

# Melva's Corner

## HOPE STILL ALIVE AND WELL

May 15, 2006

(Luke 24:25-26)

**Central Truth: Jesus is risen, and that means that there is no place where God is not, no evil so deep or dark that the light of grace and power and love does not pierce to its very bottom.**

I realize the 'world' celebrated Easter on April 16<sup>th</sup>. But for weeks I have been meditating on the "Resurrection." The true Resurrection and what it should mean to believers. As I think of the disciples on crucifixion day, you could see it in their stooped shoulders, in the dark circles under their eyes, in the lines of worry on their foreheads and in the down turned corners of their mouths. You could see it in the shuffling way they walked, in their grave expressions and subdued gestures.

You could hear it, too, in their vocabulary: "they crucified Him, but we had hoped that He was the one who was going to redeem Israel." **We had hoped.** They had dared to imagine that God was going to bring about the long-anticipated freedom of Israel through Jesus. Whatever aspirations these two individuals had - nationalistic, religious, political, economic - whatever aspirations they had were bound up with Him. Tied to His fate.

A week earlier, as crowds welcomed Him to Jerusalem with waving palm branches and shouts of "Save now," it must have seemed to them that all those hopes were on the verge of fulfillment.

But now, they're entombed with the body of their friend and teacher. Now their hearts are as empty as His tomb apparently is.

We had hoped. Ah, I imagine you've walked where they walked. Bet you've even said the words, haven't you?

**"I had hoped the treatment would give him a few more good years."**

**"I had hoped we could work out our problems."**

**"I had hoped to keep my job a little longer."**

**"I had hoped to pay off this debt by now."**

**"I had hoped I could reconcile with my child."**

To live in this world is to travel roads that turn unexpectedly, that traverse places you'd rather not go, and that seem to end abruptly in places that were never your intended destination. It's really a testament to the human capacity for hope that we keep getting disappointed; it's such a common part of our lives that you'd think at some point it would stop surprising us. But surprise us it does, and when it hits us in the gut and leaves us gasping for breath, one of the first things we'll always wheeze out is that we had hoped.

I came across a tragic story several months ago from a newspaper in Nairobi, Kenya. The story was about a woman, dying of hunger in the drought-ridden Kagundo district of the country, who had placed a curse on God for sending the famine. "Whoever brought this famine, let him perish," she chanted, banging on an empty cooking pot, just hours before she died in her sleep.

To tell you the truth, I couldn't blame the woman for being disappointed in God. That empty cooking pot is a powerful symbol, isn't it, of lost dreams, dashed expectations, failed aspirations? What do you do when hope is all in the past tense – when your present is bleak and your future nonexistent? One of the options, surely, is to give up hope, curse God, and die. Who's to say that, pushed to the point of starvation, they wouldn't do exactly the same? Not a claim I can make with complete confidence.

There is an alternative. But it's not intuitive. It's not one that we can come up with on our own.

It involves a change of heart, a widening of vision, and it requires the intervention of someone who sees things from a higher vantage point. "What are you discussing together?" a stranger asks the two discouraged disciples. And they tell him. They tell him about Jesus, and they tell him about their hopes, and they tell him about the cross and the tomb. But their hopes are so far gone that not even the fact that His tomb was found

empty that morning can retrieve them. That's why they need Him.

That's why we need Him too; without Him, our ruined hopes are overwhelming. Jesus reminds these two disciples that nothing that has happened is outside the boundaries of what God has already said must happen. "Foolish," He calls them, "slow to believe," because they should have realized that God's plans would not be derailed by something as trivial as a cross and a sealed tomb. They should have recognized that God wouldn't leave them alone to pick up the pieces of shattered hopes.

It takes a while, but finally their eyes are opened and they recognize the One who has been with them all this time. "Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?!" they exclaim to each other. Their hearts had been cold piles of embers, and now they are aflame again with hope, joy, anticipation, and excitement.

**All it takes is resurrection.**

Jesus' tomb is empty. Sometimes that meaning gets lost. But if the world looks a little more bleak than it should, if it's hard for you to hear the shouts of "He is risen!" because of the incessant thumping of "I had hoped" in your heart, then I want this to be more than the usual year for you. I pray that it will be a time when you come face to face with the risen Lord. I hope that He will open the Scriptures for you and help you to see that your lost hopes do nothing to derail the work of God in your life, and even that sometimes lost hope is necessary so that you will have room for the new hopes He wants to give you. I pray today that you will recognize Him as He breaks the bread, hear the reassurance of the church that Jesus is alive, and that your heart will be set aflame again with hope, joy, anticipation, and excitement.

Jesus is risen, and that means that there is no place where God is not, no evil so deep or dark that the light of grace and power and love does not pierce to its very bottom. There is no lost hope that cannot be restored or replaced, no discouragement that cannot be transformed into anticipation. Jesus is risen, and that means that sickness, sin, and death are defeated. Jesus is risen, and that means He walks with us in our discouragement and reminds us of the hope that because He

**lives, we live too. Jesus is risen, and in His empty tomb we see beyond a shadow of a doubt that wherever the road you travel might take you, He is right there with you.**

**Jesus is risen. So hope lives, too.**

**Scriptural References:**

**“How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” (Luke 24:25-26)**