

Sermon - Easter 3

April 18, 2021

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May our reflections on scripture this day inspire us to be strong followers of Jesus in word and action. **Amen.**

In my sermon on Easter Sunday, I wrote,

The story of Easter is a story about suffering, death... and new life.

Even in the worst moments of fear; the worst moments of sadness; the worst moments of death and despair – even then, God’s presence is still with us. Even then, God is working out possibilities for new life. This was certainly true then – and this is certainly true now.

At this point in our lives, in the midst of dark times, you and I need to know that this is certainly true... God’s presence is still with us...

In the Gospel reading for this Sunday, we hear another story of the risen Jesus appearing to the disciples. Right after Jesus appears to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, they return to Jerusalem to tell the eleven of their experience:

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ... Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you--that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled."

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day..."

Luke 24:44-46

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures...

Jeremiah 33

33:14 - The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up from David.

Isaiah 61

61:1 - The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

Isaiah 42: 1

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.

Psalms 78:1-2

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;
incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings from of old.

Isaiah 53

53:3 - He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account. Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our burdens...

In understanding these scriptures, the disciples hearts were opened to experience the truth that their hopes were not dashed. The redeemer lives and because of what has happened, their relationship with God has been transformed forever.

If you put your full trust in Jesus; if you have full confidence in him, then you will experience that awesome

sense of freedom, love and joy.

Not only that, but because of this, you will feel a great energy and desire to do as Jesus did – to reach out and transform relationships wherever possible.

Over and over again, this is what Jesus did throughout his three-year ministry. He wanted to mend people's bodies, he wanted to lift people's spirits, he wanted to transform people's relationships with one another – and *above all* he wanted to *transform people's relationships with God*.

**Yes, we're all broken -
but in the sight of God...
we are all precious...
we are all deeply loved.**

Years later, the disciple John wrote...

*See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God;
and that is what we are... 1 John 3:1*

You and I are now to be called **children of God**. We have been given the knowledge, the resources and the spirit to continue Jesus' ministry. As **children of God**, we have been given the spirit and the ability to be people of hope in this world. As people of hope - as **children of God**, we

look for ways to demonstrate that everyone is loved and valued by you and God.

The disciples who knew Jesus – the followers who experienced his life, death and resurrection -were absolutely convinced that this is precisely the reason why Jesus had come into their world – to take the initiative of transforming our relationship with God.

And in so doing inviting us into a new reality – a Kingdom of God that is breaking into this world. Knowing that you are participating in the Kingdom of God means that you are in the world but not of the world.

Like many before us, you and I have been called to be children of God, followers of Jesus Christ, the risen Lord. We are called to walk with him along the road of life. We are called to listen to him and learn from him. We are called to be people of hope in this world and carry on his ministry of transforming love.

Peace be with you... as you encourage one another and live out this beautiful calling in your lives.

Amen.