

Easter Sunday — 2023 Murray Valley Lutheran Community

1 Peter 1:3: "Praise be to 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.

He is risen is our hope.

Hope is life changing — life giving.

On SBS they have some strange shows — I love SBS.

One day they had a special feature on Rats.

All the shows that day were somehow connected to rats.

And the big finale was a Rat Horror movie.

One of the shows was about scientific rat experiments.

It was very interesting — totally unethical but very interesting.

They got a rat and put it in a giant aquarium half full of water. The rat had to swim of course.

The rat went around and around for about an hour and then it drowned — I know this doesn't sound good - but it's SBS.

Then they got another rat and put it in the same aquarium. This rat swam around and around but after 10 minutes they held a ruler into the water so the rat could hold on to it and have a rest.

Then they took the ruler out of the water.

Of course, the rat started swimming again —it had no choice.

But things were different this time. The rat would

swim around the edge but it always stopped where the ruler was.

It would look for the ruler - no ruler - and then swim off again.

This Rat did this for over 4 hours until they finally let the poor thing go.

This rat never drowned.

The experiment was to show that the rat who had the hope that the ruler might appear again, lived.

The rat who had no hope drowned.

A typical weird SBS show — but so true.

Those with no hope die but those who have hope live.

And when we think of the first Easter there were so many people with no hope.

The first ones without hope were Jesus closest friends, and followers.

As he went to the cross they gave up — they had no hope of Jesus resurrection.

We know this is because when Jesus died the disciples hid themselves away in private — sad, grieving — they were in sorry business.

Their only hope was dead and buried.

They were convinced they would never see Jesus again.

It was a hopeless situation for the women close to Jesus.

We know this because they went to the grave on Easter morning to "prepare" — what they thought would be the hopeless, smelly, body of Jesus.

They all agreed with Isaiah's words:

..... we thought his suffering was punishment from God.

Jesus friends and followers had no hope — the soldiers curse rang in their ears: *He can save others — why can't he save him self.*

Soon and very soon they all were very surprised to discover Jesus was alive.

Now they had hope.

Now they had the will and hope to live.

Now they had a new message.

Now they had seen the resurrected Jesus.

Jesus resurrection, as announced by the prophets, as foretold by Jesus, witnessed by hundreds is our hope for eternal life.

Now there is hope!

A bit like that Rat — the rat with hope just wouldn't die.

I was reading a true story — similar to the Rat film.

During WWII there was a small spy Submarine which was stuck on the bottom of the ocean.

The reason it got stuck was because the crew were drunk. They were doing everything they shouldn't have been doing. Somehow the submarine got stuck.

They were running out of air fast.

They were feeling the effects of too much carbon dioxide.

They started blaming each other.

Some started fights.

Some went quietly to their beds — ready to die.

It was a hope-less situation.

In the mean time the Navy came and sent down some divers who attached a cable to the submarine so that their ship could winch it up.

No one knew if it would work - they didn't know how badly they were stuck.

They had more-or-less given up.

The diver was looking in the porthole.

So they tapped a message in mores code to the diver — IS THERE ANY HOPE?

And the diver tapped back—THERE IS HOPE!

The news spread quickly in the submarine.

The men in their beds waiting to die got up.

A calmness came over the submarine as the crew silently waited and hoped.

By this time there was virtually no air— but everyone was OK.

Everyone was excited.

Eventually there were winched to the top and rescued.

Its just like the rat film – isn't it?

But what did those men do once they know they had hope?

Did they keep on drinking?

Did they keep on fighting?

Did they go back to bed?

No!

They were glued to the little windows trying to see what was happening.

They were encouraging each other.

Those who were once fighting were now helping each other.

Hope brings life and change.

Thomas one of the 12 was not around when Jesus rose from death to life.

When the others told him Jesus was alive — he just couldn't believe them. He said unless I poke my finger into the holes I saw in Jesus hands when he was on the cross. And unless I put my hand in his side where I saw that spear go in — I won't believe.

Sometimes, we're a bit harsh with Thomas — "doubting Thomas" we sneer — but the truth is we're all a bit like Thomas.

That strange act — Thomas sticking his finger in Jesus side. It is recorded for all of us who doubt.

It is recorded so that we have hope.

Our hope is based on what happened, what was seen, what was prodded and poked, and what was recorded — the actual truth.

And now we quite concretely enact that hope in Baptism:

- Our sins on Jesus back — dead and buried on Good Friday.
- Our eternal life raised when Jesus was raised to life on Easter Sunday.

You remember this one: "Faith is being sure of what we hope for, and certain of what we do not see." ...

1 Peter 1:3: "Praise be to 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."

"For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.' —Jeremiah 29:11

Can you share hope?

I Hope you can? I know you can.

Prayer: Lord Jesus remind us of our hope in you —sins taken away, forgiven, new life, life eternal. Let us live and share this new hope. Amen.