

Salt – Light – Hope

Casting Hope from Afar



We have all made it safely through Holy Week. Well done, good and faithful technological servants in ministry! While the construction of the opening sentence may sound a bit odd, this special week in the liturgical year for those in ministry (both teaching and ruling elders) is often experienced as an intense,

compact journey of love, pain, anxiety, and overwhelming joy, culminating in the emotional catharsis of Easter Sunday followed by the Easter Monday crash.

Except this year. This frustrating, enervating, pandemic-ridden year fraught with balancing unexpected responsibilities and disruptions, fielding frenetic anxieties, and cultivating skills outside seminary curricula or ministry experience. **Yet, dear friends, we have done it, and we have done it to the glory of God!**

But it may still feel as if something is out of kilter, even though we witnessed that Christ has indeed risen. Because, you see, we depend upon experiencing Holy Week—and the weeks preceding for that matter, in relational community within a rhythmic existence. The kids will be at school, our partners will be at work, funerals and weddings and hospital visits and worship gatherings and Bible studies and youth activities and missional outreach fill our lives, our hearts, our spirits with people whom we love and care for.

And without touching these people in the flesh, without reading facial expressions, without clasping reassuring hands, without sharing joyful hugs, without partaking in the peace of presence, we may begin to feel as if the stone has not yet been rolled away. In fact, our stores of energy, imagination, intelligence, and love may be running low.

Yet, in the midst of this holiest of weeks, God continues to do new things. God has reminded us that covenant community matters, that we are all called to ministry together. God has sifted our priorities, separating the precious golden kernels from the chaff in our lives. God has insistently reminded us to live deliberately, intentionally, meaningfully.

So—as we seek to live in the abounding post-Easter hope of Romans 15:13, the benedictive assurance with which we bless our worship, I share these encouraging words from our colleague, Shelley White Wood, who pastors the Orchard Park Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis, in her post-Easter conversation with God:

So, I sit up here on top of this summit, and look out at the journey ahead and am uncertain, sad, scared and a little angry. It's time to ask the questions: "What good have you served? For what did you come? What sort of person have you become?"

You remind me of Esther, who came to a place for such a time as this. - She didn't want to be where she was either.

You remind of Jeremiah, who you patiently prodded, despite his utter frustration that he had to be there at all.

You remind me of Ruth whose steadfast faithfulness took her to a foreign land. She had no idea where you were taking her.

You remind me of Moses who had no idea when he set out with a community of religious folks, that they would be in the wilderness for 40 years. You remind me that you were with them, every step of the way.

You and I chat about this awhile, and you whisper in my ear, "Trust Me." And I do.

Now let's get up. There's a worthy adventure ahead.
