

TRIAGE WITH HOPE



Lou was badly injured by a bomb, including one leg severely wounded. The doctor who examined him made the decision that Lou was a **hopeless case** and tagged him as such, leaving him to die. But a nurse noticed Lou was conscious and began to talk with him. They discovered they were both from Michigan. Getting to know Lou as a person, the nurse just couldn't let him die. She broke all the rules and changed his color-tag. There followed a two-day trip in the back of a truck and months of recovery and rehab in a hospital. But Lou survived. **He went from hopeless to hope-full.** He met a girl in the hospital whom he later married. Even minus one leg he has led a full happy life, all because one nurse broke the rules of triage and

changed a color tag.

Consider with me that the task of the Church and the privilege of evangelism is going around changing the tags. Maybe that's what Jesus meant to tell us when He healed the woman and helped Jairus. Jesus IS the Friend of the hopeless. He came to befriend and save the hopeless from despair. He gave His life on the cross and was raised from the dead for that very reason. As the Fourth of July quickly approaches, we remember and worship the God who changes our Nation's color tag from **hope-less to hope-full** in Him. What do you think of when you consider the term "hopeless"? The Bible has another word that might help us understand it a little better. It's the word – "consumed."

For twelve very long years the woman we hear of in Mark 5:21-43 had been subject to bleeding. **Her body was almost consumed.** The ravages of disease had taken their toll. And to live with such a disease is to live in constant fear and uncertainty. Each time she began to bleed, she had to wonder, "Will it stop this time?" Each time, as she began to feel light-headed from the loss of blood, she had to wonder, "Is this the end?" For twelve years, this physical and mental anguish had taken their toll. She had tried and done everything she could. She kept going to doctors, each of whom probably promised healing and relief. She had given all of her money to them in the hopes of a cure. But nothing worked. She kept growing weaker. She kept getting worse. The end was probably near for her. She was almost **consumed.** Or in other words, things looked hopeless.

When you think of hope, what comes to mind? Some think immediately of a "wish" or "a yearning desire" but when God uses the word "HOPE," He is talking about clinging to Him alone who IS hope. In other words, the hope that we have in Christ will not disappoint or ever deceive. When we hope for an object or outcome which we do not obtain, we are conscious of disappointment, perhaps sometimes of a feeling of shame or even anger. But the apostle says that the Christian hope is such that it will be fulfilled; it will not disappoint; what we hope for we shall certainly obtain.

This week's Gospel text from Mark 5:21-43 presents two people who might have felt that they had every reason to be disappointed. A woman, who had been sick even with the care of many doctors, just continually got worse. For twelve years, the woman heard the Scriptures

from God declare her “unclean” because of her bleeding. Do you think she ever became discouraged or angry with God? Now she hears that Jesus, the Great Physician, is coming through her town but the crowd of people between her and Jesus makes it almost impossible to get near Him - so close and yet so far. Talk about hope disappointed. How is a person who is not allowed to touch anyone because she is unclean going to fight through the crowd to touch of all people - Jesus? But she does and Jesus heals her, blessed her with His peace and gave her the name “daughter.”

This all happened as Jesus was accompanying Jairus to his home where his daughter is dying. Jairus couldn't move Jesus along fast enough. But while Jesus was busy healing the woman who had been sick for twelve years, the sick twelve-year-old died. While Jesus is speaking with her, word came that it was too late to heal Jairus' daughter. The situation that may have had some hope was now impossible. Do you think Jairus might have had the same reaction as Mary and Martha - If only You had been there in time, my loved one would not have died?! But Jesus says to Jairus, “Do not fear, do not lose hope, only believe!”

Not a single one of us has had a life free of struggle. And these challenges - be they illness, the death of a loved one, the burden of debt or a bill to pay, unemployment, struggles in parenting, failure in school, peer pressure, broken relationships - not to mention the myriad of challenges faced from COVID in the past 18 months - they all lead us to disappointment and maybe even anger at God - despite the fact that our anger would be correctly targeted at sin and Satan instead. But in the Scriptures, God reveals our hope found in Him.

Do not lose heart - in this sinful world - people, things, events - will disappoint, discourage and lead us to give up hope. Satan is the sower of despair and the sinful nature bears a harvest of hopelessness. But the ministry of Jesus - His healing touch and His resurrection power throws everything out of balance. Where we may see impossibility, the presence of God creates possibility. The presence of Jesus is every bit as real as that bill that you're not sure how you're going to pay, or that diagnosis or that burden that has left you in despair. Thanks to Jesus, fear is replaced with trust, sin with forgiveness, revenge with mercy, anger with grace, hate with peace, death with life. We are equipped with hope that leaves a mark of trust in the unfailing things of God over the status quo of the world. God has changed the color tag placed on our broken and wounded lives with the message: HIS - HOPE FILLED!

You remember the disciples on the road to Emmaus who said, “We had hoped He would be the One” but now it's too late. We all know how that one came out. On the third day, God raised His Son from the dead, demonstrating decisively and for all time that it is never too late for God - for only He can split the Red Sea with the most powerful army bearing down on you; only He can close the mouth of hungry lions or shield you in a fiery furnace so not even a hair is singed - and only He can feed us with the Body and Blood of Jesus, forgive every sin, and give us a reason for hope in every and all circumstances. What does God want us to see in His Word? God deals in hope - just believe! We can simplify sharing the Good News of God by simply untying the hopeless tag from the world and re-tagging every situation and every person with the message: There is HOPE, just believe in Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the One who overcomes the world. He is the Resurrection and the Life. In Him, we live and move and have our very being. He is our Portion. The Hebrew word, “portion” is just what it says - when things are dealt out, what I find that I have received is the Lord.

Therefore, I have the whole portion. We live in a sinful world that settles for far less than the portion God has in mind for them. We live in a nation that is settling for what seems like the best for the minute rather than the Portion that God says will last forever and never disappoint.

Since it is never too late for God to act, we spend our time in active waiting. **Active waiting is “hope and trust that shows.”** (Or you could say, “Hope and Trust that leaves an impression on others.”) No matter what the situation - when circumstances are at their best or worst, it is always good to wait and hope in the Lord. But even as we wait, we are to remember that others are waiting as well, others for whom WE, in their waiting, may be the answer to their prayers. God’s will is perfect for He is perfect. His plan is best. Waiting in the Lord is simply saying - I may have this in mind, but what I really want is what God wants for me. If God doesn’t want it for me, I don’t want it either. Our sinful world wants what it wants at all costs and right now.

The Lord truly takes care of the big things like forgiveness of sin, the resurrection of the body and salvation to life everlasting. But He’s also concerned with ALL the details of life - even the most minute. God meets our needs. God knows that the immediate needs of food and clothing, paying bills and getting the car fixed can cause us to lose hope - so He calls for His Church, the ones who hope in Him, the ones who trust that He is their Portion, to excel in grace and the riches of a ministry that feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, heals the sick, welcomes the homeless, and comforts the downcast. Or in other words, “Cares enough in the triage of life to change the color tag from hope-less to hope-full.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to grow in the hope that we have and the trust we share that makes a difference. There is a story of a young man in Scotland suffering from cancer. He was a singer, and he could move people when he sang about the God he loved and who loved him. Doctors told him that the only hope of saving his life was the complete removal of his tongue. In the hospital, before he was put under the anesthetic, the surgeon asked if there was any last thing he wanted to say. A shadow crossed his face as that terrible thought sank in. Then suddenly, his face beamed as he sang the words of a favorite hymn, “When this poor lisping, stammering tongue lies silent in the grave, then in a nobler, sweeter song, I’ll sing of Thy power to save.” (From “There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood”)

When this sinful world deals us a hand that would tempt us to be disappointed or even angry at God, may the Holy Spirit prepare us to sing a song of the hope that we have - the God of our salvation, the God who is our Portion, the God of healing help and hope; that our God has taken us by the hand and resurrected us to new life in Him. So when hope comes to mind, don’t think of a wish or a yearning but rather the rich portion that cannot and will not disappoint you. This is the hope that makes a difference for eternity where you live and serve Him.

I am currently on disability with two conditions that seemingly leave me “hopeless.” My continued drops/falls have been diagnosed as “atonic seizures” where there is no treatment or medication that will stop them. My DISH spinal disorder has no treatment either. I share this with you simply because I have struggled with the despair found in this Sunday’s text. But God has given me the opportunity to share the Gospel and to encourage our English

District and every member of every congregation in our District with the privilege of evangelism. Since God has color tagged me with hope through His crimson blood, my purpose for every day is to make the hope of Christ known - through speech, a touch, a call or email - to triage the world where I live. The same is true for you.

Whether or not you are struggling with something right now – like a bad back, or Parkinson’s, or cancer, or anything else – there is a far greater compassion being shown to you than simply whether or not you get what you ask for; whether or not you are healed – for your color tag has been changed, for you are marked for life, called HIS - you have HOPE in Him. Can you share this HOPE with a world I need? God has equipped you for such a task.

God has also given us the resources that have been created by the LCMS Office of National Mission - “Every One His Witness” evangelism training tool; the Making Disciples for Life resources on the Synod’s website; the Witness and Outreach bulletin sentences granting encouragement to boldly share the Gospel; Re:Vitality tools for the congregation to grow together and more. If you have any questions about any of these items - how you can make use of these resources - or how you can encourage your pastor or church leaders to implement these tools in your church family, contact the Evangelization Team at evangelizationteam@englishdistrict.org We look forward to hearing from you. Red, white and blue are wonderful colors, but none of them are like the color change from hope-less to hope-full.

In Christ Alone,
Pastor John Diener
Galatians 2:20