

**Hope Lives**  
**Lester Zimmerman**  
**John 20:1-18**

The theme for our Good Friday Service was The Price of Hope and today's theme is Hope Lives.

Hope is one of the most powerful forces on the planet. It is what keeps the human spirit alive, enabling people to overcome the most overwhelming circumstances.

Easter Sunday is a day of great celebration. Easter is about forgiveness and hope. Jesus paid the price on the cross for our forgiveness and for us to have an eternal hope. We have hope because Jesus overcame the powers of darkness.

- Evil thought it had won. Jesus was dead but three days later Jesus rose from the dead - The devil is defeated – Our sins are forgiven - Victory is ours – Hope lives

But for the disciples between Friday and Sunday it didn't look like victory. It seemed like their dream had died along with their leader. It was over. They were depressed and totally discouraged. Let's check in on Mary, Peter and John.

**Read John 20:1-13**

To Peter, John and Mary it seemed like things couldn't get any worse. Not only had their enemies killed Jesus, now his body disappears. They can't even grieve over his body. They forgot that Jesus promised he would rise again in three days.

In the midst of discouragement sometimes it's hard to remember the promises of God. It's hard to see beyond the pain of what you are experiencing. You are just trying to cope and get through the day.

Sometimes the stuff life throws at us is really hard. But the message of Easter is the message of hope, of life and of victory. The message is not to give up. The message is to look beyond your present circumstances. There is a resurrection ahead.

The message of Easter is:

**1. We are not to be discouraged when evil seems to be winning.**

Just as on the Friday of Jesus' crucifixion, all hope seemed lost and death seemed to have conquered, so at times today the world seems dark and evil seems to be winning.

Sometimes we can relate to the frustration of the people in the prophet Malachi's day. The people were becoming discouraged. It seemed like God was letting sinners off the hook. And here they were trying to live godly lives in the midst of a decadent culture. They were losing hope.

### ***Mal 3:13-15***

**13 "You have said terrible things about me," says the Lord. "But you ask, "What have we said about you?"**

**14 You have said, "It's useless to serve God. What's the use of doing what he says or of trying to show the Lord Almighty that we are sorry for what we have done?"**

**15 As we see it, proud people are the ones who are happy. Evil people not only prosper, but they test God's patience with their evil deeds and get away with it.' " GNT**

Sometimes like the people in this passage we look at those around us who want nothing to do with Jesus and we see them prospering and seemingly have a good time. It doesn't seem fair.

We do what is right and sometimes end up with more problems. We struggle to walk in integrity and live pure lives and the sinners seem to get away with their sins.

Malachi is saying.... hang in there – It is only Friday in the world but Sundays coming'.

### ***Malachi 4:1-3***

**1 The Lord Almighty says, "The day is coming when all proud and evil people will burn like straw. On that day they will burn up, and there will be nothing left of them.**

**2 But for you who obey me, my saving power will rise on you like the sun and bring healing like the sun's rays. You will be as free and happy as calves let out of a stall.**

**3 On the day when I act, you will overcome the wicked, and they will be like dust under your feet. GNT**

It may seem like a long time but there is a day coming when God will deal with evil and make all things right. It might seem like evil is winning but know for sure that "The Day" is coming.

On Good Friday, the disciples thought it was all over. But God said just wait. The resurrection is around the corner. Easter changes everything.

Let go back to Peter, John and Mary. When we left them they were pretty hopeless.

### **Read John 20:14-18**

I love this. Mary turned around and saw Jesus. We need to turn around. We need to change our focus. We need to put our eyes back on Jesus.

## **2. Hope is renewed when we turn our focus back on Jesus.**

He is always standing right behind us. There may be a bully in front of us. A seemingly impossible situation blocking us. The world may be laughing at us. Finances may feel overwhelming. And we may be discouraged with how things look in the natural.

We need to turn around. Like Mary – turn around. He is right there. Take your eyes off of the problem. Take your eyes off of the person giving you a problem and put them back on Jesus.



Turn around - The Lion of Judah is right behind you. Turn your eyes of faith around.

**Heb 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith...**

When you see the Lion of Judah in all his strength standing behind you everything comes into a new perspective. You are no longer alone or powerless.

### **3. Hope keeps us going when it's hard to see Jesus.**

There are times that it's hard to see Jesus or feel his presence. Like Mary, sometimes we don't recognize Jesus when we turn around. He is there but for some reason we can't really see him or understand his ways.

Sometimes God is silent and we are waiting and waiting on the promise. I am reminded of the disciple Thomas who struggled with unbelief until he saw Jesus. Jesus thought of us in that moment when he said this...

**John 20:29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."**

When the waves are crashing over us, our hope in Jesus becomes an anchor in our lives. Even when we can't see him hope helps us to believe.

**Heb 6:19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.**

#### **Conclusion:**

Whatever your situation is this morning it has a resurrection around the corner and resurrection power to overcome. The same resurrection power that raised Jesus from the dead now lives in us by the Holy Spirit so we too can overcome and walk in victory.

- Don't throw in the towel, don't give up – Turn around!
- Hope lives!
- God is in control and has a plan in process – the answer is on its way.

This is not a time for us to be discouraged. It is not a time for us to back off or slack off but to stand up straight and tall. Lift up your heads with hope and anticipation.

The message of Easter is that because Jesus overcame death and rose again there is hope for your situation today.

***Heb 10:23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.***

The resurrection of Jesus brings hope to all of humanity.

- No person is beyond the reach of his love
- No situation is too big for God to solve it





## Discussion Questions:

April 16<sup>th</sup> 2017

*Hope Lives*

Message by Pastor Lester Zimmerman

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Hope is a powerful thing. As Pastor Lester pointed out, it keeps the human spirit alive, enabling people to overcome the most overwhelming circumstances.

- Have you ever lost hope in something, or someone? What happened, and how did that impact you?
- Have you ever been sustained by hope in a way that enabled you to overcome great odds?

2. Acts 23:6 says, "I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead."

1 Peter 1:3 says, "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."

- What does it mean to find hope in the resurrection from the dead?
- And how does that sustain us through the darkness in this world?

**3. Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-34**

- What has it meant to you personally to be "made alive in Christ?" (vs 22)
- What do you think Paul means by verse 24 that all dominion, authority and power will be destroyed, and how is that a cause for hope?
- How has your life been touched or shaped by death? (vs 25-26)
- Based on verses 30-32, how should the hope of resurrection impact the way you live? Does it?

4. On Sunday Pastor Lester said, "Hope is renewed when we turn our focus back on Jesus. Hebrews 12:2 says, 'Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.'"

- What are some of the things in life or society that tend to cause you to lose hope and take your eyes off of Jesus?
- Is there something stealing your hope right now?

- What does the process look like for you to turn your focus away from circumstances and onto Jesus? What helps you do that?
- Are there people in your life that are hope busters? Who are the people in your life that are hope builders?

## **WORSHIP & COMMUNION:**

Spend some time having communion together as a group, celebrating Jesus' death and resurrection.

**See *A Guide to Experiencing Communion* below.**

# A Guide to Experiencing Communion together

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## Preparation:

### You will need:

- **Bread:** it can be any kind of bread (crackers, unleavened wafers, loaf, chunks)
- **Juice:** You will need grape juice or wine
- **Cups:** for each person to receive the grape juice
- **Your Bible:** marked and ready to read from *Matthew 26:26-29; or 1 Corinthians 11:23-29.*
- **Music:** If you want any soft music or worship playing in the background

### A word of instruction:

The Bible doesn't give exact instructions on how to celebrate communion. Different faith communities have different traditions that make it meaningful to them. The important thing is to affirm God's presence. Giving people clear instructions is helpful in guiding them through the process so that they aren't confused about the details and can focus on connecting with the Holy Spirit.

## Importance of Communion

Sometimes it is meaningful to remind people why we celebrate communion together.

When we celebrate communion we are:

- Remembering the price Jesus paid for our forgiveness of sins
- Re-affirming our covenant and commitment to him
- Celebrating the community of God's people living in love, unity, and forgiveness towards one another.

## Follow up

Because communion is so powerful and experiential and intimate it is usually a great opportunity to lead people directly into a time of worship, or into a time of confession of sins (groups of 2-3), or into a time of personal sharing, etc.

**See next page for suggested script.**

## Suggested Script for Communion

**Say:** “In the gospel of Luke Jesus instructed his disciples to, ‘*do this in remembrance of me.*’ (Luke 22:19)”

### Bread

**Say:** In Matthew it says “*While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.”* (Matthew 26:26)

The bread represents the body of Christ that was broken so that we could be restored to God.

**Action:** Hand out the bread.

**Pray:** Pray out loud on behalf of the group. Pray from your heart as you feel led. (It is usually appropriate to thank God for giving his son Jesus, to thank Jesus for giving himself for us so that we could be healed, and to recognize God’s presence in our midst.)

**Action:** Eat the Bread (Take your time; give people time to pray and reflect).

### Cup

**Say:** Again in Matthew it says “*Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”* (Matthew 26:27-28)

The cup represents the shedding of Jesus’ blood so that our sins could be washed away, and we could be made new.

**Action:** Hand out the cups.

**Pray:** Pray out loud on behalf of the group. (It is usually appropriate to thank Jesus for his blood and the cleansing from our sins and freedom we experience through his blood.)

**Action:** Drink the juice

### Closing Prayer

**Pray:** Pray out loud on behalf of the group, or invite others to pray out loud closing the time of communion.

### Follow up suggestion

Because communion is so powerful and experiential and intimate it is usually a great opportunity to lead people into a time of worship, or into a time of confession of sins (groups of 2-3), or into a time of personal sharing.