

Milton Carpenter was a wise man. Who is Milton Carpenter? He was a former treasurer of the state of Missouri and later became treasurer of the LCMS. He had this valuable advice for retired people: **(1) have someone to love; (2) keep busy; and (3) have something to look forward to.** These apply not just to senior citizens but to people of all ages; young and old alike. Another wise man by the name of Martin Luther, once said, "Everything that is done in this world, is done by hope" *(Table Talk)*.

And the Spring of the year is a time of hope! Right now, in this wondrous, promising season of the year many are looking ahead in anticipation! Schoolchildren and teens are counting down the days until summer vacation. Soon-to-be graduates from High school and College are looking forward with excitement to their next big stage in life. Grownups who've been suffering from cabin fever all winter long are anxious to get outside and enjoy the great outdoors. Meanwhile, those with green thumbs page through seed catalogs, while farmers are itching to get out into the fields to plant.

No matter who you are and whatever your age it is essential to do as Milton Carpenter recommended: **(1) have someone to love; (2) keep busy; and (3) have something to look forward to.** Why? Because all these things give you hope, much like springtime gives hope!

And hope plays a key role in today's reading from 1st Peter chapter one. Please listen again to the first three verses of our Epistle lesson:

³ Praise be 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, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade- kept in heaven for you. ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Here, the apostle Peter invites his readers to join in a hymn of praise for the extraordinary blessings God has showered on us. Here, Peter speaks of a "living hope."

But it is important to note that not all types of hope are the same. For example, hopes and predictions that cling to the belief that mankind is basically good always end up falling flat. For example, the notion that people do wrong things because they are not taught properly has been around for a long time. In the mid 1800's, Horace Mann, a prominent educator from Boston, prophesied that crime in our country would in time virtually disappear. Why? Because, Horace Mann maintained, there will be more and larger schools that would be tax-supported to properly educate people. Well, that prediction from

over 150 years ago never came true! In fact, many tax-supported schools themselves have become ridden with crime.

Not intentionally, of course. I, and many others, have a great deal of respect and admiration for the many wonderful, patient teachers and administrators who stick it out in less than desirable settings. But unfortunately, Horace Mann's prediction of crime disappearing because of tax-funded schools? That is a hope that was never realized.

Speaking of schools, a high school graduation speaker, who was determined to lift the spirits and aspirations of the class, quoted this bit of poetry: "Believe in God - in (your) own self believe:

All that (you have) hoped for (you shall) achieve."

Believe in God? Yes. Have confidence? Sure. But the last sentence, "all that you've hoped for you shall achieve"? That is simply not true. I **hope** nobody listened to that, because it's a fuzzy hope, a nebulous hope, a hope that sooner or later will leave you severely disappointed.

But there is one kind of hope that will **never** disappoint and that is a **living** hope. Yes, a living hope will never let you down. This hope is not the wistful optimism that 'in the end everything is going to be alright', which so often **passes** for hope. Rather, a "living hope" is a hope that rests not on oneself, nor on that of any person, but on **God alone**, the **living** God who raised Jesus from the dead and gave Him glory so that our faith and hope might be in Him.

These first verses of Peter's letter **shout** hope - **living** hope- as he encourages us with the **reason** for the better hope that lives. God has given us new birth into a living hope through resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, the One who conquered sin, death, and the devil for us!

Shortly after Jesus was born an elderly man named Simeon "was waiting for the consolation of Israel... It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Lk 2:25-26). Simeon's hope was **living** because it came from God and not from his own, or anyone else's, wishful thinking.

Page through the four Gospels and just look at all the people who lined up to talk to Jesus with the **hope** that He would cure them or their loved ones. Look to Jairus, whose 12-year-old daughter was dying. Even while Jesus was on His way to see her, a woman came up from behind and touched Him, and her bleeding of 12 years stopped (Lk 8:40-48). These, and many others looked to Jesus with a sure and certain living hope, that He could help them in their most desperate time of need.

But it's not just for needs we have here and now on this earth that Jesus gives us hope. The living hope Peter describes has as its *goal* an "*inheritance* that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in *heaven*" for you.

When you hear that word "inheritance" what do you think of? If you're like me, you picture a group of tense family members in a lawyer's office listening intently as that lawyer reads their relative's last will and testament. Often this eagerly awaited moment disappoints people and may even divide the family members in days and years to come. An earthly inheritance may not *always* be a blessing.

Recall the parable of the Prodigal Son. There are actually a lot of lessons a person can learn from this well-known parable of Jesus. One of the lesser one's centers on what the younger son did with his share of the inheritance. Do you remember how he asked for his inheritance, even before his father's death? And then what did this son do with his generous inheritance? He wasted it. He squandered his wealth in wild living (Lk 15:13). So often that's how it goes with earthly inheritances. Because they aren't earned, the recipients, unless they are frugal, spend the money quickly. "Easy come, easy go."

And it can't be emphasized enough that we *inherit*, not *earn*, "the kingdom prepared for you" as Jesus refers to it in Matthew 25:34. Interestingly, Jesus followed this statement with His parable of the sheep and the goats. And as a consequence, we may mistakenly come to the conclusion that the works of mercy performed by the righteous pay their way into heaven: "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me" (Mt 25: 35–36). These good works provide evidence that true believers who, having received God's mercy in Christ, are merciful to others, especially to those in need (Lk 6:36). But the heavenly inheritance is theirs not because they *do* these merciful things, rather because God has made them members of the Father's family. They show proof of their faith through these good works. As St. Paul says in Galatians 3:26: "You are all (children) of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26). It is by grace through faith in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus alone, that we are saved. *That's* how we inherit eternal life. This is the best news ever! And that's how Peter can go on to say in verse 6:

"In this you greatly *rejoice*, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials". Part of the reason we need to cling to our living hope in God, is because we must continue to live in this sin-fallen world until Christ's return on the last day or until He calls us home. Sadly, until then,

we will at times suffer grief in all kinds of trials. Such as ill health, problems at work or school, estrangement from family members, and the list could go on and on; and even though these struggles can indeed be very long and hard, still Peter assures us that the grief we suffer in *all kinds* of trials really only last a *little* while, a *little* while compared with the eternity of peace that lies ahead for all who trust in Christ. Peter tells us that- “These (trials) have come so that your faith- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen Him you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.”

Though we cannot see our Lord now or our loved ones who have died in the faith of our Lord Jesus, nor can we sometimes see how our current problems, whatever they are, and even when they’re caused by our own sinful actions, can possibly get better, we still believe in Christ and trust in His promises of forgiveness and deliverance. These promises really are able to fill us with a hope (a living hope) and joy that words cannot express.

Peter concludes our text in verse 9, “For you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” Today we’ve heard God’s great promises. Trusting in God, we can be sure that one day, the Lord will take us, out of this world, with its grief and trials and bring us to the place of eternal peace and joy in God’s presence forever!

So, for hope in this world it is wise to remember Milton Carpenter’s advice: **(1) have someone to love; (2) keep busy; and (3) have something to look forward to.**

For a *living* hope in the *eternal* inheritance Christ is preparing and keeping for you in heaven, keep trusting in God’s promises of eternal life through the forgiveness of sins won for you in Christ. Trusting in the Lord, you and I can be absolutely confident that one day, He will take us, out of this world, with its grief and trials and bring us to the place of eternal peace and joy in God’s presence forever!

That Is A Real Hope that’s Living and Joyous! Amen!