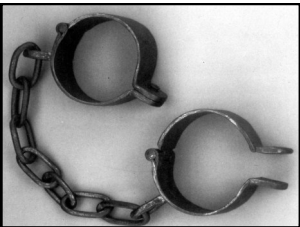
In the midst of that the resurrection is a picture. The resurrection to me and hopefully to all of us is a photo of what life can be like, what hope looks like when I simply say to God, "I can't do this on my own."

The resurrection for those of the early church was a day when they thought it was all over. The man that they had followed, the man that they had entrusted for all of their life, the man who they saw crucified and they really weren't sure. He told them that the kingdom would rise again in three days and the temple would be rebuilt. This was new. Could they really believe everything Jesus said? The people of the world who are hurting—those of us who are gathered here and those who are lonely in the world about us—are looking for that same

resurrection power that says there is hope, there is tomorrow, there is a better opportunity.



There are lots of people who gather every Sunday with heavy hearts and many people who are beyond the walls of the church who have heavy hearts. Some of it is for things that we have done and said that we can't take back. I believe that one of the reasons people keep such a heavy heart is we can't forgive ourselves. Jesus opened up his arms so widely to simply say, "Come here children. You are mine I love you no matter what you have done, no matter what you have said, not matter what you have left undone or unsaid, I love you with a grace that will never fail you. But we beat ourselves. Things you did as children. Things you did as young adults. Things you did yesterday. And for some reason God says I can forgive you and love you this much. I want you to know, children of God, that you are forgiven. You are people who are redeemed and I've given my life to redeem you. Therefore, why don't you come and live for me. Find abundant life. Find a full life that you might be unshackled and unfettered from this world.

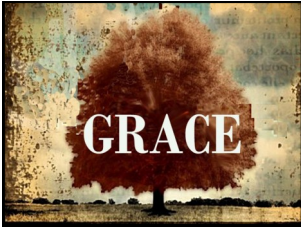


When we think of slavery a lot of us thing back to the early parts of our own nation a hundred years or so ago. The reality is that there are many people enslaved today. Some are enslaved in the kind of addictive behavior we have here in America. Slavery is a real issue in our personal lives when we are enslaved by the sin that we are gathered in and can't let it go. Things that we know that are bad for us, bad for our family, in so many ways they are destructive to us and yet we are not ready to be unshackled and unfettered from it. To that God says I have the keys to unlock it that you may have a future that you would not find anywhere else.

The reality is as I read the news there really is slavery today. Human trafficking today is at an all time high where we sell people. People from all around the world are sold as if they are some item just simply to be had.



In the midst of all these things God is looking to us for we who call ourselves Christians to bring life and wholeness and healing and freedom to other people around us. When we see the word "free", typ-



ically if it's in a market or a mall, we want to grab up all we can that's free. I like free, it works for me. But when we come to the grace of Jesus Christ there are so many people have so many walls up. It sounds too good of a deal to think that somebody can simply say I know you have messed up in the past and I'm cleaning the slate. You are a new person. While people around you might remember a few of those things I want you to know that I, the Lord and Savior love you. And I am not going to remember anymore those foolish things that you have done. Those things you know you shouldn't have done or said. For full grace, something I didn't deserve but I got anyway, Jesus Christ paid the price and he shouldn't have that I might not pay a price that I should have paid.

God really invites us to become a grace-filled people. It's one thing for us to hear that we have been forgiven by God. It's something else when we, among our families and among our friends and within nations that are warring so badly, could learn to live with grace and mercy. To free up one another from the guilt and the burdens of the mistakes that we have made. Some of them have been very painful. God invites us to be peacemakers.



When the disciples went to the tomb early that morning and saw the resurrection power, it was really a turning point in their lives. It turned them from a bunch of people who were very frightened to a bunch of people who were very empowered by God. They went out and did far greater things, according to scriptures, than what Jesus himself was able to do. That's pretty impressive.



They went out because they believed and the placed their lives at an anchor of Jesus Christ. The anchor isn't a symbol that we use much anymore because most of us aren't into big shipping all the time. It's a symbol for us—an anchor for a ship that's being blown around at sea that will be anchored down so that it will not be tossed around. You and I have the position and the ability to anchor our lives on Jesus Christ. He is the one that when we face the storms of life, and they are out there now, he will anchor us. If you haven't noticed that in the last year with the economy and with all the warring nations and the problems in our local communities you probably don't realize very much. We are in a world that needs to get an anchor. It's being torn and tat-

tered and tossed all over the place and Jesus Christ is inviting us to get anchored on the word of God that we might live and believe in the promises of scripture that has been laid before us.

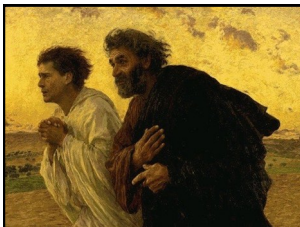
Some days when I look at the paper I think can't somebody print something good? When you hear all the news on the economy and how quickly it's changing and how rapidly things are going to be improving. But when you go to the market to buy your groceries and when you go to pay all your bills and especially if you go fill up your gas tank you are noticing it isn't really changing that rapidly.

It is to all of these things that Peter has his last word—you are here on a very short journey. Most of us probably won't see much beyond a hundred years. That's pretty brief in the time of eternity. He says that during that time here you are going to have some of these trials and tribulations but I want you to know we will overcome them. And when you overcome them that is when you are going to find life and find how important and how abundant it is.

The early disciples went first when Mary had called them and told them the stone was rolled away. They went with fear and trembling. They weren't sure what they would find and they weren't sure if they could stand what they would find because they thought at first that someone had stolen the body of their savior, Jesus Christ. But once they had met again the Risen Lord they became a force power. They were a very forceful people who changed the environment in which they were living.

There is a man named the Apostle Paul who most of you are well aware of. He knew what it was like to go through some of the aggravations here on earth. I want to read some of the words that he shared in Colossians.

I want you to know how glad I am that it is me sitting here in jail and not you. There is a lot of suffering to be suffering to be centered into this world, the kind of suffering Christ takes on. I welcomed the chance to take my share of the church's part of that suffering when I became a servant in this church. I experienced as a sheer gift, God's way of helping me serve you laying



out the whole truth.

None of us like to think about the suffering we will endure but everything is more endurable if you know you will not go through it alone. When I look at Peter and what he went through, I look at a man who was radically changed. If I was to look at one who had to go through trials, I would look at a man who had to be embarrassed after the resurrection because he was the one who told the Savior, Jesus Christ: “Everyone else will fail you but I never will.” And Jesus told him: “Before that cock crows three times you will deny me.” It’s amazing to me how much courage Peter had in the end. Not only was he the one that did that but he was the man at one time who wanted to have that fierce power but he didn’t have it to even walk on the water with Jesus Christ. He was a man who was so transformed, who found such new life after the resurrection that within six weeks of the resurrection it was told that he was preaching to thousands in Rome. That’s a great transformation. And he preached so much over the next couple years that indeed the Roman officials came to him and said, “Either you stop preaching or you will face the same death that your Master, Jesus Christ, faced.” And so he, too, was hung on a cross.



Folks, someone doesn’t go down that road and go through that same crucifixion experience for wishful thinking. He didn’t just think Jesus Christ arose from the grave, he knew it. He wasn’t about to go out there and try new life and try new things just with the hope that maybe there was a new kingdom. He experienced new life because he met the Risen Savior. And when you and I meet the Risen Lord you and I will have that same kind of power that Peter had so long ago. Once he met the Risen Lord you couldn’t hold Peter back. They were running around telling everybody the good news of the one who came to bring new life.

It is that new life that is the gift for us today. It’s the gift that we don’t keep just for ourselves. It’s the gift of knowing that our salvation is secure, that the one who loved us, the one who redeemed us also gives us the resurrection power. It’s not just when we leave this kingdom. We have that power every day to live anew. Our prayer for all of us as we assemble this day is that we do become that resurrection people. Every day when we wake up we re-commit our lives to Jesus Christ, to living for his kingdom and to bringing his life to everyone else.