

5.10.2026 Easter 6

Pastor Timothy McKenzie

Acts 17:22-31; Psalm 66:8-20; 1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21

“In him we live and move”

*Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Today’s reading from 1 Peter contains words that are always at the forefront of my mind: “*Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you.*” This means Christians should always be ready to make the hope that is in us real and tangible to others. To be a Christian is not a passive and private spiritual matter. We are each given faith, hope and love so that others might know Jesus Christ.

There is an aspect of Christian theology which does precisely what Peter is talking about. It is called Apologetics, and is based on a word Peter uses, ἀπολογία in Greek, which means to witness to the faith and hope we have in Jesus Christ. The word Apologetics is related to the word “apology” and can also, at times, express sorrow for the ways that Christianity has participated in empire and colonialism, times when we should have spoken out against systems of oppression and conquest which are always at odds with the love of Jesus Christ.

Fortunately, in every era faithful Christians have also attempted to make the case for Jesus Christ. From popes and bishops to priests and pastors, and to lay people in every walk of life, people have sought to explain the hope that lives in them through Jesus Christ.

What is this hope that Peter talks about? What is the hope that dwells in us? Jesus describes it in today’s gospel, saying, “*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him because he abides with you, and he will be in you.*” Our great hope is the abiding presence of God. Though you have not seen him, you know him because “*he abides with you, and he will be in you.*”

The hope that Peter describes is that because Christ lives, we also will live. No matter what is going on in the world or in your life, Jesus does not leave you orphaned. Jesus lives in you precisely because of the many people who have shared their hope in Christ with you. Our hope in Christ is passed on to us through others.

Today on Mother’s Day, we give thanks for all mothers, grandmothers, and the many women mentors in our lives. Mother’s Day always reminds me of Paul’s words to Timothy, “*I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you*” (2 Tim. 1:5). On Mother’s Day, we recognize that mothers were probably some of the very first apologists for the faith in our own lives. Mothers are people who have made their faith understandable, often by reasoning with

us when we were young; and even into adulthood, mothers continue to help us to understand that the faith, hope, and love we carry in us is a true and reliable hope. God bless all mothers and mothering mentors in our lives and everywhere!

The good news is only good news if you share it with others. The good news is only good news if it is made real to others with gentleness and respect. The hope we have in Jesus is not a platonic ideal or abstract idea; rather, our hope in Jesus Christ is so real that we often suffer with and care for others – not only for family, but also others whom the world ignores, hates, and treats as invisible. To be a Christian is to “*Always be ready to give an accounting for the hope that is in you.*”

In today’s reading from Acts, we see Paul giving an accounting for the hope that was in him to the people of Athens. Standing on the Areopagus, the site of the Greek judiciary, Paul was an apologist for the Christian faith, attempting to make Jesus Christ understandable in a different cultural context. To do this, Paul approached his audience through the words of ancient Greek poets. “*In him we live and move and have our being*” and “*For we, too, are his offspring*” are ancient Greek words that everyone would have understood. Thanks to Paul, these words have become part of our Christian vocabulary, for in God we indeed live and move and have our being. God has created all there is and all we are; all human beings are God’s offspring. In God’s eyes, we are all sisters and brothers; we are all God’s children.

Today’s world needs Christians who speak clearly of our sisterhood and brotherhood, for God has given life and breath to all people. No one is outside of God’s love. Yet Christians also need to confess that rather than praying for our enemies, we have, at times, treated them with hatred and contempt. We confess that though we have been created in God’s image, we have also ignored God’s image by squandering our intellectual gifts and making weapons that kill and beat others into submission. We confess that we have tried to remake the world in our own image. Paul stood before the Athenians witnessing to a loving God who has created all people. Our ongoing task as Christians is to clearly witness to the faith, hope and love that dwell in us.

So I ask: Have you ever given an accounting for the hope that is in you? Have you ever witnessed to your faith to someone of another nation, culture or religion with gentleness and respect? Have you ever suffered alongside of others to make Jesus known to them? This is what Peter exhorts us to do saying, “*Always be ready to make your defense to anyone...for the hope that is in you.*” You might be the only Christian that someone will ever meet.

In many ways, this was my life for nearly three decades living in another nation, where I was often one of very few Christians in my community. Eleven years ago, when I was a professor at the Japan Lutheran Theological Seminary, I was asked to speak on the topic of

peace in an open public lecture in the city of Hiroshima. The occasion was the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and the end of the Second World War. The lecture was attended by Christians as well as non-Christians, and to be honest, I was a bit uneasy because, like it or not, people would view me first not as a Christian, but as a citizen of the only nation to have used atomic weapons in war. My presentation was titled, “On being Peacemakers.” My talk that day concluded with my own faith and the example of Jesus whose self-emptying love gives us a peace that causes us to work for peace in today’s world.

The hope that dwells in each of us is very real. Jesus is not an abstract or metaphysical hope. He is a tangible and living hope, causing us to empty ourselves in witness and service for others. In a world of constant conflict, Jesus needs your voice.

Imagine a world of voices saying we are all sisters and brothers – all children of God no matter how different we are.

Again I ask: Have you ever given an accounting for the hope that is in you? You might be the only Christian that someone will ever meet.

May you always share the hope that is in you, and may you always work for peace.

*In him we live and move and have our being.*

He gives you hope that you might be hope for others. Amen.