

## Third Sunday of Easter

April 14, 2024

Psalm 4 (ESV) TO THE CHOIRMASTER: WITH STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. A PSALM OF DAVID. <sup>1</sup> Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer! <sup>2</sup> O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame? How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? *Selah* <sup>3</sup> But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him. <sup>4</sup> Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. *Selah* <sup>5</sup> Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the LORD. <sup>6</sup> There are many who say, “Who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!” <sup>7</sup> You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. <sup>8</sup> In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

Acts 3:11–21 (ESV) <sup>11</sup> While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon’s. <sup>12</sup> And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: “Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? <sup>13</sup> The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. <sup>14</sup> But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, <sup>15</sup> and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. <sup>16</sup> And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all. <sup>17</sup> “And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. <sup>18</sup> But what God foretold by the mouth of

all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. <sup>19</sup> Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, <sup>20</sup> that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, <sup>21</sup> whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.

Luke 24:36–49 (ESV) <sup>36</sup> As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!” <sup>37</sup> But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. <sup>38</sup> And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? <sup>39</sup> See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” <sup>40</sup> And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. <sup>41</sup> And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” <sup>42</sup> They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup> and he took it and ate before them. <sup>44</sup> Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” <sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, <sup>46</sup> and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, <sup>47</sup> and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

1 John 3:1–7 (ESV) <sup>1</sup> See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. <sup>2</sup> Beloved, we are

God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. <sup>3</sup> And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. <sup>4</sup> Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. <sup>5</sup> You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. <sup>6</sup> No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. <sup>7</sup> Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.

***Encounter Jesus!***  
***Encounter the Hope of Jesus***

1 John 3:1-7  
Outline

Introduction: Close encounters  
(1 John 1:1-3; Titus 2:13)

- ❑ **Hope grounded in the love of God**  
(verse 1; 1 John 1:3b; John 1:12)
- ❑ **Hope in becoming like Jesus**  
(verse 2; Romans 8:29)
- ❑ **Hope that purifies**  
(verse 3; 1 John 2:1-2)
- ❑ **Hope that transforms**  
(verses 4-7; 1 John 1:8, 9)

***Encounter Jesus!***  
***Encounter the Hope of Jesus***

1 John 3:1-7

Encounters with bears are fairly common at Mt. Rainier National Park. I once hiked up to a waterfall in a less-travelled portion of the park. I took in the beauty of the foaming water rushing down a steep gorge, then decided to see if there was another viewpoint farther up the trail. After 40 minutes without finding a view, I turned back the way I came. I had only gone a few steps on my return journey, when I spotted two tiny bear cubs coming up the trail. They could not have been far from the path when I walked past them moments before without seeing them.

Since I knew mama bear could not be far behind, I immediately left the trail and headed uphill to avoid an encounter with a protective mother, which, as you may know, can be extremely dangerous. I kept out of sight of the mother bear but I knew she could smell me. From my vantage point some 75 feet uphill, I could see the cubs climbing a tree—shooed there by their mama. I continued making a large detour until I was back on the trail at a safe distance.

You may have seen social media posts of tourists, trying to pet wildlife in national parks that did not end well. There is something compelling about having a close encounter with a large wild animal, like an elk, bison or bear, that makes people defy common sense.

In these Sundays following the Resurrection, I want us to have close encounters of the best kind, as we encounter Jesus through the book of 1 John.

**Encounter Jesus!** is the theme of these messages.

The apostle John wrote this letter so believers could do just that. He writes out of his own experience of a close encounter with Jesus. The letter begins in this way:

<sup>1</sup>That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— <sup>2</sup> the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— <sup>3</sup> that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:1–3 ESV)

Today, we **Encounter the Hope of Jesus**.

Hope is a basic, God-given longing of our heart; a God-designed desire. The dictionary definition is, “to cherish a desire with the expectation of fulfillment” . . . it means “to long for with an expectation of obtainment.” (Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary)

Hope expresses a longing for something we don’t have in the present, but look forward to obtaining in the future. Hope gives us a reason to look forward to tomorrow.

Clinical Psychologist, Jeanne Jensma, says that “the believer’s hope is grounded in the character of God and all the promises to be culminated in the return of Christ and spending eternity with Him. . . . God’s promises regarding eternity can provide a hope that is real, a hope that is powerful, and a hope that is permanent.”

Verses 2-3 of our text today speak about the hope we have in Jesus’ coming again. As Titus 2:13 says, we are *waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*, (ESV).

First, it is a

**Hope grounded in the love of God** (verse 1)

<sup>1a</sup> See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

John is writing to those who, by faith in Jesus, have *fellowship . . . with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ*. (1 John 1:3b)

John 1:12 teaches how we become children of God: *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God* (ESV)

Because of the love of God, He has made us His children.

Lutheran Bible Scholar Richard Lenski wrote: “He, from whom we have been born in infinite love, acknowledges us as his children; all his love, and all the gifts that it is able to bestow upon us, are ours.”

Lenski goes on to note that the Greek has the force of: “Just take a look at this love!” . . . with the idea of both quality and quantity . . . To see it aright is to sink down in adoration before it. It is beyond all comprehension.”

Martin Luther wrote about this passage saying, “what glorious, sublime love,”

Verse one goes on to explain, <sup>1b</sup> . . . *The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him*.

The unbelieving world does not understand this kind of love, and cannot fathom this special relationship we have with God, because they do not know God personally, the One who is love.

Unbelievers think born again Christians are arrogant to speak of God as their Father and their confidence that they will be in heaven with Him for eternity. Many believe that no one can know for sure if they will go to heaven until they die.

Later in this series we will come to 1 John 5:13 where Christians are told explicitly, they can know for sure that they have eternal life by their faith in Jesus.

John tells us in verse 2 that our hope is a confident expectation based on being a child of God. It is a certain

## **Hope in becoming like Jesus** (verse 2)

*2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*

That is our blessed hope, to see Jesus and be like Him in his righteousness and holiness. It is God's purpose for His children to become like His Son. Romans 8:29 teaches, *For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.* (NIV)

God begins that process of being conformed to Christ in this life. In this verse we are assured that God will complete that work; that one day when we see Jesus in glory, we will be like Him.

Martin Luther taught: "We shall be like Him but not identical with Him . . . . For God is infinite, but we are finite creatures. Moreover, the creature will never be the Creator. Yet we shall be like Him. God is life. Therefore we, too, shall live. God is righteous. Therefore we, too, shall be filled with righteousness. God is immortal and blessed. Therefore we, too, shall enjoy everlasting bliss."

The hope that we have—what we are looking forward to, what we long for—is to see Jesus when He comes in glory and become like Him: to be holy and pure as He is, to have a transformed, glorious body as He does.

That hope is not wishful thinking. It is based on what Jesus has already done for us in His death and resurrection.

Because our hope is to be *with* Jesus, and to be *like* Him, it ought to be our desire to be more and more like Jesus right now.

John teaches us that this is a

## **Hope that purifies** (verse 3)

*3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*

This hope has a purifying power because it fixes our eyes, and thoughts and desires, on Jesus.

The Greek word used here to *purify* denotes an ongoing action. The action of purifying ourselves is continual. We cannot achieve sinlessness in this life. We will not be completely pure until we see Jesus in glory. And so, we "keep striving after a perfect model," our Lord Jesus. (R.C.H. Lenski)

Richard Lenski translates this verse, "And everyone having this hope (set) on him continues to purify himself even as that One is pure." Lenski comments: "There is no exception. He who stops purifying himself has dropped this hope from his heart. . . . To claim that we are God's children, who have been born of him, to claim the hope of heaven and glory and yet to stop self-purification is to be lying (1:6)"

Lenski goes on to write: "As Christ is pure, and sin is not in him, [the Christian] must ever be purifying themselves, and when they find themselves sinning must flee to their Advocate with his expiation for such sins."

1 John 2:1–2 says, *1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.* (ESV)

Finally, we have a

## **Hope that transforms** (verses 4-7)

*4 Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. 5 You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.*

<sup>7</sup> *Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.*

The apostle John goes on to assert the incompatibility of being a new creation in Christ and continuing in sin.

John is saying, in the strongest terms possible, that we cannot take sin lightly. We cannot accommodate sin in our lives as a child of God. John is combating heresies that taught that you can believe in Jesus and then do as we please; that sin is not serious. He wrote in verse 7a, *Little children, let no one deceive you. . . .*

Martin Luther wrote: God “does not tolerate the hypocritical Christians who consider it sufficient for them to believe that they are Christians, remain in sins and filth, and are not changed. If they believed sincerely that they are children of God, they would not be polluted but would purify themselves.”

According to Lenski: This verse “implies a decisive break with sinning. Remaining in Christ, the expiator of sins, the Sinless One, means faith in him and in his expiation and thus a steady fight against sinning, a constant self-purification by his grace and his help.

Lenski goes on to note: “Perfectionists misunderstood this statement and think that it refers to total sanctification: [that a Christian] has stopped sinning altogether.”

They ignore what John has already written in 1 John 1:8, *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.* John includes himself as he speaks of the need to confess our sins: *‘If we confess our sins,’* he wrote.”

The true believer ever keeps his eyes on Jesus. John says that the one going on in sinning has not *seen* Christ or *known* Him. If we have beheld Jesus with the eyes of faith and have come to know His goodness, love and joy, through God’s Word, we will want to be like Him. To truly know Jesus is to want to be like Him.

As we fix our hope on our absolutely holy and pure Savior and Lord and yearn to be both with Him and fully like Him, our lives will be positively affected toward righteousness in the present writes John MacArthur.

Because of God’s great love we are children of God and one day we will be like Him. That is our hope. That is what we look forward to, what we long for. That is the finish line we are moving toward.

If our hope is to become like Jesus, to be pure and holy as He is in everything we think, say and do, then we will continually be purifying ourselves by God’s means of grace. We have no ability to purify ourselves by our own efforts. It’s not a matter of more self-control or more will power.

We are being sanctified, being made holy and pure through the work of the Holy Spirit. This purifying is a work of grace which we receive by availing ourselves of the means of grace—God’s Word and the sacraments.

The *Explanation to Luther’s Small Catechism* teaches: Sanctification is the gracious work of the Holy Spirit by which He daily renews me more and more in the image of God through the Word and Sacraments.

The Holy Spirit works through the Word of God, both the law and the gospel, to show us our sin (John 16:8) so that we repent and confess it, and then to believe God’s promise of forgiveness and purity:

1 John 1:9 tells us, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.* (NIV)

Let us pray . . .