

Hope in Darkness (Luke 24:1-12)

This is an All Age Talk recorded on Easter Sunday 2022. Where can we find hope we can be confident in? Especially in times of darkness? The resurrection shows that we can have a confident hope in Jesus.

Past Hope

What does the word, 'HOPE' mean?

Hope is when you think things will become better in the future. We might hope in things or people that will make things better.

But can we be certain that things will become better?

25 years ago, in 1997, there was a lot of hope that the world was heading to becoming a better place. The Labour Party even used the song, *Things can only get better* as their campaign song for the election they won that year under Tony Blair.

And there were a lot of reasons to have hope. There seemed to be a renewed certainty that some of the things we put our hope in were becoming more certain:

Hold up A3 sheets with these pictures on.

- Peace - the threat of a major war in Europe seemed impossible now that communism had collapsed in Eastern Europe and Russia. The cold war had ended.
- Money - over the following ten years there was low inflation and steady growth.
- Health - people were living longer, drugs were improving with new break throughs over disease. We were confident in our NHS.

Present Darkness

Yet the last few years have stopped us feeling as certain about a future hope based on the things we rely on.

One by one tear these things in half.

- Health - the Pandemic has shown us that no matter how good our science and health is, we cannot prevent a new disease causing a major pandemic with radical effects on our lives.
- Money - the financial crisis in 2008 which led to years of austerity and now the rapid rise in the cost of fuel and other things, mean we cannot be certain that our money will get better.
- Peace - the war in Ukraine has left us far less certain that peace across Europe can continue and reminded us of how horrible our world can be.

The truth is that if we put our hope in health, money or peace then we cannot be certain that things will get better. We can lose hope and the world can feel very dark.

Hope in Jesus?

Before Jesus died on the cross, people had seen him as someone who would bring them great hope! If you look a bit later on in Luke's gospel it says, 24:21:

"...we had hoped that he was the one who going to redeem Israel."

Perhaps there were three things about Jesus that people hoped in:

Hold up sheets of paper...

His Words - Jesus was someone whose words had amazed them, he seemed to be able to teach about God in an inspiring and powerful way, that offered hope of a better future in God's Kingdom.

His Salvation - Jesus seemed to have power to save people from their illnesses and even raise the dead. They had seen him do lots of amazing miracles.

His Kingship - Jesus seemed to be the one who would be a new and better king. Who would offer a wonderful leadership for God's people.

His followers and many of the people of the time hoped that Jesus would be all these things. But the leaders didn't like him. They didn't like his words because he criticised them, they were jealous of his miracles and they thought trying to make him king would destroy their power. So they had Jesus killed on the cross.

Tear up sheets of paper...

Kingship - On the cross the Roman soldiers shouted: 'If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.' (Luke 23:37). But Jesus did not save himself. He died.

Salvation - The Jews shouted, "He saved others let him save himself, if he is God's Messiah." But Jesus did not save himself. He died.

Words - When Jesus died it seemed that all his promises and his vision had come to nothing. It was as though his words had died with him.

For Jesus's followers and friends on that first Good Friday, it must have been a moment of sheer devastation. All their hopes looked like they were destroyed.

At the Tomb

All they could do on the first Sunday afterwards was come to the grave to anoint Jesus's body. To be sad at his death.

But when the women came to the tomb, they found that Jesus's body was missing and two angels appeared to them and said to them:

"Why do you look for the living among the dead?
He is not here! He has risen!" (Luke 24:6)

The angels then reminded them of what Jesus had said to them:

"The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again." (Luke 24:7)

In other words, what had happened did not show that Jesus's words had proved useless. What Jesus had said, proved to be exactly what had happened. He had been crucified and they were about to discover that what seemed utterly impossible had also happened he had indeed risen again on the third day!

Resurrection Hope

The resurrection shows that the cross does not tear up our hopes about Jesus, rather it shows us that nothing can take away our hopes in him. Not even death could defeat him.

From the scraps, unfold the fresh truths about Jesus.

Words - His words have proved powerfully true. Surely, we can trust his words and follow his words more than the words of anyone else. After all who else has risen from the dead.

Salvation - Also, we can trust his salvation more than anyone else. Who else has shown not just that they can heal people, but bring people through death itself. More than that his death on the cross is shown to be the ultimate act of salvation by bringing us forgiveness of our sins and helping us to be friends with God again so that we can have eternal life.

Kingship - It also shows us that Jesus is truly God's chosen king. The one who has the right authority to lead us in our lives and show us how to live for the best.

What seemed to be destroyed by the cross, becomes even more true because of the resurrection. Out of darkness, God has brought us certain hope.

Resurrection People

So, how will you respond? Will you become one of God's resurrection people. Finding a certain hope in Jesus that cannot be found in other things in this world?

Will you seek to live by his words, trust his salvation and follow him as your king? If we believe the resurrection to be true, then surely this is the only way to respond?