

WE FIND HOPE THROUGH THE RESURRECTION

Opening Prayer: Holy God, You have always been one who disrupts; You interrupt suffering to bring peace; You interrupt isolation to create community; You interrupt silence with the sound of alleluias. So today, we ask that You would interrupt us. Stop us in our tracks with the good news that only You offer. Freeze time and move among us, so that we can hear Your word anew until the sound of alleluias ring in our ears. In Jesus' Name we Pray. Amen.

Easter this year is different in relation to the impact of COVID19 – our way of life has changed, we are isolated. Many of us are struggling. We may be asking – where can we find hope?

As I said on Good Friday we have to take the path that Jesus took to reach Resurrection Sunday. **And here we are.**

I wonder if any of you got up at sunrise to celebrate this wonderful day – the day when Jesus Christ won over death and rose to give us hope and change the world.

You may feel that this virus is the only thing changing and controlling our world today – but let me share the Good News.

The disciples thought they had lost their hope on Good Friday as Jesus was lifted up onto the cross. Their lives were dramatically changed. They thought everything was gone as Jesus said: It is finished.

But what hadn't changed and what we celebrate today, on Resurrection Sunday, is that Jesus had already won the battle and things will never be the same again. We have hope. We can find hope in Jesus.

You may ask - why did Jesus give His life for us?

To find out we need to go back to the beginning, back to Genesis, back to the story of Adam and Eve. You see Adam and Eve were living in the Garden of Eden, like living in heaven. It was perfect and God walked with them in the Garden.

But Satan, the fallen angel made them doubt God's words leading them to disobey God and be sent away from His presence. This act affected all creation.

You know years ago people thought nothing of polluting streams with chemical waste and garbage. It seemed insignificant – so small. Now we know that just 2 or 3 parts per million of certain chemicals can harm human health.

Sin in our lives is similar to pollution in streams. Even small amounts are deadly. Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden, separating them from the close relationship they had with God.

I think we can understand what being separated from others feels like, due to COVID19. We experience sadness, anxiety, loneliness, hopelessness.

Now in order to restore our relationship with God, after the first sin, a reversal had to take place.

God continued to give people opportunities to repent and obey Him. He sent His prophets but many were killed. The people would obey God for a time, then lures of the world would draw them away.

It is like some of the people who are disobeying the Health restrictions today. The lure of how they used to live their lives draws them to disregard the restrictions, risking further spread of the virus.

But most of all, the actions of a few mean that the lives of many are then changed as the restrictions are further tightened.

Just like Adam and Eve's sin – their action affected them and it has been affecting all people since. We all will die, but we all have a way out – we all have Hope.

God's plan to reverse this situation was through a once for all, sinless sacrifice.

We are told about this from the very beginning. You cannot just concentrate of the New Testament – you only get half of the story. The entire Bible is God's story of His saving grace. Jesus is the one who reverses Adam's story and ours.

He chose to come to earth, to take on humanity, to draw people back to God and to reverse the separation that existed – the sadness, anxiety, loneliness and loss of hope, to become our High Priest who has opened the way for us to go directly to God.

Jesus was not in the tomb. He had risen. Even the Temple Guards knew Jesus had risen but the Chief Priests opposed to Jesus, bribed the guards to lie about what they had seen.

For 40 days following His resurrection, He met and spoke with many people – His disciples and around 500 more at different times.

The facts are there in black and white, Jesus rose from the grave just as God had planned back in the beginning and just as Jesus said.

You may recall that at the precise moment that Jesus died, the curtain in the temple was torn in two, top to bottom. Now this curtain is not like you normal bedroom curtain. It separated the Holy Place and the Holy of

Holies in the temple. It was just over 18 metres long and 9 metres wide with 2 layers composed of 72 joined squares.

Now when a Jewish Father received horrible news of his son's death, he would tear his clothing. While Jesus died for the rescue of the world, the crucifixion and death of Jesus caused His Father untold pain – God was showing His grief.

We should not ignore the tearing of the curtain as it provides a physical and visual sign that the purpose of the Messiah Jesus had been fulfilled.

It reveals the mourning of the Father over His Son and it also reveals God's promise of redemption and restoration of humanity had been completed through Jesus opening the door for us to directly enter into His presence.

Now you may struggle to comprehend this amazing story. But you wouldn't be alone. Like Mary and the disciples you may be at any of the following stages of belief.

1. Suggesting the story is a fabrication and impossible to believe.
2. Like Peter, you may check out the facts and still be puzzled about what happened.
3. You may have encountered Jesus leading you to accept the fact of the Resurrection.
4. You may have committed yourself to the risen Lord and serve Him.

Then you begin to understand the reality of His presence with you.

Jesus resurrection is the key to the Christian faith. Why? Here are 5 reasons:

1. Just as He said, Jesus rose from the dead. We can be confident that He will accomplish all He has promised.
2. Jesus' bodily resurrection shows us that the living Christ, not a false

prophet or imposter is ruler of God's eternal kingdom.

3. We can be certain of our own resurrection because Jesus was resurrected. Death is not the end – there is future life.

4. The Divine power that brought Jesus back to life is now available to us to bring our spiritually dead selves back to life.

5. The resurrection is the basis for the Church's witness to the world.

You can't have the cross without the resurrection. Today when we may be feeling our hope has gone – look to Jesus – He is our Hope. He is with us during this crisis. He holds the world in His hands. He holds you in His hands.

I would like to finish with You tube.