

Series: When the Going Gets Tough  
Sermon: Living Hope  
Speaker: Kevin White  
Text: 1 Peter 1:3-12  
Date: February 20, 2022

How many of you would agree with this statement?

“It’s a tough time right now.” If you’re in person, raise your hand.  
If you’re on-line click the button in the chat, (**COP moment: It’s a tough time right now**)

How many of you would agree with this statement?

“Someone I know and love is going through a tough time right now.” Again, if you’re in person, raise your hand. If you’re online, click the button in the chat (**COP moment: Someone I know/love is going through a tough time**).

I saw a lot of hands and I imagine a lot of you online clicked the button.

You’re in the right place. This is the second week in a series called “When the Going Gets Tough.” We’ll be going through the book of 1 Peter.

As Pastor Jeremy said last week when he started this series, the book of 1 Peter was written by the Apostle Peter to Christians who were going through a hard time. Jeremy used the image of a storm.

They were suffering because of their faith.

Because they believed and lived for Jesus, they were suffering - suffering at the hands of their Greek and Roman neighbours, and suffering from the emperor who at the time was against Christians.

There is a lot to be said about suffering for faith in this passage. But today we’ll look at suffering in general. I’ll also tell you a little bit of my own journey and then we’ll look at what I think the passage can say to us, in this immediate moment of hard times that we find ourselves in.

Shall we go for it?

For me, these past two years have been the hardest of my life.

I’ve gone from being married, to a separation, to now what looks like soon a divorce. It’s been incredibly hard. It is incredibly hard. Not being in a relationship that I thought I would be in for the rest of my life has brought me to my knees. It’s a pain that at times has felt like too much to bear.

Not everything in life gets to be our choice.

But I’m not the only one who has gone through or is going through a tough time.

Many of you have gone through or are going through something similar.

A struggling or failed marriage.  
A serious health issue.  
Loneliness.  
Not being able to have children.  
Tensions in your family - whether with parents, siblings, kids or whoever.  
Uncertainty about the future.  
Mental health issues like anxiety or depression...  
Not to mention the pandemic that has taken away so much and changed our lives forever.

What tends to speak to me the most is when God gives me a word in the middle of a journey. Anyone can share hope once they've come to the other side, but for me, I want to hear how people are making it in the middle of their journey.

How do you have hope when you're not sure how it's going to turn out?

Hope is crucial in a world that is marked by suffering.

Pastor and Author Tim Keller says that there's no way to get through life unless you know how to get through suffering. And there's no way to get through suffering unless you have a living hope.

That's what 1 Peter 1:3-12 is all about. So, let's get into it.

### **1 Peter 1:3**

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...

Peter starts out with praise but that doesn't seem to make much sense, because this is written to people who are suffering. How and why can they praise in the midst of suffering?

It's because of God's great mercy.

Why is that a big deal? It's because of something we don't talk about.

We don't talk about Bruno. 😊

Just kidding. We don't talk about sin. We don't think we're really that bad.

But according to the Bible, we are that bad. We are all sinners in a hopeless situation.

Romans 3:23 - archery term...

Romans 6:23 - what we deserve - separation from God...

What we get - gift of life... through Jesus...

Right off the bat, despite your situation, there's a gift of new life with God through Jesus Christ.

That's where this living hope comes from. God's mercy gives us new life, and then new life gives us living hope. As long as you're alive you have a choice to choose this living hope.

It comes from the resurrection of Jesus. I don't know that we really take the time to take in what the resurrection means. We think about Jesus dying for our sins and taking our place, but do we really think about Jesus coming back to life and what that means?

That means that Jesus has already proven that there is victory over death. I came across this quote from a book, "Called to be Saints" that I think captures it.

**"Hope is to believe and act in the conviction that though evil is strong, it does not have the last word."**

If we look at our lives, there's no doubt that there is evil. We live in a fallen world and we are affected by tragedy. We're affected by bad choices that we make, or choices that others make against us. We suffer even (and sometimes especially) when you are walking with God - but that's not the end of our story.

Jesus Christ came back to life in the middle of history. That's a game-changer.

In the middle of the human story, when it seemed like sin had gotten the upper hand, Jesus entered and changed everything. So when you and I are in the middle of our story, we can take a step back and say that we're really in the middle of THE STORY. And we know how the end of THE STORY is going to turn out. And that gives us hope for our story. We know we can make it because Jesus did, and because he's with us through the Holy Spirit.

Everything hinges on that. Evil is strong, but it does not have the last word - Amen?

If you're online, type Amen in the chat. If you're in person, say amen out loud.

Because of the resurrection there is hope. Evil does not have the last word.

We have living hope in a living Saviour.

Jesus Christ is alive right now! Just like we sang earlier - In Christ alone, our hope is found...

Look at me. You have a choice.

Jesus' resurrection in the past, means that there is hope in the future. And you can choose to use that past event – and that - future hope now :) You get me bruv? ☺

Vs. 4a

...and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

The passage goes on to say that this future hope is an inheritance that can never

Perish - can't be destroyed by a hostile force

Spoil - like rotten fruit

Fade - like clothes after you wash them a bunch of times

This is some beautiful imagery here. First of all, what is an inheritance? You guys know this. It means that someone leaves something for you in their will so that when they die, it will be passed on to you.

But do you know what that means? It means that we're family.

God is our Father,

Jesus is our brother and we are brothers and sisters.

"We are Family"

Wait, we're in church right?

**(Sing)** "We are the sons, we are the daughters of God..." ☺

Last week, Jeremy talked about identity amnesia. Sometimes we forget who we are. We are the sons and daughters of God. Of the king. We are royalty. Pastor and Author Tim Keller said that God took everything that we deserve as sinful humans and gives us everything that Jesus deserves.

Our inheritance is indestructible.

The problem is, that we put our hope in things that DO perish, spoil and fade. We put our hope in our stuff, our relationships, our looks, our health. All these things are good. But they fade. They end. They spoil.

Tim Keller says that's what suffering is. It's when you put your hope in worldly things. Because if you live long enough, they all will be taken away.

Actor Jim Carey said, "I think everyone should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see it's not the answer." Jim Carey is worth 180 million dollars.

But we have an inheritance that is indestructible.

Vs. 4b-5a

...this inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power...

The passage goes on to talk about how it's "kept" in heaven for you, "shielded" by God's power.

Those words are army words. Can I take you back to an Old Testament story to tell you what I mean? StarKids - you ready?

In the Old Testament, there's the story of the 12 spies going to the promised land to see what it's like. They go, and when they come back they give a report. 2 of them say, let's go for it. But 10 say no. They say no because the people there are strong and the land is 'fortified.' That word fortified is the same word used here in our passage in Peter.

Your inheritance is fortified. It's kept safe - by God. God is guarding your inheritance. So you don't have to worry about it. It's that secure. Picture God locking it up in a way that no one can get to. Picture Jesus standing in front of it so it's double protected.

It also means that God is keeping you safe from getting out of his kingdom. So if you are a follower of Christ, God is protecting outside forces from taking you away, and God is protecting you from you - because sometimes life is so hard YOU wanna get away.

You're safe.

There's something interesting here though. It says that it's kept through faith.

On the one hand, God is keeping it safe and secure. On the other hand, it's kept through faith. Your faith.

So there's a partnership. How does that work?

I came across an extraordinary quote.

“We are responsible IN history, but not FOR history.” (Glenn Tinder)

We aren't responsible for the ultimate outcome of history, but God does call us to act now. It's not a passive faith just waiting for God to make everything right. We can choose to do what God is calling us to do, and then trust him with the rest.

Vs. 6.

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

Remember what we said at the beginning? How many of us are going through or know someone who is going through a hard time? “

Even as you go through hard times, God is protecting you. What you are going through isn't going to last forever.

Look at me - you will make it through this trial. In Jesus' name.

And... your suffering can actually bring God glory.

How, you ask? No, actually ask me how...

I'm glad you asked.

Vs. 7

These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.

The passage has some beautiful imagery here.

You guys know how gold works right? It's made more pure - more gold by fire. Under intense heat, all the impurities are burnt away and then what's left is the most “goldie” gold.

That's suffering! The gold has to go through hard times, it has to suffer, go through fire to become its purest.

That's like us. We have to go through hard times, we have to suffer, go through fire to become more pure.

Believe me. I wish I didn't have to suffer. Like I said, it's been the toughest two years of my life.

And as a pastor, I've had the honour of walking with many families through the last two years. I wish they didn't have to suffer. I wish none of you, none of us had to suffer.

But it seems as if that's the way to purify us. When you're squeezed. What's inside comes out.

This comparison to gold leads us to an even bigger truth though. You see, gold goes through this process of refining, of suffering, of fire, to become pure gold. But even still, eventually, it fades. So even after all that refining, it doesn't even last forever.

But our faith does last forever. That's why it's worth even more than gold!

You can see how excited I am about this passage - I could go on but we need to wind down.

Right in the middle of my own story, while I'm going through the lowest of lows, God gave me this message of living hope. Of all the times, of all the pastors. Me.

It spoke to me in a way that sparked hope. That revived me. That brought me back to life. A living hope.

I pray that this may be a message that speaks to you today in the middle of your journey.

I trust - I hope it can be God's word to you - to all of us. Today.

What do we do with all this?

### **MAKE THE CHOICE TO HOPE**

Hope isn't just for the future. It's not just optimism. It's not just wishful thinking. It's a firm conviction. Hope moves us forward. "...we have a fixed hope - a clear vision of what God is going to do in the future." (NIV Application Commentary)

Tim Keller says that living hope makes your heart bigger. So, you can be full of joy AND full of suffering at the same time - that's exactly how I feel.

I feel like my heart has grown these past two years. I 'FEEL' more. I feel more joy when I look at creation and God's beauty. I feel more love from my family and friends and from all of you. I feel more intimacy when I spend time with Jesus. I'm more present and grateful for each moment that I have.

I also feel more sad when I think about what I'm going through and what so many people are going through. I feel more sad when I think about all the injustice in this world and how we're so far from how we should and could be.

As Pastor Andrew says, it's not either/or. It's both/and

What you're going through is not a waste when it softens the soil of your heart, giving space for new life to grow (paraphrased from Lysa Terkeurst - Forgiving What You Can't Forget)

### **MAKE THE CHOICE TO HOPE**

Remember that story I was sharing about the Israelites and the spies? Well, it's part of a longer story of them on the journey to the land that God promised them. They took a little detour for their lack of faith, but they still ended up going to the promised land. And how did they do that? They kept moving forward.

God promised them that land. He held it and protected it - and then gave it to them. Just like he does our inheritance. They had hope for that land in the future. And their future hope kept them

making choices in the present - every day to move towards that future promise. That became their identity.

We too are in the wilderness. We too are on our way to our inheritance.

Tim Keller says that you can only survive if you have a hope beyond yourself.

That hope has to be in Jesus Christ.

What step can you make today to activate your living hope? (Tim Keller)

If you have it but you don't use it, it's useless.

Here some suggestions to activate your living hope.

1. Make the choice to follow Jesus.
2. Make the choice to get baptized.
3. Make the choice to journey with others.

We have tons of ways for you to journey with others.

- a. In person, online
- b. StarKids – in person or virtual classroom – there's even a monthly memory verse – it's going to be our benediction at the end stay tuned.
- c. Small groups, semester groups

Choose something to move your faith forward.

Make the choice to hope.

As the worship team leads this next song, I pray it will be a powerful moment for you and Jesus together. God bless you.

## BENEDICTION

StarKids memory verse of the month: (2 Corinthians 12:9a)

My Grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect in weakness

That goes perfectly with the message. It's like God knows what he's doing. Even when you feel weak, God's grace (his mercy) will help you through.