

A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

Holding on to Hope 4/5/23

Jesus said, "It is Finished." Then He bowed his head and died. (John 19:30)

Unbelievable. Here we sit between Palm Sunday and Easter. The tide had turned. The crowds have turned. We want to hold on to hope, we try. The enthusiasm of Sunday's parade has passed and yet, the hosanna's still ring in our ears. The palm branches are still green. Rumors are running rampant. The Pharisees are in cahoots with the Romans, they will get rid of the One who claims to be The King of the Jews. For once they agree on something. Jesus has upset both of their apple carts.

Hope has faded for many. How can this be? Yet many are holding on to hope, to see this through, to believe in the Man from Nazareth.

When they took Jesus before Pilate, He remained silent as He was whipped and mocked. The people who had praised Him as He entered the city, now cried for Him to be crucified outside of the city. The people denied Him as their king, claiming they had no king but Caesar.

So, Jesus is taken to Golgotha. Family and friends, followers of the Way, gather at the foot of the cross as He is crucified under Pilate's sign which - rightly declares Him, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

When His time was come Jesus said, "It is finished," bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

All seemed lost. What's it all about? How could this be? Is it all over? What becomes of all He'd taught? Would the sun ever shine again?

But still, we look to God, and we gather up our gumption and grab ahold of hope and continue. We face a new day, with new strength given to us by God. We do not give up. We face challenges, we become stronger for having faced them – and we survive. We become more hopeful. Our lives testify to the goodness of a loving God who blesses us even when the skies are gray, even when hope is tenuous, we believe with our last little bit, not letting go – but holding on to hope.

We journey through this story, following the way of Christ. We pick up our crosses and love and serve others. We are kind and generous. We lift up our voices and sing praises to His name. We go and share the story. We believe the sun will come out tomorrow and His story will continue. Through the darkness of night, we - hold on to hope.

The crucifixion of Christ is not the end. We know in our heart of hearts this story of Good Friday must be told, must be heard, even though it breaks our hearts, makes our minds whirl, goes against the theme of any fairy tale, it is wrong and appears unfair. I mean flag on the play. Yet it is as old as time, was written before the stars shone, and we must go through the pain and the heartbreak of Friday, holding on to hope. For Sunday is coming.

Please pray with me.

Loving God, when we have nothing left, we hold on to hope and thank You for loving us so much You sent Your only Son to live and love, teaching us how to live for You and to love others. Thank You for giving us Your Son who was willing to die for us. Thank You that this story does not end on Friday, but rises to new heights as Your Son rises on Easter morning.

Amen.