

GIVE WITNESS TO THE HOPE THAT IS IN YOU

(1 Peter 3:13-22)

Intro: Always be ready to give witness to the hope that is in you.
-1 Peter 3:15.

Predictions of the end of the world.
-Where is our hope?

Tornadoes, flooding, and other natural disasters.
-Where is our hope?

Congregations and church bodies.
-Aging.
-Declining.
-Deficit spending.
#Where is our hope?

Human bodies.
-Aging.
-Declining.
-Wearing out.
#Where is our hope?

Graduates.
-Completing a major step in your education.
-Next steps.
#New challenges.
#New adventures.
*Some in the classroom.
*Some in a college dormitory.
=Where is your hope?

Always be ready to give witness to the hope that is in you.

I. Hope.

A. More Than Wishful Thinking.

1. I hope I do well on my final exams.
2. I hope my car doesn't run out of gas.
3. I hope I get to watch my granddaughter grow up.
4. I hope I'll have enough money saved up so I can retire one day.
5. I hope that this lump on my breast is not cancer.
6. I hope it doesn't rain on my Memorial Day BBQ.
 - a. Wishing and hoping.
 - Will not cut it when it comes to final exams.
 - If I don't bother to study.
 - b. Wishing and hoping.
 - Will not keep my car from running out of gas.
 - If I don't check the gas gauge and refuel in a timely manner.
 - c. Wishing and hoping.
 - Won't create a positive relationship with Sophia.
 - If I don't schedule time to spend with her.
 - d. Wishing and hoping.
 - Won't fund my retirement account.
 - If I don't discipline myself to save and invest.
 - e. Wishing and hoping.
 - Won't keep me well.
 - If I don't take care of myself or see my doctor once in awhile.
 - f. Wishing and hoping.
 - Won't keep the rain away.
 - Nor make it come.
 - #Some things I cannot control at all.

B. Hope Is Faith Focused On The Future.

1. That's my working definition.
 2. Hope is faith.
 - a. Not wishful thinking.
 - b. But trust.
 - Not in ourselves.
 - #Although a healthy self-confidence can be a good thing.
 - But trust in God.
 - #Who is faithful to us.
 - *Whether the world is ending or not.
 - *Whether there are natural disasters or not.
 - *Whether our congregation is growing or not.
 - *Whether our bodies are healthy or not.
 - *Whether our grades are good or not.
- #Hope is faith.

c. 1 Peter was written to people of God who had their struggles.

-They had been persecuted because of their faith.

#Maybe it was organized persecution.

*By the state.

*By the synagogue.

+Like what Saul did.

=In Jerusalem.

=In Damascus.

-Acts 9.

#Maybe it was more personal persecution.

*Family.

*Friends.

+Who ridiculed their faith.

=In a crucified Messiah.

=In a God/man raised from the dead.

-They were resident aliens.

#Forced from:

*Their homes.

*Their homelands.

#Living in places like:

*Pontus.

*Galatia.

*Cappadocia.

*Asia.

*Bithynia.

+1 Peter 1:1.

-It is these people.

#People of God.

#Minorities.

#Living in unfamiliar and perhaps hostile settings.

*Who are encouraged:

+Always be ready to give witness:

=To the hope that is in you.

3. Hope is faith focused on the future.

a. I have told you my Seminex story.

-Concordia Seminary-in-Exile.

#I'm not going to re-tell it this morning.

-But when we created Seminex.

#There were those of us who naively thought:

*We would be going back to the Concordia campus.

+Board of Control would see the error of its ways.

+We would go home again.

#There was no going home.

- God was doing a new thing.
 - #Seminex gave birth to the AELC.
 - *Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches.
 - #AELC gave birth to the ELCA.
 - *Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
 - +It was the AELC which invited:
 - =LCA (Lutheran Church in America).
 - =ALC (American Lutheran Church).
 - To work toward Lutheran unity.
- b. For the people of 1 Peter.
 - There was no going back.
 - God was doing a new thing.
 - *In new places.
 - *In new ways.
 - It was the same God.
 - *Who had brought:
 - +Life out of death.
 - +Resurrection out of crucifixion.
 - *Who could be counted on:
 - +To be faithful to God's people.
 - =No matter where they were.
 - =No matter what was happening.
 - +So that they might always be ready:
 - =To give witness to the hope that was in them.
 - Faith focused on the future.

II. How Do We Give Witness To The Hope That Is In Us?

- A. When The Harold Campings Of This World Try To Predict Its End.
 - 1. It sounds:
 - a. Faithful.
 - b. Hopeful.
 - 2. Although:
 - a. Misreading 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.
 - b. Putting too much stock in a human construct.
 - Rapture.
 - #Concocted by John Darby.
 - *Englishman.
 - *1830.

- c. Ignoring Jesus' own words.
 - “But of that day and that hour no one knows,
Not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son,
But the Father only.”
#Matthew 24:36.
#Mark 13:32.
 - “Watch therefore, for you do not know
On what day your Lord is coming.”
#Matthew 24:42.
#Mark 13:35.
#Luke 12:40.
 - “I do not pray that you take them out of the world,
But that you keep them safe from the evil one.”
#John 17:15.
 - 3. But what might appear to be:
 - a. Faithful.
 - b. Hopeful.
 - Might really be the opposite:
 - #Unfaithful.
 - #Unhopeful.
 - Not truly trusting God's future.
 - #But wanting:
 - *Predict.
 - *Control.
 - +Future for ourselves.
 - 4. To be ready to give witness to the hope that is within us.
 - a. Not trying to:
 - Define.
 - Confine.
 - Refine.
 - #God's future.
 - b. But to trust that our future is in God's hands.
- B. When There Are Natural Disasters.
- 1. After a tornado hit Joplin, Missouri last Sunday.
 - a. Leveling buildings.
 - Block after block.
 - Mile after mile.
 - b. Destroying the facilities:
 - Peace Lutheran Church.

2. President Barack Obama promised.
 - a. Federal government.
 - b. American people.
 - Would be with the folks in Joplin to help them rebuild:
 - #Building by building.
 - #Block by block.
 - #Neighborhood by neighborhood.
 - Lutheran Disaster Response makes a similar commitment.
 - #No matter how long it takes.
3. What gets rebuilt.
 - a. Will not duplicate what was lost.
 - Some things are irreplaceable.
 - People are irreplaceable.
 - b. But it will be:
 - New.
 - Different.
4. To be ready to give witness to the hope that is within us.
 - a. Not to undo:
 - Death.
 - Destruction.
 - b. But to affirm that we are people of the resurrection.
 - Walking together.
 - Working together.
 - #To pick up the pieces.
 - #To bring new life.
 - *Out of what has been lost.

C. When We Rekindle The Fire.

1. Our process of congregational renewal.
 - a. Is there any doubt?
 - Our future will look different from our past.
 - b. At our last church council meeting.
 - H.I. Aston (chair of our Dream Team) suggested.
 - #It was time to:
 - *Take down our congregational timeline.
 - *Put away our historical picture boards.
 - #I did.
 - Because it's time we focused our faith on the future.
2. I have some ideas about how we might do that.
 - a. Not:
 - Lamenting.
 - Trying to reconstruct.
 - #What we once had.
 - #What we've lost.

- b. But to use a strategy called "asset mapping."
 - Identifying.
 - Celebrating.
 - Building on.
 - #Gifts.
 - #Strengths.
 - *We do have.
 - +Individually.
 - +Collectively.
3. To be ready to give witness to the hope that is within us.
 - a. Trust that God will give us everything we need.
 - To do what God is calling us to do.
 - b. Trust that God will focus our faith on the future.

D. When You Take The Next Step In Your Education.

- 1. You will learn:
 - a. New.
 - b. Exciting.
 - Things.
- 2. But knowledge.
 - a. Cannot be.
 - b. Should not be.
 - Ultimate focus of your:
 - #Faith.
 - #Hope.
 - Knowledge may help us find better ways to fix what ails:
 - #Our minds.
 - #Our bodies.
 - #Our world.
 - Knowledge alone will never fix what ails our souls.
 - #Sin.
 - *For that we need:
 - +Jesus.
 - +Savior.
- 3. Even knowledge of the Bible cannot save us.
 - a. 1 Peter 3:13-22.
 - Has some puzzling words.
 - b. 1 Peter 3:18.
 - For Christ also suffered for sins once for all,
The righteous for the unrighteous,
In order to bring you to God.
He was put to death in the flesh,
But made alive in the spirit.
#I get that.

c. 1 Peter 3:19-20.

-In which (the spirit) also he went and made proclamation
To the spirits in prison,
Who in former times did not obey,
When God waited patiently in the days of Noah,
During the building of the ark . . .

#What does this mean?

#Who were these spirits in prison?

#What did Jesus proclaim to them?

#Why?

-I think I understand these verses.

#But I'm not sure I would stake:

*My faith.

*My hope.

+On them.

#This is the Biblical basis.

*For the line in the Apostles' Creed:

+ "He descended into hell."

=Although the Biblical text doesn't say that.

*More modern version of the Apostles' creed has the line:

+ "He descended to the dead."

=Jesus was really dead.

-In the flesh.

#But he was made alive in the spirit.

*And in the spirit he preached to the imprisoned spirits.

+I think these were the sons of God.

=Angels.

=*Nephilim* (fallen ones).

-Intermarried with the daughters of humankind.

-Gave birth to a race of giants on the earth.

-Precipitated the flood.

=Genesis 6:1-4.

+Jesus preached to them.

=Not to give them a second chance.

-I don't see anything else in the Bible.

#Suggests you get a second chance after death.

=But rather as a victory lap.

-Proclaiming Jesus' victory over:

#Sin.

#Death.

#Devil.

-But that interpretation is not the basis of:

#My faith.

#My hope.

4. To be ready to give witness to the hope that is within us.
 - a. Doesn't mean we have every scripture figured out.
 - b. But rather that we put our trust in the God:
 - Who raised Jesus from the dead.
 - Who claimed us as his own.
 - #In the waters of Holy Baptism.
 - Who nourishes us with:
 - #Faith and forgiveness.
 - *In the bread and wine of his Holy Meal.

Concl: So we have hope.

- Whether the world comes to an end or not.
- Whether there are natural disasters or not.
- Whether congregations and church bodies are growing or not.
- Whether our physicals bodies are healthy or not.
- Whether we continue in a process of lifelong learning or not.

Always, always, always be ready to give witness to the hope that is in you.