



THE **HOPE** OF **EASTER**

10 REFLECTIONS FROM
Our Daily Bread.

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INTRODUCTION | JASMINE GOH, *Our Daily Bread* author

Cloudy Vision

In March 2013, I spent a week in and around Tromsø, a Norwegian city located within the Arctic Circle. Coming from a city-state on the equator, I was looking forward to experiencing snowfall in its softest powder form. But what I was hoping for more than that was to see the aurora borealis, also known as the northern lights.

After a week, I'd witnessed the former (through my tropical lenses, the falling snow was simply magical) but sadly not the latter. We had even spent a few nights in a cabin far from the city and, still, we'd missed seeing the aurora.

Back home, my disappointment was met with well-intentioned responses meant to make me feel better: Did you check the weather forecast? (Yes.) Did you stay up late enough? (Yes.) Did you stay for at least three nights? Did you go on a tour to chase the lights? (Yes and yes.) I tried shrugging it off, but the reality was *it was just too cloudy*.

It seems I'd done everything necessary and still didn't get the results I'd hoped for. This same realization hits me each

time I face disappointments in life. Does it seem that way to you too—when stuck in a marriage that’s breaking down, rejected at yet another job interview, overlooked for that promotion, discouraged by news that the latest round of medication isn’t working? After striving and doing all that’s needed, there’s no certainty that we’ll get what we hope for.

Feels frustrating, doesn’t it? Maybe even helpless. We can do everything right and, still, things go wrong.

During a low point in my life, I found myself asking: *How did it go so wrong?* It was a time when, after years of serving as leaders, my husband and I found ourselves without a church community. At the same time, I was struggling with a severe flare-up of eczema. There was also unspoken anxiety over our financial situation because of my husband’s job situation, and our communication lost the depth of emotional intimacy it once had. Weeks went by without any positive development, and then months. I started to resent living and felt stuck in a season that I didn’t foresee and which didn’t seem to be passing.

At that time, I could only describe the experience as living under a heavy dark cloud that refused to go away. I see now that it was a sense of hopelessness. With each passing day, it seemed harder to have hope for our marriage, my health, his career, our relationship with the church.

As I struggled to sleep each night, filled with dread for the next day, I’d pray, *Help me, Lord*. These three little words were all I had; I didn’t know what else to say. It took months before that heavy dark cloud lifted and even longer before the other issues were dealt with.

But during those dark days, God met me where I was. The words of Lamentations 3:21–23 (ESV) became something I held on to:

*But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:
The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.*

When waking up to a new day felt terrible, when staying alive felt difficult, it was during those times that I came to understand the faithfulness of God. Little by little, as He helped me to persevere through the day, He showed me that there *is* hope. It's a hope found not in a set of circumstances, not even the most ideal ones, but found in a Person—none other than Jesus Himself.

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we've been born again “into a living hope” (1 PETER 1:3 NIV) and “into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade” (v. 4). When we hope in Jesus, there's certainty for our future. Even when we “may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials” (v. 6), we can rejoice because we have hope—not just any hope, but a hope that's true and certain.

Being unable to see the northern lights during that trip in Norway taught me something about our vision. The thing with auroras is that they happen constantly. From Earth, however, we may not see them all the time, due to location, light pollution, or cloud conditions. It's not that they're not there; it's just that we don't see them.

And hope is a lot like that. Hope is always there, but we don't always see it or feel it. Hope isn't the problem, our vision is. Sometimes it's because we're looking in the wrong places or sometimes it's just *too cloudy*. Wherever you are right now, there is hope. You don't have to wait for the right set of circumstances or see things happen to have it. Because Jesus died for our sins and rose to life again, we have hope in this life.

As you read the following devotional articles, my prayer for you are the words from Ephesians 1:18: *I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.*



 LUKE 19:10

The Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.



ADRIFT

A man desperate for work agreed to spend six months miles from shore on a tiny fishing hut—lighting lamps to attract fish. His only human contact occurred once a week when supplies were delivered. Disaster struck when the hut’s mooring broke and he drifted hundreds of miles out to sea. His hopes later sank as he watched ten ships pass and his cooking fuel ran out. Finally, after 49 days adrift, the man was spotted by a ship’s crew and rescued!

We may never be stranded in the ocean, but most of us have felt adrift, lost, and desperate for help and hope. Perhaps like Zacchaeus in today’s Scripture reading, we’re an outcast and yet somehow know Jesus is the One we need (LUKE 19:3–4). Scripture repeatedly recounts how God comes to us in our rebellion and troubles. In Eden, God finds Adam and Eve, hiding and confused (GENESIS 3:8–9). And Israel runs away again and again (PSALM 78:40), but God draws them back. Finally, Jesus, God’s ultimate Source of rescue, comes not for those who have life figured out but for those who are in a mess. Jesus “came to seek and save those who are lost” (LUKE 19:10).

While we face challenges amidst the tossing seas of life, God promises to be with us in them. And hope comes as we remember that Jesus has provided our ultimate rescue—from sin and death (V. 9; EPHESIANS 2:4–8).

WINN COLLIER

**Where do you need God’s rescue? Where are you lost?
What would it take for you to yield to God’s rescue and help?**

*Dear Father, I’m out on my own, in deep trouble.
I don’t think anyone can help me. But You say You come for the lost.
I’m here. Please come.*

This hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

WHEN DISAPPOINTMENT COMES

To try to rid himself of his disappointments, a man decided to auction off his belongings on eBay. He said, “On the day all my possessions are sold, I intend to walk out of my front door with my wallet and passport and nothing else.” He planned to visit his mother before heading to the airport. “I’ll see where life takes me from there. It’s time to shed the old and in with the new!”

All of us can relate to the disappointments of life. The apostle Paul encouraged the believers in Jesus in Rome to remember that Jesus’ death provided them with “peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us” (ROMANS 5:1). This divine peace empowers all believers to experience “hope [that] will not lead to disappointment” (v. 5). Moreover, it helps us face difficulties without running away from them. “Trials,” he wrote, are designed to develop “endurance . . . strength of character, and . . . hope” within us (vv. 3–4). God’s presence provides a settled confidence that He loves us and will empower us through the Holy Spirit (v. 5). And His love and the Spirit’s presence provide the assurance that our trust in Him isn’t misplaced (v. 8).


As believers in Jesus, rather than running from our disappointments, we can rejoice in them, knowing that God is walking with us through them.

MARVIN WILLIAMS

**What was your initial response to a recent disappointment?
What will help you express your confident hope in God
even when facing disappointments?**

*Dear God, please help me trust in You when I face the
hard and disappointing times of life.*

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE | **ROMANS 5:1-11**

 ¹ Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. ² Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

³ We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. ⁴ And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. ⁵ And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

⁶ When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. ⁷ Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. ⁸ But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. ⁹ And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. ¹⁰ For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. ¹¹ So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.

If we look forward to something we don't have yet, we must wait patiently and confidently.

FINDING JOY IN LONGING

Author Susan Cain's research revealed that people played the happy songs on their playlists an average of 175 times but the sad songs 800 times. What is it about sad music that's so compelling for many? Cain suggests it has to do with our hunger for longing—"joy that's laced with sorrow. Which is often triggered when we experience something so exquisite that it seems to come to us from some other world. . . . Except it only lasts a moment, and we really want to live there for good."

Longing, Cain argues, is inseparable from passion and love, for "the place you suffer is the exact same place where you care desperately." So instead of fearing our pain, Cain suggests that our longing can point us "in the direction of the sacred."

Cain's insights remind me of how Paul describes how "the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay" (ROMANS 8:21). While Jesus has already defeated sin and death, we still wait for His victory to be seen in its fullness in all of creation.

That day isn't here yet. We live in hope, and "if we already have something, we don't need to hope for it" (v. 24). But as we wait, we experience joy and hope in the longing, as the Spirit carries and strengthens us in God's love (VV. 26–27, 39).

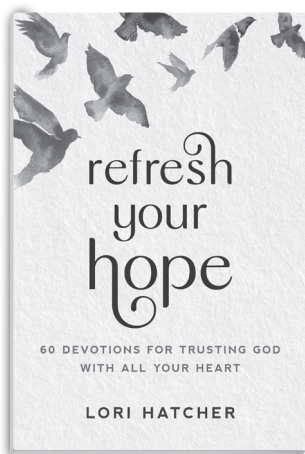
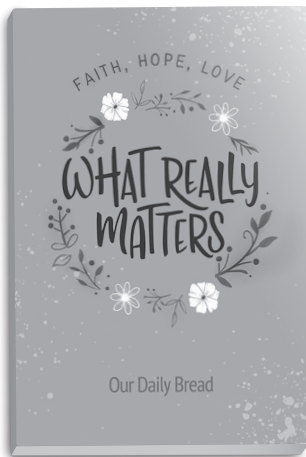
MONICA LA ROSE

**When have you experienced joy and sorrow simultaneously?
How can longing connect us to hope?**

*Precious Father, thank You for filling my heart
with longing for You and the beauty of Your kingdom.
Help that hope to anchor my heart.*

LOOKING FOR

Check out these other resources to reclaim your hope in God's faithful character and promises.

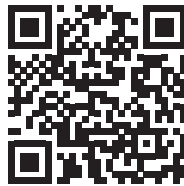


MORE?



To order your books
on hope, go to

go.odb.org/easter24-resources



JOHN 13:7

Jesus replied, “You don’t understand now what I am doing, but someday you will.”



WAY MORE

George had a passion for telling others about Jesus. He organized a gospel crusade in his high school. In college, he recruited two of his friends to distribute the Bible in Mexico. George Verwer later founded the international ministry Operation Mobilization.

Successful though he was, Verwer was aware of mistakes he made. In his book *Messiology*, he wrote, “I believe history will show that God was doing way more in the midst of our messes than we realized at the time.”

Jesus said something to Peter on the evening of the Last Supper that would affirm Verwer’s contention. About to wash Peter’s feet, Christ said, “You don’t understand now what I am doing, but someday you will” (JOHN 13:7). Intriguingly, Peter’s “mess” hadn’t happened yet: “Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me” (v. 38). But it was a much bigger mess that Jesus was referring to: the sin of all mankind. The disciples didn’t know that God was doing something far greater than they realized.


In living for Jesus, we may find ourselves in our own “messiology.” Even in our best work, we make mistakes, mess things up, and fall into despair. But Jesus tells His disciples, “I am the Messiah” (v. 19). That gives us real hope. We may not know what God is doing, but we should trust in who He is. He’s way more than what we understand.

KENNETH PETERSEN

**What in your life is hard to understand?
How are God’s purposes confusing to you?**

*Dear God, please help me accept that Your ways
are not always known to me.*

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE | JOHN 13:6-20

 ⁶ When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”
⁷ Jesus replied, “You don’t understand now what I am doing, but someday you will.”
⁸ “No,” Peter protested, “you will never ever wash my feet!” Jesus replied, “Unless I wash you, you won’t belong to me.”
⁹ Simon Peter exclaimed, “Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!”
¹⁰ Jesus replied, “A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not all of you.” ¹¹ For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, “Not all of you are clean.”
¹² After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, “Do you understand what I was doing? ¹³ You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because that’s what I am. ¹⁴ And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet. ¹⁵ I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.
¹⁸ “I am not saying these things to all of you; I know the ones I have chosen. But this fulfills the Scripture that says, ‘The one who eats my food has turned against me.’ ¹⁹ I tell you this beforehand, so that when it happens you will believe that I am the Messiah. ²⁰ I tell you the truth, anyone who welcomes my messenger is welcoming me, and anyone who welcomes me is welcoming the Father who sent me.”

 **JOHN 14:6**

I am the way, the truth, and the life.
No one can come to the Father
except through me.



THE SWEEPER'S PRAYER

When Raza saw a man sweeping his street, he felt sorry for him and gave him some money. The man thanked him and asked Raza if he could pray for him. Surprised, Raza wondered how to answer, feeling conflicted but wanting to make the man happy. He consented and the sweeper prayed, giving thanks for the money and for Raza, saying “God, please show him the way, the truth and the life.”

Raza was puzzled by the prayer but forgot about it. Yet six years later, “God changed my life,” he said, when he came to know Jesus as his Savior. Suddenly he understood that God had answered the sweeper’s prayer, for in Jesus Raza had found the way, the truth, and the life.

Jesus told His friends on the night before He died that they would know “the way to where I am going” (JOHN 14:4). Thomas questioned how they could know the way because they *didn’t* know where He was going. Jesus responded: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me” (v. 6). He assured them that if they knew Him, they would also know the Father (v. 7).

Jesus breaks down the barriers and brings us into His Father’s presence. He’s the way to a fulfilled life; He’s the truth that sets us free; He gives us life, love, and hope.

AMY BOUCHER PYE

**How might God inspire you to pray for others,
perhaps even a stranger on the street? How have you
seen Him answer someone’s prayers for you?**

*Dear Jesus, You’re the way, the truth, and the life.
Thank You for taking me to the Father through
Your work on the cross.*

God heard their groaning,
and he remembered his covenant.

GOD REMEMBERS

Sok Ching had just recovered from Covid-19 when her aged mother took a fall. Days later, her mother died. Then her estranged husband filed for divorce and threatened to fight for custody of their young son. Sok Ching felt like she was going through a desert, totally drained of life. *Where is God?* she wondered. *Does He know what I'm going through?*

She found it tough even to pray. Then Exodus 2:23–25 came to mind. The Israelites were suffering a multitude of troubles: an oppressive pharaoh, cruel slave masters, their sons were being killed. They must have asked the same question: “Where is God?”

But He *was* there: “God heard their groaning, and he remembered his covenant He looked down on the people of Israel and knew it was time to act” (vv. 24–25). Though their deliverance would come forty years later, the Israelites were assured that God knew their pain and would respond.

As Sok Ching read from her journal, it reminded her of the time God helped her take care of her mom, strengthened her when her husband left her, and encouraged her as a single mother. And she recalled how Jesus went to the cross for us. “It gives me hope,” she said, “knowing that God is there for me in the desert.” She could declare in confidence, “God is there. And He remembers.”

LESLIE KOH

**How has God helped you through tough times in the past?
How can you draw strength from His promises?**

Father, You know what I'm going through, and You know my pain and worry. I know You care for me. Help me to keep trusting in You.

AS SPRING FOLLOWS WINTER

Standing trial for the “crime” of writing about his nation’s unprovoked invasion of another, the journalist made his final statement. Yet he didn’t defend himself. Instead, he spoke boldly. “The day will come when the darkness over our country will dissipate,” he said, “when at the official level it will be recognized that two times two is still four; when a war will be called a war.” With irrepressible confidence, he continued: “This day will come as inevitably as spring follows even the coldest winter.”

World events often seem irrevocably bleak. Lies and violence are the way of the world. It’s nothing new. A thousand years before Jesus’ crucifixion, the psalmist David wrote of the Messiah he awaited: “The kings of the earth prepare for battle; . . . against the LORD and against his anointed one” (PSALM 2:2). God merely laughs (v. 4). The rightful King would one day “break them with an iron rod” (v. 9). David wrote, “Be warned, you rulers of the earth! Serve the LORD with reverent fear, and rejoice with trembling” (vv. 10–11).

The arrest and crucifixion of Jesus was the worst human rights atrocity ever, yet it’s through that travesty of justice that Christ conquered sin and death and offers us hope. As sure as spring follows winter, the darkness is dissipating, fleeing before the Light of the World. “What joy for all who take refuge in him!” (v. 12).

TIM GUSTAFSON

What events tempt you to despair? Where and how do you experience the Light of the World today?

Precious Savior, may Your light flood this dark world and give us hope for a future with You.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE | PSALM 2



- 1 Why are the nations so angry?
Why do they waste their time with futile plans?
- 2 The kings of the earth prepare for battle;
the rulers plot together
against the LORD
and against his anointed one.
- 3 “Let us break their chains,” they cry,
“and free ourselves from slavery to God.”
- 4 But the one who rules in heaven laughs.
The LORD scoffs at them.
- 5 Then in anger he rebukes them,
terrifying them with his fierce fury.
- 6 For the LORD declares, “I have placed my chosen king
on the throne
in Jerusalem, on my holy mountain.”
- 7 The king proclaims the LORD’s decree:
“The LORD said to me, ‘You are my son.
Today I have become your Father.
- 8 Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance,
the whole earth as your possession.
- 9 You will break them with an iron rod
and smash them like clay pots.’”
- 10 Now then, you kings, act wisely!
Be warned, you rulers of the earth!
- 11 Serve the LORD with reverent fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
- 12 Submit to God’s royal son, or he will become angry,
and you will be destroyed in the midst of all your activities—
for his anger flares up in an instant.
But what joy for all who take refuge in him!

■ **Walk** the footsteps of Jesus from Bethlehem to the cross. ■ **Learn** about the women of Holy Week.

■ **Dig** deeper into the life-changing messages of Easter.





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and **videos** about the powerful
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DETECTIVE WORK

In 1986, Sir David Suchet, the English actor known for playing detective Hercule Poirot, began a quest to understand the resurrection of Jesus. Wondering what would happen after he died, he began reading the book of Romans. After twenty years of careful consideration, he committed fully to believing in Jesus.

“Without the resurrection there is no faith,” Suchet concluded, echoing Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. Thus, he observed, what he believes “is based not only on the death, the crucifixion, of Jesus, but also on the resurrection.” The miracle of Jesus rising from the dead, Suchet said, is what gives us hope and points to Him being both human and God.


When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, which he’d founded and lived with for eighteen months, he was concerned over reports of division and a waning belief in the resurrection. He stated: “If Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins” (1 CORINTHIANS 15:17). Not only did Jesus die and rise again, but so would His believers as well. If the church at Corinth didn’t hold on to this hope, then they would be pitied “more . . . than anyone in the world” (v. 19).

When God helps us to trust that Jesus rose from the dead, we can delight in the assurance that we’ll live with Him forever. And that’s a wonderful conclusion to a worthy quest. AMY BOUCHER PYE

**How does knowing that Jesus rose from the dead and is alive
give you hope and shape you in the way you live?
Why does this matter?**

*Risen Christ, thank You for dying on the cross and rising to new life.
I rejoice in the life I have with You.*

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE | 1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-24

 ¹² But tell me this—since we preach that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless. ¹⁵ And we apostles would all be lying about God—for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave. But that can't be true if there is no resurrection of the dead. ¹⁶ And if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. ¹⁸ In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! ¹⁹ And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.

²⁰ But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.

²¹ So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. ²² Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. ²³ But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back.

²⁴ After that the end will come, when he will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having destroyed every ruler and authority and power.

[Mary] turned to him and cried out, “Rabboni!”
(which is Hebrew for “Teacher”).

KNOWN BY GOD

“**W**ho is this stranger?” A college student in Georgia (USA) asked that question when a fellow student texted him saying a DNA test showed they could be brothers. Separated by adoption almost twenty years earlier, the young man texted a reply in which he asked what name the other student had been given at birth. He immediately answered, “Tyler.” Replied the other, “Yes!!! You are my brother!” He was recognized by his name.

Consider how a name plays a key role in the Easter story. As it unfolds, Mary Magdalene comes to Christ’s tomb, and she weeps when she finds His body missing. “ ‘Dear woman, why are you crying?’ Jesus asked her” (JOHN 20:15). She didn’t recognize Him, however, until He spoke her name, “Mary” (v. 16).

Hearing Him say it, she “cried out, ‘Rabboni!’ (which is Hebrew for ‘Teacher’)” (v. 16). Her reaction expresses the hope and joy believers in Jesus feel on Easter morning, recognizing that our risen Christ conquered death for all, knowing each of us as His children. As He told Mary, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (v. 17).

In Georgia, two reunited brothers bonded by name, have vowed to take “this relationship to the next level.” On Easter, we praise Jesus for already taking the utmost step to rise in sacrificial love for those He knows as His own. For you and me, indeed, He’s alive!

PATRICIA RAYBON

**How does it feel knowing that Jesus rose again and knows you
by name? How can you know Him better?**

*Your knowledge of me is humbling, dear Jesus.
Thank You for the sacrificial gift of Your knowing love
and the hope of eternal life with You.*

Put your finger here, and look at my hands....
Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!

NAIL-SCARRED HANDS

Like me, you may know exactly when you received certain wounds that left scars. A small scar on my wrist is the result of a fellow middle-school band member plowing me over in his haste. Another on my elbow is from the time a driver mistook the gas pedal for the brakes and slammed into our van. And a third comes from a surgery.

Perhaps you also have mental and emotional scars from the pain of sickness, loss, or death. The wonderful, healing news is that, as the song “The Only Scars in Heaven” by Casting Crowns affirms, the only scars in heaven will belong to Jesus. In that place, we won’t be broken or wounded. We have the hope of a life without doubts, fears, mental anguish, or physical pain. We’ll be with Jesus, made new (REVELATION 21:4).

After Jesus’ death and resurrection, He appeared to His disciples and showed them the scars in His hands and side (JOHN 20:20). Thomas wasn’t there, so he doubted the news (v. 25). Jesus returned and told him to touch His scars and not “be faithless any longer” (v. 27). His doubts gone, Thomas responded, “My Lord and my God!” (v. 28).


Jesus died to take our sins away. His scars identify Him as the Lamb who was slain for us (REVELATION 5:6)! We can believe and rejoice and be filled with hope, for one day He’ll hold us in His nail-scarred hands.

ALYSON KIEDA

**What emotional or mental wounds do you still bear?
How have you experienced healing through Jesus?**

*Dear Jesus, thank You for being scarred for me.
Help me to rejoice in You.*

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE | JOHN 20:19-29

 ¹⁹ That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! “Peace be with you,” he said. ²⁰ As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord! ²¹ Again he said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” ²² Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

²⁴ One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came. ²⁵ They told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he replied, “I won’t believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side.”

²⁶ Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don’t be faithless any longer. Believe!”

²⁸ “My Lord and my God!” Thomas exclaimed.

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, “You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.”

CONCLUSION | TOM FELTEN, *Our Daily Bread* author

There Is Hope

***When you hear the hard news,
there are two diverging roads from which to choose.
One's despair, but don't go there. There is hope.***

All of us will face the chilling, bitter winds of life. The lyrics above are from a song I wrote that reflects on my journey as a five-time cancer survivor. There are no easy answers when tragic events and disturbing diagnoses fall on us like a cold spring rain. We have a choice, however, to either remain awash in despair or press on in hope.

***Though it's dark and there's fear,
light will dawn and soon the way will be clear.
Look above, for in God's love there is hope.***

Fear, anxiety, and depression can fill our hearts when we're battered by the blows life delivers. Those are normal responses. And if you're experiencing them, don't beat yourself up. In time, by God's grace, light and delight can return. Some life-giving words that I've clung to as life's cold winds have threatened to topple me are, "I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then

you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit” (ROMANS 15:13).

***Lift up your head, lift up your eyes,
walk by faith and not by sight.
Take a step, make a start,
let God’s hope fill your heart.***

Paul wrote Romans 15:13 as a closing prayer for the church at Rome—a church he’d never visited. His letter was an introduction to the believers in Jesus there, written to help them understand why he believed God was “the source of hope.”

***Like a jar made of clay,
bodies fail but one thing will not pass away.
It remains, for through the pain there is hope.***

In another letter to the church at Corinth, Paul penned, “I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said” (1 CORINTHIANS 15:3–4). The apostle possessed hope because of the reality of Jesus’ resurrection. Though he’d faced intense suffering (SEE 2 CORINTHIANS 11:24–27), Paul knew that Christ had promised that those who believed in Him would be saved from sin and death: “If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (ROMANS 10:9).

Those who believe in Jesus will also live with Him forever. Just as Christ was resurrected from the dead, so one day we can experience the hope of Easter as we receive our own transformed resurrection bodies: “Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength” (1 CORINTHIANS 15:43).

***Hope is found as the light
of God’s presence blazes in the darkest night.
When it’s dim, wait on Him, for there is hope.***

We live in the darkness of a world tragically broken by our rebellion against God. And yet, we can experience hope and peace because of Jesus' death and resurrection, which makes it possible for us to be "made right in God's sight by faith" (ROMANS 5:1). Later in his letter, Paul wrote that "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord" (6:23).

Real hope begins with receiving the gift of salvation Jesus offers. We do this by simply expressing our faith to Him. If you believe in Christ and desire to receive life in Him, pray something like this:

Dear Jesus, I know that I've been far from You—lost in a hopeless state due to my sin and rebellion. I confess the wrong I've done against You and desire to receive the salvation You alone offer. I believe You came to earth, died on the cross for my sins, and rose again. You're the One who provides true peace and hope by the power of Your resurrection. I praise You and surrender my whole life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

If you prayed to receive salvation in Christ or want to know more, simply use the link below for more information and to connect with us so we can encourage you. Life will still offer cold winds and challenging times, but as you face them, you can now...

look above, for in God's love there is hope.

TO LEARN MORE, GO TO
ODB.org/personal-relationship-with-god

