

He Lives!

To Restore My Hope

A Sermon on Luke 24:13-35

Year A - Easter 3
30 - April - 2017

JJ¹

Hope is a powerful thing. Some would argue it's the most powerful state of mind. Being so powerful, worldly hope gets used in two main ways—1) to sustain; and 2) to crush.

Hope is used to sustain baseball teams in the World Series, down three games to one. Hope is used when a project or school play doesn't seem to be coming together in time—"Hold out hope!" Hope is used to sustain the sick and suffering—"Maybe things will get better!"

Hope is also used to crush. Sometimes it's used to actually sustain people so that in the end, they will be crushed. You find this in the Nazi slave camps of WWII. The sign above the entrance to Auschwitz read *Arbeit Macht Frei*—Work Will Make You Free. Hope is used and manipulated in abusive relationships so that the abuser can hold on to the weak.

Hope lost is a crushing blow. How great the hope is will determine how great the blow will be. A little boy hopes to go outside, but he wakes up to a cold and rainy day which leads to a grumpy, fidgety demeanor (and that's the parents, by the way). You hope to make the team. You hope to make first chair. You hope to get accepted to your college of choice. Each

deals ever increasing blows as hopes are lost.

You hope for a successful career, but something happens and it goes careening off path. You hope for a marriage that lasts till death do us part, and that only after getting old and gray. You hope for children, but there are barren wombs, miscarriages and even children lost later in life. You hope for answers and finally recovery from illness, but the body succumbs to death. You hope for lasting faith and faithfulness to God in those you love, but you see some turning away from God.

The experiences of life are often hope-crushing.

Yet here is where we must be very careful. Experience, that which we see with our eyes can be very deceiving. So deceiving that when the experiences of life are viewed without vision given by God, then all hope is lost! Just look at these two disciples on the road to Emmaus!

Their experience growing up gave them a false view of the Messiah. They were waiting for a political Messiah, a mighty victorious earthly king. Someone to restore glory to the *nation* of Israel. You see they held on to this so tightly that

¹ JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

they still couldn't see clearly even after Jesus taught them the truth for three years! This experience and thinking is what they fall back on when everything seems to fall apart with Jesus' death. You see it in how they describe who they thought Jesus was to Jesus: he was "a man who was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." Jesus' apparent failure left them with the opinion that he was indeed a prophet mighty in deed and word, but still just a prophet. Still just a man. They say, "we were hoping that he was going to redeem Israel." It seems very likely that they're still thinking of earthly redemption, not spiritual.

Their worldly, human-based hopes had left them without hope. Their foolishness and slowness of heart to believe manifests itself when they meet Jesus and are kept from recognizing him!

How often have you found yourself in similar situations? Situations where you don't even recognize Jesus any longer. If you don't think you have, let me share ways we all have. "I wonder if God has forgotten about me?" — "Does God even listen to my prayers?" — "God must be punishing me. That's why this happened." — "Does God even love me?" — "Could God really forgive me again, for this?" — "I don't think even God can help with this!"

We've all thought some, if not all these things at one point in time. How many of them have you wrestled with in just the last week? Even already today?

You see, when we find ourselves thinking and saying these things, we're revealing that we're not recognizing Jesus. We're letting experience and what we can see tell us what Jesus looks like. Sirens should be wailing in our hearts and minds when we think and speak this way. But so often, we ignore them. That's when we need Jesus to come to us and say: "How foolish you are and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"



God does this as he sends a pastor, a family member or a friend, who through the law calls us out for our foolishness and doubt. "Why are you looking for and trying to recognize Jesus in this world? Why are you trying to see who

Jesus is from the so-called scholars you can watch on the History Channel? Why are you trying to recognize Jesus by melding together everyone else's opinion of Jesus to fashion your own opinion? Why are you trying to recognize Jesus as the Jesus this world wants him to be— just a nice guy who will pat you on the head and never tell you you're wrong, and who has an entourage of free-loading groupies?"

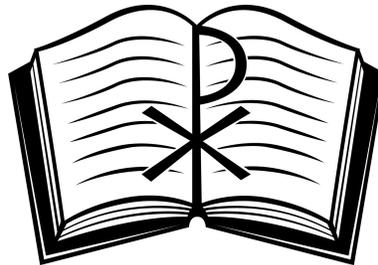
Then that pastor, family member or friend says, "Let's look in Scripture to see Jesus. Let's see what Jesus has to say about himself...and you!" Friends, look at the love of God in the Old Testament! God used everything, even the devil's evil plans and actions, to still carry out his plan to save the world! Remember what the Lord said to us through Peter today: "...you were redeemed from your empty way of life...not with things that pass away, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like a lamb without blemish or spot...Through him you are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God" (1 Pt. 1:18-20).

Friends, when the reality of God's truth strikes our hearts, hope is born and **HOPE IS RESTORED!** That's exactly what happened for those disciples on the way to Emmaus so long ago. "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was speaking to us along the road and while he was explaining the Scriptures to us?"

Friends, **JESUS LIVES TO RESTORE YOUR HOPE!** And your hope in him is not a worldly hope that has a good chance of

disappointing and crushing you. No! Not at all! This is a heavenly hope. A real hope. A hope based on God's absolute, unchanging truth. It is hope in the truth that: God *is* in control. God *does* know what you are going through. God *does* listen to your every plea. God *did* punish, not you, but Jesus in your place. Jesus' blood *does* cover *all* your sins. Jesus *can never* forget you, because your name is forever written on his heart. Jesus *can* help and *always will*, according to his perfect plan.

When we look to the Word of God, we recognize Jesus and our hope is restored.



Friends, remember hope is real and everlasting when it is based on truth—God's truth. Seeing Jesus clearly once again, let your hearts burn brightly with the truth of God's

Word. Be filled with the same joy and eagerness as the two who ran to tell others that Jesus had restored their hope. Know that because your hope in Jesus is real, you will one day sit down with him and break bread, but he will not vanish from your sight. You will see him forever and ever! Why? Because "the Lord really has been raised!" Amen.

SDG²

² SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for “To God Alone Be The Glory”. This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn’t about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

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