

## Luke 23:39-43

What do you hope for in this season of Lent. Are we hoping for something to make us feel better?

But the hope we grab onto most tightly this Lent is the hope of Christ. The hope we have in Jesus Christ and his cross is not like any other type of wishful thinking we have in this world. It is sure and solid and lasting.

The irony is that the cross does not look like an element of hope. The cross was not initially a goal to strive for or a driving force in our everyday living. It was a torture device, and one of the cruelest at that.. The cross provides us with hope when there once was none at all. The cross and Christ's death upon it gave us a path to follow, heaven that awaits us and a faith that would bring us to a closer understanding of God's will to gather us together with him. These are the reasons we have hope.

Even though Jesus told them again and again, the disciples did not want to believe that Jesus would suffer and die for their sins. They doubted the news. They questioned it. When it was happening, they ran away and hid. They sank into hopelessness and despair.

One of the criminals on the cross next to Jesus mocked him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" The soldiers also mocked Jesus in the hours before he went to the cross. They put a purple robe on him; they made him hold a staff as a scepter and pushed a crown of thorns into his head and then bowed before him in fake flattery, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

The people, standing before a beaten and bloodied Jesus,

presented to them by Pilate, seemed to have no hope in Jesus whatsoever either, when they cried out in loud and angry voices over and over again, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

The people who walked past Calvary and saw Jesus hanging on the cross thought all hope was lost, as they shook their heads, as if to say, “What a shame. This did not turn out the way we thought it would.” Hopes were dashed.

Only the criminal on the cross on the right side of Jesus showed he had hope in what was happening right before his eyes in the person of Jesus. He said to the criminal on the left of Jesus, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we got what we deserved,; but this man has done nothing wrong”. He knew that Jesus was not guilty of any crime, but that he, himself was. He knew that he deserved death but that Jesus didn’t. So he said to Jesus, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom”.. Jesus’ response assured the criminal of this belief when Jesus said to the man, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise”.

Need a little reminder of this fact? Fast-forward to the evening of Easter after Jesus had risen. Two disciples were headed from Jerusalem to their home in Emmaus. Along the way on their journey, a stranger began walking beside them. The disciples did not know the stranger was Jesus, so when Jesus asked them what had happened over the last days, the disciples talked about Jesus in the third person, about how he had been killed. “We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel”. In that moment, the Emmaus disciples had no hope in Jesus. But Jesus, “interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself”. The disciples realized that their hearts

were burning within them with hope when Jesus was talking to them and when they recognized Jesus when he broke bread in front of them in their home. They immediately ran to tell the other disciples about Jesus. That is what hope does for us too. It compels us to tell others about Jesus and to be excited about the Good News of salvation in him.

What events in your life might cause you to share with others the hope you have in Christ and the cross? Maybe it is a profound spiritual moment you had in church, or maybe it was a recovery from any illness or injury. Or maybe it was an a-ha moment you had while praying or reading the Bible.

Be guided to the cross this Lent. Be guided to the hope you find there. Be blessed in your moving forward in faith with confidence and assurance that the Crucified Christ will always be by your side, teaching you along the way and making your hearts burn within you for him.

Amen.