

Heavy but Hopeful Hearts!

We are living in a day when every human being is being awakened to what's always been true, namely, every human heart needs hope! (repeat)

The heavy-heartedness around us all is so thick right now that you'd have to be in a cryogenic sleep to not be aware of it in our world.

But I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I am **NOT** going to dwell on the heavy-heartedness in which we're all swimming (and many not swimming too well). After all, when someone is drowning, they don't need a news team to come out on a yacht with lights and cameras to inform them of what they already know. The drowning person knows they're drowning. What they need is help!

And so it is for us!

And for all who are around us!

We need help for heavy hearts!

And I'm here to tell you that help is not only on the way, but help for every heart is here already in God's Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit of God who proceeds from the Father and the Son!

But just like when the lifeguard or the Coast Guard comes to get the drowning soul, as the God of hope has come to help us in Jesus Christ, you can't fight him and tell him that he's serving you the wrong way, as the sisters of Lazarus did in today's Gospel reading. You can't tell God that he doesn't know what he's doing!

The God of hope, who made this utterly amazing universe to begin with and keeps it AAAAALL in order so it doesn't become a cosmic smash-up derby,

The God of hope who made the intricacies of your brain and nervous system and blood flow to every stitch of your being,

Don't you think he knows how to save your heavy heart from despair.....and how to fill you with the hope that renews the weary soul?

So let's just take a few minutes to observe from Holy Scripture, the practices of the Great Physician, who met 2 heavy-hearted sisters and the crowd that was mourning with them,

and not only raised their brother named Lazarus from the dead (for a time),

but also would himself be raised from the dead by the glory of the Father to fill and renew the heavy hearts of AAAAALLL who would receive him with a hope that will not fail!

So what God shows us in his word is that he births and nurtures hope in heavy hearts by...

Reminders. The FIRST thing God does is remind us.

Jesus told those around him when he heard of Lazarus's illness, "This illness does not lead to death, rather it is for God's glory so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

Jesus knows that heavy hearts tend to FORGET what gives them strength. So Jesus REMINDED the heavy hearts around him of the truth that he'd told them before. The end and the goal and the purpose of this illness is to bring everyone closer to the Lord everlasting.

Now, I don't know about yall, but I've got work to do to get better as a giver and encourager of hope. God says that heavy hearts tend to forget, so he lovingly reminds us.

Me? I think everyone should remember everything in the world that I have ever said, so when someone forgets something I've told them before, my flesh, my sin nature, gives a little huff and a sigh. Anyone here know what I'm talkin' about because, uhhhhh, maybe you do it to.

God births and nurtures hope in heavy hearts with reminders, starting with you and me, so we can lovingly and gently do the same because heavy hearts tend to forget.

Reminders!

Second, what God shows us in his word today is that he births and nurtures hope in heavy hearts by not just reminding us, but reminding us of what **HE HIMSELF HAS SAID BEFORE.**

Jesus says that this heavy-heart needs to be reminded of **WHAT GOD HAS SAID AND SHOWN BEFORE!**

When Jesus says that the illness is for God's glory, this is not **NEW** news! From the beginning of creation, God has revealed him**SELF** and his heart and his goodness through his word.

God not only knows that heavy hearts forget, but he knows that heavy hearts need to **SEEEEEEE** **SOME**thing that encourages us and keeps us moving along the way. Light at the end of the tunnel isn't just at the end of the tunnel, it fills the **WHOLE** ungodly cavern with the light and guidance of the Lord.

God in Christ Jesus knows that chins fall and **NEED** to look up and see **AGAIN** and **AGAIN** and **AGAIN** not only the light that's coming but that in truth is already **HERE!**

Just this morning, one of my neighbors was walking with their child in a stroller, and I asked him how they were doing. His heavy-heart began to spew. With both of us being new to the neighborhood, I didn't know if he'd heard of hope in Jesus, but **GOD!!!!** **REMINDED** me to share what I know, that God is bringing glory to him and blessings to many as paces are slowing down and people are calling each other and eating meals together even if some of those meals use the phone and the technology that God invented before the

foundations of the world but has revealed in more recent days. And my neighbor smiled and said, ya know, you're right, and he started to talk about the ways he's enjoying the new normal that's been thrust on us all.

Jesus says that heavy-hearts are filled with hope when **GOD SAYS AND SHOWS US** what God's said and shown before... and he's counting on us to spread the word.

Third, what God shows us in his word is that he births and nurtures hope in heavy hearts by acting in accord with the truth. In the case of the Bible readings today, Jesus acts in accord with the truth by not overreacting. The Gospel reading in John 11:5-6 says this, "ACCORDINGLY, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, Jesus stayed two days longer in the place where he was."

Hunh! Jesus heard heavy-heart-making news but he acted **IN ACCORD** with the truth. Knowing and trusting that **AAAAALL** things are used by God for his glory, Jesus didn't overreact. He stayed calm.

Jesus did this because he knows that heavy hearts need time. Heavy hearts need time to process what our hearts are actually yearning for.

A couple days later in the Bible reading, the sisters would say, “Jesus, if you had been here, then our brother wouldn’t have died.”

People, listen!

Is that what we really want? Do our hearts really want for NOBODY to ever die? Seriously? You wanna play that out?

Our congregation is blessed with some amazing Octogenarians, people who are well into their 80’s and beyond. Ask them! They’ll tell you that no matter how healthy they look, getting old is very hard work!

Doesn’t God’s own word tell us in Psalm 90 that a reasonable life is 70, maybe 80 years?

Is that we want then, for people just to never die?

Friends, Jesus died on that cross and rose from the dead to OPEN the way to the everlasting heaven NOT to shut us out!

Maybe what our heavy-hearts are longing for is for the things that are happening in this heavy-hearted day. A

restaurant owners taking food to a guy in a wheelchair who to this point had navigated 300 yards of highway 31 traffic in a wheelchair because he's got one leg. To see the tears of joy in my friend Joseph as he speaks of the privilege of taking food to John.

Maybe we're yearning for the neighborhood Bible reading that's happening as people stand at their garage doors in the Danberry neighborhood in Hoover.

Maybe we're yearning for the sound of community that is 10's of thousands of people in Brazil singing one song into the streets from their high rise apartments and experiencing a glimpse of the **THRONG** that will sing praises to God in the everlasting heaven.

Jesus stayed calm and took his time because he knows that heavy hearts need time. Heavy hearts need time to process what our hearts are actually yearning for. And when we've been weaned off the yearnings and desires of the world, **THEN OUR HEARTS CAN AWAKEN TO THE YEARNINGS AND DESIRES AND HOPE OF THE LIVING GOD!**

And finally, what God shows us in his word is that he births and nurtures hope in heavy hearts by calling us out of the grave...to live the new life that he came to win for us through faith and hope in God's Living Word Jesus Christ.

Can't you just see Jesus sauntering over to the cave where Lazarus had been laid and a stone rolled before it which was the way the people said NO HOPE! No hope that Lazarus will live. No hope that God can do anything now.

DID

WE

NOT

HEAR

THE

WORD

OF

THE LORD THROUGH EZEKIEL?

God said, Oh mortal, can these dry lifeless bones live?

And Ezekiel being a humble man was a smart man and said, “Unnnh I don’t know Lord, what do you have to say about that?”

And God said, “Prophecy! You tell these bones what I tell you and you will see them come alive!”

So Ezekiel spoke God’s Word and those bones came **ALIVE!**

Jesus spoke God’s Word and that dead man came **ALIVE!**

Friends, we have that same everlasting word today, and if we’ll speak that word, we’ll see those heavy-hearted hearts come alive!

Prophecy I say! Which means to tell the world what we know, **IN JESUS CHRIST THERE IS HOPE!**

And May God be praised...as hope springs forth...as we do!

Amen!