

“Easter People Hope Confidently”

Scripture: Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21

Graphics: cross, Easter, city

Big Truth: We are Easter people - people who are transformed because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and alive and living in us. What’s our response? Our response is to live the everlasting Kingdom today as Easter people who passionately worship God, who witness boldly to the Risen Christ, who love God and others extravagantly, who follow Jesus unswervingly, and who hope confidently in the new Kingdom and new Earth. We are Easter people!

Focus Phrase: Easter People put their hope in God alone.

1. Introduction

- A. **VIDEO - EASTER PEOPLE** (play right after the special music)
- B. **“WE ARE!” “EASTER PEOPLE!”** (3X)
 - i. Easter people **Worship Passionately**, with our whole being.
 - ii. Easter People **Witness Boldly** to the fact that the New Heaven is coming down to a New Earth when Jesus returns.
 - iii. Easter People - those who have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ - are called to **Love God and others Extravagantly** because God has shown US love that’s off-the-hook extravagant by sending Jesus to earth and promising His return.
 - iv. Easter People **Follow Unswervingly** through every twist and turn of life, as the world tries to send our rear-ends fishtailing.
 - v. And, AND, because of ALL THOSE THINGS, Easter People **Hope Confidently**. That’s our message title...
- C. We’ve spent some time in the Book of Revelation...which we could do for another year and still not fully understand it.
 - i. ...it’s really a **letter**. It’s a letter written to the fledging Christian churches in Asia. It’s a vision of the end of all things, especially when Jesus returns to put all things right again - as they were at Creation.
 - ii. The Book of Revelation was critical to the Easter People in those churches in the first century because it allowed them to hear from Jesus, who was inviting them to live in a brand new way - to worship passionately, to witness boldly, to love extravagantly, to follow unswervingly, and to hope confidently.
 - iii. The Book of Revelation wraps up the entire story of God throughout history past, present, and future. It puts an **exclamation point** on the full scope of God’s Word. And, even though we can’t fully understand every vision John had on that island of Patmos, it’s important for US to be part of the story of God, the church, and the world to come.

- D. Because of the worship, witness, love, and pathway of the communion of saints, who are and will be gathered around the Throne of Jesus right now, WE, Easter People, can be CONFIDENT in our HOPE...HOPE that you and I will be ushered into the presence of Christ when we die or He returns.
- E. The bible has lots of insight into the definition of HOPE.
- i. Every time the Bible mentions hope, it points to God's sovereign plan for the world.
 - ii. My favorite and most simple definition of hope (because I'm pretty simple, I guess) is that **hope is what happens when we project God's awesome future reality into our lives today...and LIVE** as if that future is already here. If you KNEW (for certain) that you were going to win the Boston Marathon in 10 years, you'd be motivated to live TODAY like you've already won it.
 - iii. That's the opposite of what we do on a regular basis when we project fear, anxiety, and worry from today INTO tomorrow...living today like we've already lost tomorrow.
 - iv. HOPE encourages and sustains us, no matter what's happening around us. Hope assures us that no matter the circumstance, it's not the final say. God has the final say. And if God has the final say, then we can confidently hope in God, today.
- F. If you're taking notes, write down this very simple phrase: **Easter People put their hope in God alone.**
- G. Let's pray and finish the final part of our Easter People series.
- H. PRAY!**
- I. Let's go to the very last book of the Bible, to the very last Chapter of the last book of the Bible, to Revelation 22...starting in verse 12.

2. Scripture

A. READ Revelation 22:12-14

- i. One of the cool things about modern credit cards is that they mostly all have CASH BACK incentives.
 - a. I have no clue how that works, but I DO know that when I use my credit card for certain things, I get 1%, 2%, 3% cash back. I view it as free money, even though I'm sure the credit card companies aren't losing any money to give that to me.
 - b. When I used to fly a lot, I'd rack up all kinds of frequent flyer miles and Stacy and I would fly to different parts of the country for free.
 - c. Cash back incentives and frequent flyer programs aren't immediately gratifying, right? You have to wait for those rewards to come.

- d. We look forward to the reward. We may even plan something today, because we know a reward is coming in the future.
- ii. Our hope, as Easter People, ultimately, has nothing to do with Rewards Programs or Cash-back. But we DO have a reward coming when Jesus returns. He's bringing it with Him. He said, "I am coming soon; my **reward is with me**, to repay according to everyone's work." (22:12)
- iii. We're not sure what the reward is, but throughout the Bible, we read about something similar to a modern-day points-based reward system:
 - a. "For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done..." (Matthew 16:27).
 - b. "For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil..." (2 Corinthians 5:10).
 - c. "Be on your guard, so that you do not lose what we have worked for, but may receive a full reward..." (2 John 8).
 - d. "For he will repay according to each one's deeds..." (Romans 2:6)
 - e. There will be a reconciliation and those who are following Jesus unswervingly will receive Jesus' reward.
- iv. In other parts of the Bible, we read about a tiered rewards system that could include CROWNS - imperishable crowns, crowns of glory, crowns of righteousness, and crowns of life. These are crowns that Jesus promises to give to those who have endured faithfully, loved and served God, and who have surrendered their lives to Jesus and his call.
- v. In verse 14, we read of another reward for those who have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb. They will have the right to the tree of life. We talked about that last week...the healing that comes from the leaves of the tree and the nourishment from the fruit of the tree.
- vi. The reward those saints receive is entrance into the New Jerusalem to spend eternity with God...because their names are written in the Book of Life.
- vii. All of that gave them confidence! And should US as well!
- viii. The promise was and is clear - Jesus is coming back. Soon. And when He does, He's bringing His reward with Him.
- ix. Confident HOPE comes from God alone, and His promise of reward. (This summer, we'll be spending 4 weeks on the Promises of God, so you'll want to be here each week to be filled up with those promises...)
- x. Let's look at verse 16, for Jesus' next statement to John...

B. READ Revelation 22:16-17

- i. Jesus, again speaking to John, said that the vision from the angel that John received was to *witness* - to testify. If one is testifying, that person is telling the truth about something they know or that they have been told.
- ii. In verse 16, Jesus said He sent the angel to tell John the truth about what would happen at the end of all things, SO THAT, John could put it into this letter and share it with the world.
- iii. Jesus said He is the root and descendant of David. That means He was before David (the root) and is after David (the descendant). He was a forefather of King David, whose throne God promised would reign forever...and Jesus is the King who will reign forever. That gave hope to the churches because this is all the culmination of God's clear plan for the world.
- iv. And then, He got to my favorite part of this section:
 - a. The Holy Spirit and the Bride (the church) say: "Come!"
 - b. All those who hear this testimony say, "Come!"
 - c. Let all who are thirsty come. Turn to you neighbor and say, "Come!"
 - d. I just love the invitational nature of this.
 - i) The third person of the Trinity says COME to the church, who says COME to the world.
 - ii) All those who hear the invitation and respond, say, "Come" to others.
 - iii) And all those whose souls are thirsty for God...they come.
 - e. When God invites us into his presence, there HOPE is found.
- v. Finally, we read the very last verses of the entire Bible...verse 20...

C. READ Revelation 22:20-21

- i. Two things echo once the canon of scripture comes to a close:
 - a. First, Jesus said, "Surely (confidently), I am coming soon."
 - b. Second, God's grace will sustain the church until that happens.
- ii. Christians have trusted in Jesus' return for over 2,000 years. Jesus is coming back.
 - a. When? We don't know. Why is He waiting? Some say that the gospel must be preached to all the nations. NO matter what, Jesus will come back when He says he'll come back.
 - b. The phrase we read in verse 20, "Come, Lord Jesus" is the Greek term *marána thá* means "O Lord, Come" It's a plea in response to Jesus' promise that he will come soon. Throughout church history, that one phrase has been consistent. Yet, it's not a question or a way out of turmoil. It's a confident statement of fact. Come, Lord Jesus!

- c. As I watched the news this week and was heart-broken over another senseless and evil act of murder at a Texas elementary school, my only words were, “Marána thá” O Lord, Come. He is our only hope.
- iii. The second part is about grace. The last phrase in the Bible, gives us hope as well.
 - a. We are not alone...we are covered by the grace of God...by the **undeserved favor of God** in this life, through the presence of the Holy Spirit and because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - b. Grace woos us to God before we even know it or Him. Grace saves us from eternal separation from God and helps us flee from the wrath to come. Grace sanctifies us as disciples, transforming us into the image of Jesus. And grace will lead us home to Him!
 - c. “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.”

3. Application

- A. There are lots of things that you may be tempted to hope in. Maybe it’s the cash back rewards or the airline miles. Maybe it’s money or fame or success or health or your good looks and brains.
- B. Easter People put their hope in God alone.**
- C. Cash back, money, fame, beauty, or anything else in this world isn’t mentioned in the Book of Revelation. In fact, we read in verse 17 that those who come could do so WITHOUT PRICE.
- D. So how do Easter People Hope Confidently in God alone?
 - i. It starts with **hope in the reward to come**.
 - a. The fact that Jesus said He’s bringing His reward with Him when He returns is all you need to know, really. And then live today as if that reward is already yours.
 - b. Plenty of things in this life can give us temporary hope, but only Jesus can give us everlasting hope.
 - c. The rewards will be different for each of us. Yet, the ultimate reward will simply to stand in the presence of God, worshiping, witnessing, loving, following, and hoping as we bow in His presence.
 - d. Believe the words of Jesus. Live a life today that strives for the reward to come, so that when you stand before Jesus, you’ll hear those words, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”
 - ii. Then, **respond to the invitation to “come.”**

- a. We all like to be invited and welcomed. We've all been left out of a party or wedding or a gathering and felt a little like we want to be there. We get serious FOMO (fear of missing out).
 - b. Jesus' invitation is not to a birthday party, but it's to a everlasting party that celebrates the Kingdom of God, in the New Jerusalem. Remember, that those who put their faith in Jesus have been marked! Claimed!
 - c. And once you RSVP and say YES, you notice that there's a section that says, 'And bring a guest'. You get to invite others to come as well... those who are hurting. Those whose souls are thirsty for God. Those who are fishtailing.
 - d. Confident Hope comes when we do this together as families and churches. Responding to Jesus' invitation gives you confident hope because Jesus is inviting YOU and expects you to come!
- iii. Finally, Confident Hope comes because **grace covers your life**.
- a. Grace is the key distinctive of the Wesleyan Methodist movement. Listen, the undeserved favor of the Triune God of the Universe falls afresh on your life every day as you follow Jesus as Easter People.
 - b. That grace forgives and heals. That grace guides and empowers. That grace gives you spiritual gifts to serve the church and glorify God.
 - c. Use your spiritual gift in ministry and I guarantee that you will be confident in hope for the future. Be forgiven. Let the Holy Spirit guide you, and, like a good GPS, you will navigate with confidence. Let grace cover your life.

4. Conclusion

- A. Hope is living a future reality today, with confidence that Jesus will come back and make all things right and new.
- B. Easter People put their hope in God alone. Will you increase your hope in the promises of Jesus and his return?
- C. Easter People worship passionately. Will you increase in a life of worship?
- D. Easter People witness boldly. Will you increase in a life of sharing?
- E. Easter People love extravagantly. Will you increase in a life of love?
- F. Easter People follow unswervingly. Will you increase keeping your life on the road of holiness and peace?
- G. The journey of Easter doesn't end here. Next week is Pentecost. We'll celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Christian Church. It's only the beginning! There's HOPE in Jesus!
- H. **WE ARE! EASTER PEOPLE!** (3x) Let's pray...PRAY!