

**Living Hope:  
Living This Hope Together  
1 Peter 2:4-10**

**Dr. Steve Horn**

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**Text Introduction:** We are returning to 1 Peter. “Living Hope” is a phrase that we find in 1 Peter 1:3. This will be the theme of my preaching through this letter. I shared three observations about Jesus being our Living Hope that we discover in chapter 1.

1. Our Living Hope rests in the essence of our salvation. Our salvation is provided by God’s grace through Jesus’ work, proved by Jesus’ resurrection, and perfected by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.
2. Our Living Hope results in eternal solutions for our temporary struggles. In 1 Peter 1:4-7, we see a comparison between our eternal promise and our temporary problems. We don’t need to minimize our problems, but we do need to keep them in an eternal perspective.
3. Our Living Hope is rooted in a personal relationship to our Savior. Perhaps, here is the best news of all. We can have a relationship to the ONE who brings us hope. Though life might sometimes overwhelm us, we are never without hope with Christ as our Savior.

So, what are we to do? Peter reminds us to bless the Lord and to rejoice, because after all, as believers, we are “receiving the goal of faith, the salvation of our souls.” (1 Peter 1:8)

As so often the case in the New Testament letters, theology prepares us for practices. Our beliefs should produce in us a certain behavior. We see that often with the word, “Therefore.” So, we understood that Living Hope calls us to Holy Living. At the end of chapter 1 and the beginning of chapter 2, we get several keys for helping us with holiness: keep preaching the Gospel to ourselves, keep feasting on God’s Word, keep tasting the goodness of God, and keep growing with the people of God.

It is to that subject that we turn today. We are in this together as the church.

**Text:** <sup>4</sup>As you come to him, a living stone—rejected by people but chosen and honored by God— <sup>5</sup>you yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup>For it stands in Scripture:

**See, I lay a stone in Zion,  
a chosen and honored cornerstone,  
and the one who believes in him  
will never be put to shame.**

<sup>7</sup>So honor will come to you who believe; but for the unbelieving,

**The stone that the builders rejected—  
this one has become the cornerstone,**

<sup>8</sup> and

**A stone to stumble over,  
and a rock to trip over.**

They stumble because they disobey the word; they were destined for this.

<sup>9</sup> But you are **a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises** of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

**Introduction:** Most of us here in South Louisiana think of the Mississippi River as we see it crossing over the bridge as we enter Baton Rouge. The Mighty Mississippi! This mighty river, second longest in the world, has its start as a trickle from overgrown brush. The most common thought is that the Mississippi River has as its source Lake Itasca in Northern Minnesota. Before the River empties in to the Gulf of Mexico, 41% of our nation's rivers have emptied into the Mississippi River. Do you see the picture—hundreds of bodies of water (some small, some big) all becoming one river?

Then there's the beautiful oak tree so common to our area. We have one on our property across the street in what we call the College House Lot. There's the beautiful oak in front of St. John's Cathedral. There's the Oak of the Evangeline down in St. Martinville. (Thousands of people board a bus and travel to St. Martinville to look at this tree.) And to think that these massive trees began as a small acorn!

We need both of these analogies as we consider our text today. We come to Jesus, the Living Stone. The Living Stone is the cornerstone on which the church stands. From one Living Stone, Jesus Christ, the church had its birth. And, here we are today because of Jesus. But, we are living stones being built into a spiritual house to be the holy priesthood of the church.

We who have come to believe in this Living Hope are living out this living hope together as the church. Or, are we? Are you? Some have concluded in this age that the church is unnecessary. They have given up on the church. They have become disillusioned by the church. Maybe discouraged? Disappointed? But those who have come to this Living Hope do not get that option. We are . . .

**are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises** of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people;

Living this hope together requires . . .

### **Believing what God says about the Church!**

You know what I think our problem is sometimes? We believe what the world says about the church instead of what God says about the church? The world says, "Hypocrites!" The world says, "Delusional!" The world says, "Backwards." But, watch what God says about the church!

### **What He says about us?**

- The one who believes in him will never be put to shame. (6)

- So honor will come to you who believe (7)

#### What He says about them?

- They stumble. (8)

#### Who He Says We Are

- Chosen Race--Accepted
- A Royal Priesthood—with access to God
- A Holy Nation----Identity
- A People for His possession--Value
- Once not a people, but now are a people--changed
- Once without mercy, but now have received mercy—forgiven

We sing it.

I am chosen  
 Not forsaken  
 I am who You say I am  
 You are for me  
 Not against me  
 I am who You say I am

Let's believe it.

It is time that the church stops believing what the world says about us and starts believing what God says about us. And, oh by the way, maybe it's time to stop believing what we believe about ourselves and start believing what God says about us.

#### **Practicing what God calls the Church to do!**

Priesthood—Priests represented God to the people and represented the people to God. Are you fulfilling your ministry as priest? All of you?

Holy—Remember the idea is separate. This is the practice of the church.

Proclaiming—It always seems to come back to knowing Him and making Him known, doesn't it?

Are we accountable to one another? If you are not holy, the church is not holy? We are in this together.

#### **So What?**

Have you come to believe in Jesus as your Living Hope? If so, you have no choice but to be part of the church. And, you have no choice but to be "all in." If you have confessed Jesus as Lord . . .

- 1) You have no choice than to become a member of the Church.

- 2) You should link yourself to a local Church. There are no lone ranger Christians and no lone ranger Churches. If you cannot find a church to your liking, I suggest that it is not the church that is the problem.
- 3) The Church should become a priority in your life.

Peter understood this. The very first time that the word church is uttered is to Peter by Jesus. Matthew 16 gives us the account. Peter has just acknowledged that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. And Jesus said to Peter:

“Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:17-19)