**The Walk of New Hope**

**Luke 24:13-35**

Intro – What have you been doing this week? Has your life returned to the new Covid-19 normal after Easter?

For those of us who have school kids, life is back to the grind of home schooling while trying to get you work done from home. For retired folks, life is no different from last week, trying to stay safe, now wearing a mask to grocery and drug stores as well as getting pick up food to eat.

Our new normal involves worship services virtually, Zoom Meetings, Zoom family gatherings while staying at home and staying 6 feet from one another at those grocery and drug stores.

Yet, in the church year the Easter season is just beginning. It runs until Pentecost, 50 days total, May 31 and includes Jesus ascension on the 40th day – May 21. These 50 days are supposed to be celebration. How can life return to normal when we’ve celebrated Easter and the COVID 19 virus is still pressing down upon us?

It is not easy. We have lots of thing to do. Work from home, online school, more at home meals to fix, more laundry to do and the list goes on.

We find ourselves much like the two disciples on their way to Emmaus. They were depressed at how everything turned out wrongly! Instead of a Savior commanding the religious leaders and giving Romans the boot. They walked despondently back to Emmaus. Listen to their story – Luke 24:14-35

Passover was finished, Jesus had been crucified and some women had reported that he’s risen.

The two disciples are walking down the dusty road to the village of Emmaus. Their talk concerns the crucified Jesus. Their words come slowly, trudging in cadence with the dirge-like pace of their feet. They were going home. Life was getting back to an unwelcome routine.

“I can hardly believe it. He’ gone. What do we do now?”

It’s Judas’ fault, he should have - - - “

Just then a stranger comes up from behind and says, “I’m sorry, but I couldn’t help overhear you. Who are you discussing?”

They stop and turn. Other travelers make their way around them as the three stand in silence. Finally, one of them asks, “Where have you been the last few days? Haven’t you heard about Jesus of Nazareth?’ And he continues to tell what happened.

This scene fascinates me – 2 sincere disciples telling how the last nail has been driven in Israel’s coffin. Their hope against Rome and its end to occupation – dashed. God, in disguise, listens patiently, His wounded hands buried deeply in his robe. He must have been touched by the faithfulness of this pair. Yet, he also must have been a bit chagrined. He had gone to hell and back to give heaven to earth, an these two were worried about the political situation of Israel.

“But we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.”

But we had hoped - - -

* How often have you heard a phrase like that?
* We had hope that the conorna virus would be done by Easter and we could celebrate at the cemetery and church?
* We had hoped we could have had our block party and Easter egg hunt.
* We were hoping the doctors would have found a solution to this virus and our medigagtion would have worked sooner
* We had hoped school would be back in session and that Graduation would be back on the schedule

We had hoped to that our jobs would be reinstated. In March I thought all this would be over by Easter.

* We had hope life would be back to normal

But we had hoped - - -

Words painted gray with disappointment.

What we wanted didn’t come

What came, we didn’t want.

The result - shattered hope and the foundation of our lives tremble.

What have you hoped for and it didn’t happen?

In the mid 1990s, I really wanted to make a change in my area of ministry and felt lead to do so my God. I wanted to work full time as a hospital chaplain. I applied, interviews, everyone but the one hiring said “I had the job in the bag.” Five chaplain jobs came open as the Chaplain's department was expanding. Yet – Each time it came down to me and one other person. But I wasn’t hired.

What I hoped for didn’t happen!

How about you – what have you hoped for – and it didn’t happen?

We join the 2 disciples and trudge up the road to Emmaus, dragging our sandals in the dust, wondering what went wrong:

What kind of God would let me know like this? Let us down like this?

And when we get like this, so tear filled are our eyes, so disgruntled by disappointment, so limited in our perspective that God could be the person walking next to us and we wouldn’t know it. The person sitting next to us now – and we wouldn’t consider it.

You see, the problem with our 2 heavy-hearted friends was not the lack of faith but the lack of vision – of what could be.

Their petition, their vision, was limited to what they could imagine – an earthly kingdom.

Had God answered their prayers, had God granted their hope for a free, redeemed nation of Israel, the 7-day War would have started 2000 years earlier and Jesus would have spent the next 40 years training apostle to be cabinet members.

You have to wonder if God’s most merciful act is his refusal to answer some of our prayers! To refuse to buy into our vision.

We are not much different than the burdened travelers, are we?

We roll in the mud of self-pity in the very shadow of the cross.

We piously ask for God’s will and then have the audacity to pout if everything doesn’t go our way!

**Our problem is not so much that God doesn’t give us what we hope for as it is that we don’t know the right thing for which to hope.** [REPEAT]

Hope is not what you expect; Hope is what you would never dream.

It is a wild, improbable tale with a pinch-me-I’m dreaming ending.

Hope is Abraham adjusting his bifocals so he can see not his grandson, but his son.

Its Moses standing in the Promised Land – not with his brother Aaron, but with Elijah and the transfigured Jesus.

Hope is Zechariah left speechless at the sight of his wife, Elizabeth, gray-headed and pregnant.

Hope is the fire breathing, Christian-pursuing Jewish leader, Saul, who became Paul, a missionary for Christ to the Gentiles.

And hope is the two Emmaus bound disciples reaching out to take a piece of bread only to see that the hands that offered them were pierced.

Hope is not a granted wish or a favor performed. No, it is far greater than that!

It is a zany, unpredictable dependence on a God who loves to surprise us out of our socks to be there in the flesh to see our reaction.

Did our hearts not burn within us as He opened the scriptures to us?

That’s what hope does! It gets out juices going again – so that we can almost taste what God is getting ready to do. And where we find real hope, we find an irrepressible joy.

These two disciples were so overjoyed by the new hope, that they got up and walked into the evening to share with the other disciples.

Is there an incident or event in your life that causes a burning of excitement in your heart?

If so, it could very well be God’s way of surprising you - and all of us through you – with a NEW HOPE for a NEW DAY.

Because Jesus was raised form the dead – we stand in a new day, with a new Hope. Nothing can defeat us when we stand in Christ. With this new Hope comes a joy that will never let us down. And this we need to remember in the pandemic we are experiencing! The power of the Risen Christ is more than enough to get us through! Our world will not be the same once we get through this! But in Christ it will be better!! Amen