

Messages of Easter hope from local pastors

Carried Along

Acts 27:14-15, "But before very long there rushed down from the land a violent wind, called Euraquilo; and when the ship was caught in it and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and let ourselves be carried along."

This is a snippet of the journey Luke records about Paul's journey to Rome where he was to stand trial before Caesar. During that voyage, Paul and all those upon that ship encountered a storm. That tempest raged to the point of forcing the crew to stop fighting the storm, and instead be at the mercy of it, to let themselves "be carried along."

Life in this fallen world has a knack for throwing us into storms such as these; to where we have not the wisdom, nor the strength, to fight it. We get thrown about, tossed to and fro, and battered by the harsh and unforgiving waves of this life—not in control, but rather, "carried along." It may even get to the point where it seems as if all hope is lost and death is imminent.

Such was the case for Paul and his companions. But there was something the crew did that saved their lives. Acts 27:17 tells us, "...they used supporting cables in undergirding the ship." The "supporting cables," were literally called "helps." They were cables that were passed around the ship's hull to hold it together while it was being ravished by merciless waves. The "helps" would literally hold the structure together. Without them, the ship would be ripped apart, and all would be lost.

What is interesting about this word translated "supporting cables" in Acts, is that it is the same word translated as "helps" in Heb. 2:18 and 4:16. Consider how it is used in those two places. Heb. 2:18, "For since He Himself [speaking of Jesus] was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to help [there is that same word in the Greek] those who are tempted." Heb. 4:16, "Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help [there it is again] in time of need."

I think it no accident the Holy Spirit inspired the author of Hebrews and Luke to use the same word in these three places. As "supporting cables" hold ships together in storms, so does Christ become the "help" to the Christian to hold him together during the storms of life. Jesus wraps Himself around us, so to speak, so that we might be saved in the most severe trials of life.

But all this is possible because of what He "suffered" (Heb. 2:18). Jesus lived the perfect life, so that He might become the substitute for His people. Instead of them suffering the wrath of God, He did it in their place. Then He conquered death and rose the third day. He lived, died and rose again. And all those who turn from sin and place their faith in Him will also conquer death one day. How? Because He clothes them with His perfectly righteous life. He wraps them up in Himself. No longer can the wrath of God harm them. They become changed from those

who have the bull's eye of God's righteous indignation on their backs, to targets of His love and mercy.

Though there are severe storms in this life, none compare to what is on the horizon. Death awaits us all. The only way to pass through that storm unscathed is to have the "supporting cables" ("helps") of Christ holding you together. Without Him, you will be torn apart as wave after wave of God's wrath is brought against you. The choice is to be "carried along" by Christ or the wrath of God in hell. Choose Christ. Turn from sin and trust in Him, for He is your only true "help" in this life and the next.

*Eric Schonbachler
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Worship service: 10:45 a.m., 210 Water St., Lexington.*

'Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?'

It will be Easter this Sunday, a day celebrated by many as a welcoming of Spring, anticipated through long, cold winter months.

But this day carries a joy infinitely beyond a season.

It is Resurrection Day, the most joyful day of the year because it is the day that Jesus walked out of the tomb, overcoming death!

We can celebrate this most wonderful day because we see the harsh reality of the Good Friday before, the day that Jesus was nailed to a cross.

More than 600 years before, the prophet Isaiah told us about this day:

"Who has believed our message? To whom has the Lord revealed His powerful arm?"

My Servant grew up in the Lord's presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground.

There was nothing beautiful or majestic about His appearance, nothing to attract us to Him.

He was despised and rejected, a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.

We turned our backs on Him and looked the other way.

He was despised, and we did not care.

Yet it was our weaknesses He carried, it was our sorrows that weighed Him down.

And we thought His troubles were a punishment from God.

But He was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins.

He was beaten so we could be whole" (Isaiah 53:1-5 NLT).

Because we understand that a love beyond our understanding compelled Jesus to die in such a way for us, we can celebrate His victory over death with an infinite joy! This is the rebirth that is Easter – Resurrection Day! God, "in His great mercy... has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!" (I Peter 1:3 NIV)

Come celebrate this love with us!

*Pastor Joann Dickson
Hopeful Saints Ministry*

Corner of Gale and Church St., 541-676-9970
Maundy Thursday 6 p.m.; Good Friday 6 p.m.; Son Rise Community Service 7 a.m. at the fairgrounds; Sunday Easter

Service at Hopeful Saints 10 a.m.

The Feature Film

Are you one of those people who enjoy watching the previews before a movie? Or, are you squirming in your seat, trying to decide if you have enough time to go grab a Coke and a bucket of butter-laden popcorn before the movie you came to see starts?

Previews are just that; a preview of something yet to come. Properly called trailers, these five-minute montages of clips give us just a taste of what the full-length movie will be like, in the hopes we will return to see their film.

I love movies. I love going to the movies. There is nothing like the experience of smelling the popcorn and seeing the lights darken as the screen pops and the story unfolds.

As exciting as that may be, there is an even greater story you must see. That story actually had a preview as well. A real-life trailer that began in black and white before shifting into Technicolor.

Allow me to briefly tell you this story as you sit back in your comfy velvet chair and adhere your shoes to the sticky soda-stained floor beneath you.

But first, the preview. There was a man named Lazarus. Jesus loved Lazarus. In fact, Jesus was very close to Lazarus' whole family. But Lazarus got sick. He was so sick that his sisters went to get Jesus for help. But Jesus delayed in coming to see Lazarus, and Lazarus died. Lazarus' sisters were pretty upset with Jesus about this and told him as much. The moment became so emotional that Jesus, overcome with sorrow over the reality of death, wept. With tears steaming down his face, Jesus ordered others there to open Lazarus' tomb. When the stone was rolled away, Jesus shouted into the tomb, "Lazarus, come out!" And at once, a man, once dead, came walking from the grave.

That's the preview. The taste of the real story. The real story is not just a story about a regular guy, like Lazarus, coming back to life at the behest of Jesus. The real story began in a garden. A perfect place named Eden, without danger or disease or death. Two people lived in this garden, made their home in this garden, and it was good. But something happened, something terrible. The man and woman in the perfect garden walked away from it all and chose a different life. They abandoned the garden because they falsely believed they had a better offer elsewhere than in the place the garden owner had freely given them. So they abandoned him and all he had given them.

For many, many, many years they regretted their choice. They and their descendants suffered the consequences of that choice for generations. Theft happened. War happened. Disease happened. Death happened.

But the garden owner saw, and he was filled with great compassion. And so, he began his merciful plan to restore it all back to the way it should be. To get back to the beauty of the beginning, death had to be dealt with forever. And the only way to face death would be to die himself.

And so, he came and lived as one of the original inhabitants of the garden. He loved. He never did wrong to anyone or anything. And because of that, he should not have died. Why? Because he alone did not deserve death, but yet he chose death. And by choosing to die when he did not have to die, his death was offered as a substitute death for anyone who was willing to receive it as such. And so he died.

But the story does not end there, and this is where the significance of the preview of Lazarus' death comes into focus. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, that was just the foreshadowing of the ultimate resurrection from the dead. Because you see, Jesus did not just die, he came back from the dead three days later.

No one had ever raised themselves from the dead, and no one has ever done it since. Jesus rose from the dead. It is a fact of history. Many people testified about it. Hundreds of witnesses saw Jesus alive again. Some of them were even willing to die to tell other people about it.

What about you? Have you seen the movie? Do you believe it is true? Or are you stuck in the previews, watching the trailer, wanting more?

Come worship with us on Easter morning at 10 a.m.!

*Tripp Finch
Pastor, Willow Creek Baptist Church*

560 Minor Street, Heppner,

Also, streaming live at: <https://www.facebook.com/wbccheppner> & <https://www.youtube.com/@WCBCHepner>.

Easter and the Real Jesus: Hope Is Alive—and We Need Each Other to Live It Out

Let's be real: the world feels heavy.

Division is everywhere—on our news feeds, in our families, even inside our own hearts. War, heartbreak, anger and anxiety have become part of the daily background noise. People are exhausted, overwhelmed and silently wondering, "Is this all there is?"

But it doesn't have to stay this way.

Since the time of Jesus, there has always been another path - a better one. A life full of purpose, peace, and actual hope. And Easter reminds us why that's possible: *the tomb is empty. Jesus is alive. Hope is alive.*

At the Ione Community Church, we're launching a four-week sermon series about *Resurrecting Hope*. It's all about how the resurrection of Jesus Christ still speaks directly into our struggles today. For generations, followers of Jesus have faced grief, loss and injustice—and still held onto joy. Why? Because resurrection changes everything.

In our darkest days, it gives us *light*.

In overwhelming discouragement, it gives us *faith*.

In the midst of devastating loss, it gives us *joy*.

In times of deep division, it offers something powerful: *unity*.

That kind of hope doesn't come from more money, better habits or a really good self-help book. And it definitely doesn't

come from the version of Jesus found in *Cultural Christianity*—where Jesus is more of a cosmic good luck charm than a risen Savior.

You know that version—He's "the big man upstairs," the one who's good for a quote here or there or a song at a funeral. A Jesus who's admired but not followed. A Jesus who "takes the wheel" only when we're skidding on ice. He's sentimental, but He's not transformative. And honestly, that Jesus can't help us.

But the *real* Jesus—the one who walked out of the tomb and invites us to follow Him? He can transform everything.

Galatians 5 paints the contrast. We see what happens when we try to run life on our own: hatred, division, jealousy, selfishness, fits of rage (sound like your last group text or post on Facebook?). But when we walk with the Spirit of God, something beautiful begins to grow: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Here's the thing—we *weren't meant to walk this road alone*.

That's why it matters to show up. To gather. To worship. To grow. Whether it's at the Ione Community Church or another local church, we need each other. Life by the Spirit is deeply personal—but it's never meant to be private.

Church is more than a building or a Sunday thing. It's a group of real people learning to live with real hope, together. It's where we remember who Jesus really is—and who He's calling us to be.

So this Easter, don't just admire Jesus from a distance. Don't settle for empty faith or cultural comfort.

Come meet the risen Christ. Come be part of a community where hope is alive—and growing.

Because hope spreads faster when we walk in it *together*.

*Jeff Clabaugh
Minister, Ione Community Church*

www.ionecommunity-church.org

Peace be with You!

After six weeks of spiritual renewal, we have reached the desired goal of Easter. I wish you all a "Happy Feast of Easter!"

Easter's theme is "Peace" (shalom), reminding us that peace isn't something we find on the outside; rather it is a blessing we can experience on the inside. What we notice in all the post-resurrection scenes is that the first words when Jesus appears to His disciples are "peace be with you"...Something we and the world are looking for and longing to have.

As I was preparing my Easter message, something from the Bible struck me intensely from the Gospel of John, an apt message for the occasion: "Jesus answered them, 'Do you believe now? The time is coming and is already here when all of you will be scattered, each of you to your own home, and I will be left all alone. But I am not really alone, because the father is with me. I have told you this so that you will have peace by being united to me. The world will make you suffer. But be brave! I have defeated the world!'" (John 16:31-33).

Easter reminds us that peace is available to us at

any time, even in the most difficult of circumstances, because of Christ and His sacrifices made for each of us. We need to shout, "Alleluia, God is with us!" Much before His death, just as a movie director knows what is going to happen or how things should happen in the next scene, Jesus was able to predict what was going to take place after His death: "In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

The evening vigil service has seven readings from the Old Testament. All of them describe the love of His fidelity to humanity: The creation of the world out of nothingness, and then the creation of human beings put in control of the whole world. Through disobedience and sin, humans' loss of friendship with God, but His not leaving mankind like that. How God protects His chosen people of Israel through various experiences, from the slavery in Egypt and His leading them through the mighty waters of the Red Sea. But man kept on ignoring God and continued the path of sin.

In Paul's Letter to the Romans, (6:3-11), Paul reminds us of an important element: We who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death. Through these six weeks of Lenten observances, we were preparing ourselves to be crucified with Christ so that our sinful bodies might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin. Paul's epistle constantly reminds each one of us that we should not fall into sinful situations but keep ourselves pure and holy.

The Gospel of the day is from Luke (24:1-12). The Evangelist describes the Risen Lord's encounter with one of His beloved followers, Mary Magdalene, and a few other women. Mary Magdalene loved Him, since He freed her from the clutches of sin. That is why, even after His death, these women continued to show their fidelity and love towards the Lord. We need to examine our own consciences occasionally and realize what the Lord has done for you and me every day in our lives. Are we grateful to Him for all we receive daily from Him? Like Mary of Magdala, do we love Him with our whole hearts and do we look for Him daily in our troubled moments?

The risen Lord also mentions, "Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid" (John 14:27). This Easter season reminds us all to come closer to the Lord, who is caring for us, who continues to protect us from all threatening events. The Lord invites everyone to come closer to Him and trust Him more.

Let the words of Christ resonate in our minds and hearts. I think that is the real message of Easter: "Be brave, I have conquered the world." If you remain in Him and His words remain in you, surely we can conquer with our faith anything and everything that challenges us every day. The gift of peace is available to us because Christ is the Prince of Peace. Jesus Christ is the light that dispels darkness and ushers lasting peace and joy.

Father Thankachan Joseph