

# Spirit of Hope

Mount Hope Lutheran Church

Preschool and Childcare

April 22, 2020

***Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And you have placed your faith and hope in God because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory. 1 Peter 1:21 (NLT)***

He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed, Alleluia!!

Happy Easter! Yes, we began this way last week as well; but Easter is a season in the church, not just one day that we celebrate. In fact, since Christ is risen, every day is an Easter celebration for His followers. That is why we can place our faith and hope in God, as the verse above tells us. That's Good News!

I don't know about you, but I need to be reminded of Good News, especially now during this pandemic. There is no shortage of bad news available to us 24/7 through our many forms of electronics. Each day brings its share of challenges. Thank God, You raised Jesus from the dead giving us life-giving hope.

You have probably heard that perhaps this may be the only time, due to the lockdowns, that some people may be receptive to learning about Jesus and the hope that you have. Many churches are experiencing record views in attendance at their online worship services. Who do you know that you could share Jesus with and also invite them "to church"? (mthopelutheran.org)

I want to continue to encourage you to please make time each day to be in God's Word and prayer. Use the FAITH 5 bookmarks to guide a family devotion each day/evening or look for something on RightNow Media ([rightnowmedia.org](http://rightnowmedia.org)). Remember this is a wonderful resource (described as the Netflix of Christian materials) gifted to Mount Hope and any you choose to share with, by the Women of Hope. There are wonderful Bible studies, children's materials, movies, and other resources to spend some quality time on. Contact the church office or me if you need assistance gaining access to RightNow Media.

Please keep checking in on each other. It is such a blessing to hear how our Mount Hope family is genuinely concerned for and calling/encouraging others. Keep on being a wonderful community of faith *Where guests become friends and friends become family.*

Finally, please continue to pray for Mount Hope, our country, the leadership, those on the frontlines battling during this pandemic and our world; COVID-19 will be conquered!

Serving together,  
Pastor Fran Green



# The Message

## Believe!

I know some of you are not able to watch our online services, so you probably missed the message that was delivered on Easter Sunday. So, I will share with all of you another “dog story” for this week. I would like to tell you the story of the empty kennel (this is a true story by the way). Shortly after I graduated from high school, I decided that I needed a dog. Never being allowed to get one when I was younger, I thought that as an older and mature and now educated young man I would get myself a German Shepherd puppy. This arrangement seemed to work pretty well while I was still living with my family, but there came the time that I needed to leave the nest and join the “real world”. Since I left to join the Air Force, I could not take my dog with me, so my family would care for her while I was away.

Fortunately for my family, our neighbors had some kennels in our joining back yards, which they allowed my family to keep Bullet during the day while they were away working and at school. Well, it wasn't long before Bullet began showing up in various places around our small town when she was thought to be locked up in the kennel. In fact, she gained quite a reputation in our town as my sister was even called out from classes at school to go and pick up Bullet somewhere in town. This baffled my family because when they would go and check the kennel everything would be locked up as when they left for the day. They just knew that someone was playing a joke on them by letting Bullet out and then closing everything back up, etc.

Finally, one day when everyone was home with Bullet locked up in the kennel, my dad happened to be looking out the window and saw Bullet climbing up the side of the cage using her mouth to hold her position while she climbed with her legs. He just couldn't believe, saying he had never seen anything like it! She would actually climb the sides of the kennel and jump out over the top. Mystery solved!

The disciples must have felt somewhat like my family when they discovered the empty tomb. After receiving the crazy report from Mary Magdalene, then Peter and John saying that Jesus was not in the tomb. Where did he go? It's as if someone was playing a cruel joke on them. But it is even more ridiculous than that, Mary claimed that she spoke with the Lord! That is where we join the disciples today, in a house together, the doors locked discussing, trying to make sense of the empty tomb.

Now the post resurrection appearances of Jesus are not described exactly the same by each Gospel writer. What is interesting though is that they complement each other. None give enough detail to put them in a chronological order, but the fact they are a bit different only offers further proof to their authenticity. Certainly, each of my family members would offer a bit of a different perspective of the Bullet story, but they are all based upon the same event, as all of the gospels are

based upon the same event. Even though this is such a familiar story, I would challenge you today to listen with fresh ears; where/who do you see yourself to relate most to in this story? Often familiarity clouds or closes our minds; we may miss the Lord's message for us. We do not want to miss the wonder and amazingness of this incredible message. Our story today takes place on the very evening of Jesus' resurrection.

*On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. (John 20:19-20)*

Jesus had promised earlier in John chapter 14 that he would leave them with his peace. All of their fear, troubles, and doubts were now relieved by Jesus. He didn't condemn them for their actions during the terrible event of his crucifixion (denying him, running); he passed on faith and peace. Reconciliation, restoration, they were now offered true peace from the Lord. Through showing them the wounds they would be convinced, the church would have powerful witness to the fact that this was in fact the same Jesus who they had spent the past three years with. This was truly the Messiah sent by God to redeem the world!

*Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." (John 20:21-23)*

The sending of God's son into the world is a common theme in John. Now the disciples will be sent, not to repeat what Jesus did, but to implement his achievement. They are to go into the world as Jesus' representatives to carry on his work of proclaiming the gospel message by the power of the Holy Spirit. Many see a connection between these words and those in Genesis 2:7 and Ezekiel 37:9-10 where God brings life through his breath in creation and restoration.

Now the Lord will bring New Life and New Creation through the giving of the Holy Spirit. Much is often debated and discussed between scholars as to the meaning of Jesus giving the Holy Spirit here. What about Pentecost? Did the disciples receive the Spirit partially here, etc? We truly do not know. It is interesting to compare John's account with Luke's in chapter 24. Luke's description of this event is very similar, but the details are a bit different. The significant matter is that they both describe a very real event that occurred and that Jesus reveals himself to them, gives them understanding as to the meaning of it all and then empowers them to take the message to the world.

Now we meet Thomas, Thomas who perhaps should have been with the disciples to receive understanding and the peace given by Jesus. Yet Thomas only reacts in the same manner as the disciples had reacted to the witness of Mary Magdalene by not believing.

*Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it." (John 20:24-25)*

How many of us can relate to Thomas' words here? How many in the unbelieving world? "Jesus, unless...I will not believe." Isn't it interesting though, Jesus welcomes investigation. He welcomes our investigation too.

*A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:26-29)*

This is the last witness to the resurrection offered by John. It is interesting that he uses this story of a doubter to offer the final piece of evidence to witnessing the risen Jesus. John is the only gospel to offer this story. First of all, its inclusion should close the book on the matter of if Jesus "really" died or not. Clearly, Thomas' doubt here proves that Jesus truly died on the cross. Second, Thomas is invited to investigate and find hard evidence to relieve and overcome his unbelief. Thomas is John's climatic argument/evidence for Jesus as the risen Lord and Savior. Jesus did in fact die and then rise to new life. It is interesting and clearly no accident that John includes both Thomas' Aramaic and Greek names to appeal to a broad audience, an audience that includes you and me. Though hard to believe, the evidence is overwhelming, the death and resurrection of Jesus clearly occurred. The evidence as to the meaning of it all is equally overwhelming; only God could defeat death. Only the Messiah could bring new life.

*Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:30-31)*

This verb believe occurs more in John than Matthew, Mark, and Luke combined. Clearly, John's purpose is for his readers to believe! The gospel of John was written to produce/and or sustain faith in Jesus, He is the Messiah! He selected specific signs so that you may believe, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. These words of John are able to establish and strengthen the faith of any believer. It is interesting that some commentators attempt to identify the "you" in these verses. It would seem when one takes the book as a whole, that John meant any and all who the Lord would have read this message. John 17 lays out the all when he quotes Jesus as praying for all who would believe through the apostle's testimony.

So, did you accept my challenge? Where do you see yourself in the story? One might assume that in a church we might all believe. Yet as mentioned earlier, I believe our familiarity with the story often comes with a large price. What does it mean to believe? I think sometimes we make it as an academic exercise. "Well, of course I believe". James tells us that even the demons believe. Believing involves more than the intellect. To believe is a commitment to living differently. Remember Jesus said that he came that we may have a full and abundant life, which we receive through believing.

Sadly, we often reduce the resurrection and our belief into part of our retirement plan. We now have security some time out there in the distant future because I believe Jesus died and rose again so that I will live with him some day in heaven. Yes, it is true that we will live forever with Jesus and that will be amazing and indescribable.

But the resurrection demands that we live differently NOW. Jesus has inaugurated a new creation and has been declared King. We must take our place in that creation. *John 15:16* says, “*You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit,*” What is the fruit? Loving God and loving people. It is so simple, but it is not easy! Thankfully, we are not alone. Jesus promised to send His Holy Spirit to help us in our mission. In living this mission, the mission of a servant, we live life to the full that Jesus promised. That is true belief.

Life defined (Strong’s Concordance): *Life real and genuine, a life active and vigorous, devoted to God, blessed, in the portion even in this world of those who put their trust in Christ, but after the resurrection to be consummated by new accessions (among them a more perfect body), and to last forever.*

Remember the story I spoke of at the beginning? Upon solving the grand mystery of Bullet’s escape; my dad had to do something. The empty kennel demanded action on his part. He couldn’t just leave things as they were. The evidence showed him the truth. There wasn’t anybody opening the kennel doors letting the dog out. He had to run to Menard’s and get materials to build a roof for the kennel. After the mystery of the empty tomb was solved, the disciples had to do something. The empty tomb demanded it. The evidence of Jesus conquering death and that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God demanded it. The world would never be the same. They looked at the world and people differently. After they were commissioned by the Lord, they had to take his message of forgiveness and reconciliation to the world. Remember the heart and soul of this Gospel? “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him may not die, but have eternal life.*” This is our gift. We are forgiven and free! But it’s not ours to hide; there is a confused, hurting, and lost world that desperately needs us to show and tell them this truth so that they too may believe.

*But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. Amen.*

# Announcements

## **Church Communication**

Thank you to the many people who have reached out with their email addresses. If you have an email address and are receiving this newsletter via postal mail, please contact the office. To save on the cost of postage, we would prefer to email the newsletter. Thank you. ([church@mthopelutheran.org](mailto:church@mthopelutheran.org))

## **DVD Copies of Worship Services**

Please contact the office at 952 888 5059 if you are interested in receiving the videotaped services on DVD.

## **Thrivent Choice Dollars**

Thank you to everyone who designated Mount Hope for their Thrivent Choice dollars. Mount Hope received \$2598.00 at the beginning of March from Thrivent. If you are a Thrivent member, you too can designate Mount Hope to receive your Choice Dollars.

## **Voters' Meeting**

The Voters' Meeting scheduled for April 27 has been postponed due to COVID-19. A new date will be announced when it is safe for everyone to gather again.

## **Office Hours**

Kim W is currently in the office from 9:00am-3:00pm on weekdays. If you have a question, please call 952 888 5059 or email her at [church@mthopelutheran.org](mailto:church@mthopelutheran.org).

## Sunday Worship Schedule

8:15am Traditional Worship Service  
9:30am Connecting Hour  
Bible Study / Sunday School  
10:45am Praise Worship Service

**Phone:** 952-888-5059

**E-mail:** church@mthopelutheran.org

**Website:** www.mthopelutheran.org

## Mount Hope's Staff

Fran Green	Pastor
Candy Frein	Administrative Assistant
Christina Brantner	Music Director
Kathy Sundseth	Custodian
Kim Woebke	Preschool and Childcare Director Administrative Assistant
Steve Sundseth	Custodian
Sam Killam	Custodian

Mount Hope Lutheran Church  
3601 W Old Shakopee Rd  
Bloomington, MN 55431

Address Service Requested

