

A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

"Hope, Lost and Found" 4/12/23

Today the lost hope of Christ's passion is still fresh. The surprising hope of the empty tomb still holds us in awe yet causes us to wonder. With newfound hope our spirits cry out with David's:

'I saw the Lord always before me, for He is at my right hand so I will not be shaken; therefore, my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover, my flesh will live in hope. (Psalm 16:11)

Christ followers felt all was lost. It was over. Who could have foreseen this? The end of a dream. Game over. All hope is lost.

Thomas couldn't face it. He went and hid. Thomas, the twin. Thomas, the twin of us. He looks like us, he feels what we feel, and he reacts as we would. Hiding is a common, maybe, for some, a habitual reaction to trauma. We pull the sheet up over our head and stay in bed. We go for a walk, we leave town, we get in the car and drive.

But how could he? He'd been with Christ, sat at His feet, listened, watched, seen things we can only imagine. And he dared to run off, now, when there was grief to share and hope to be rustled up, from somewhere. But he hid, it was all he could do. Hope lost. We point an accusatory finger at Thomas, but those other three fingers are pointing right back at us.

Meanwhile, that first day of the week, all had heard Mary Magdalene say she had seen Christ. Peter and John had seen the empty tomb. Yet here were Jesus' followers, scared, grieving, hiding - in a locked room.

Then, through the locked door, Jesus appears and says, "Peace be with you." They could use a little peace about now. Then Jesus commissions them to forgive others, in this way they love their neighbors, even during trying times like this. By holding on to hate and blame, they withhold the message of Christ, the purpose of His life. All are bound in chains when grudges are held.

Later, they see Thomas and tell him, "We've seen the Lord!" Oi-vey. All bluster now, Thomas tells them, he doesn't believe them. And what's more, he won't believe them, unless he sees and touches Jesus' wounds.

Thomas goes back with them, to hide safely behind a locked door. And wonder of wonder, Jesus appears again. Knowing their need, He again offers them peace. Then He turns to Thomas and says, "Here, see my wounds, touch them, they are real." Can we place ourselves in Thomas' shoes? Can we identify our doubts and our hopes with our twins? Thomas looks at Jesus, I imagine their eyes lock, unblinking. Thomas takes it all in as Jesus lovingly says, "Do not doubt, but believe." Without skipping a beat, Thomas confesses, "My Lord and my God." He gets it. Hope found.

Jesus brings us into this locked room with our twin by announcing blessing on those outside of that room, outside of that time, those who will believe without seeing. God's peace comes to all who go and seek, who come and see.

Jesus, who taught love by His life and through signs which were witnessed by many, was condemned outside of the law and crucified, but death could not hold Him and God raised Him from the dead. Jesus remains with us, so we are not shaken, so our flesh will live in hope found.

One thing I've learned about faith and hope, is how important it is to hold one to it, especially when things look the most hopeless. We question, we doubt, we are curious, and we don't understand – but we can still grab ahold of our faith and choose to believe, to trust God, even though we feel like running off and hiding. God's promises are just as true for those who wonder as they are for those who confidently proclaim their faith.

Please pray with me:

Lord, you come to us when we lose hope. You enter into our locked rooms of worry and doubt. You appear through the locked doors of our hearts, of the hospital room, the office, of our church, or the coffee shop. And You bid us peace. You rose from the dead for the sad, the curious, and for those of us who believe, even when we don't understand. In You, hope which was lost can always be found.

Amen

Easter blessings.