

Grace and Peace to you all from God our hope and our peace – Amen.

The Easter season is usually marked by many of us as a transition from sorrow to joy.

Death to life.

Desperation to hope.

But this year – for many reasons – these transitions seem harder to hold on to for me – and maybe they are for you too.

Perhaps it's the late breaking spring finally bringing us and this earth back to life. Maybe it's this lockdown, our isolation, our fear that we or our loved ones might get sick, or the loss of so many lives to this virus.

And as if this wasn't enough to worry about, many of us were shocked to hear of the tragic deaths of 23 Nova Scotians last weekend. People whose lives were tragically cut short in an act of senseless violence and terror. And now a community, a province, and our country are in a state of mourning at this great loss of life in the midst of these already troubling times.

If we are being honest – many of these losses are simply greater than our capacity to track them at this time. As hard as we try, our thoughts race from here to there and we struggle to wrap our minds around what all these significant events have meant for us.

How can we begin to process tragedies and traumas of this magnitude?

How should we?

I'll be the first to admit that perhaps, this is why it feels a little off this year to swing into our Easter celebrations full force while much of the world feels like its still encased in Good Friday's tomb.

Even while we are not gathering to worship in the ways we usually would each Sunday – it almost feels tone deaf of us as the church to simply launch into our Easter celebrations – as the rest of the world echo's the words of the disciples on the road to Emmaus this morning:

*"Where have you been?*

*Don't you know what's been happening?*

*Haven't you heard what we are all going through?"*

Perhaps, instead of breaking out our *Alleluias* we should be asking how we can live into the resurrection at a time when death and despair appear to be in charge?

Yet we are not the first people to ask questions like these.

In fact, the Sundays after Easter have *always* been a point in the liturgical year when we take a good hard look at God's post-resurrection world and think, "Now what?" Or if we're really honest: "So what?"

In our gospel text today, we hear some of Jesus disciples discussing the strange and disturbing world they are now journeying through. And they utter a phrase that I think perfectly captures many of our feelings at the moment.

*“But we had hoped ...”*

As David Lose points out in his commentary on this text, *“So much is said in those four words, as [the disciples] speak of a future that is not to be, a dream that created energy and enthusiasm but did not materialize, a promise that created faith that proved to be false. It speaks of a future that is closed off, now irrelevant, dead. And there are few things more tragic than a dead future.*

*In our lives and world, it’s not just the tragedy of what happened that hurts, but the gaping hole of all that could have happened but now will not in the way we had expected.”*

And this is the part of our resurrection story that we so easily forget or gloss over in easier times. That there is pain in mourning the loss of what was and what could have been.

Jesus followers and disciples strongly believed he was going to change the very fabric of their lives and world. That God’s reign would finally bring peace, hope, and joy to their community. That the year of Jubilee would finally come once he was crowned their king. A time of great equality the prophets of old had spoken of, when debts would be cancelled, property lines would be redrawn, those who were enslaved would be set free, and those who had much - would give those who had little - a chance to restart.

This is why Jesus death felt like the ultimate betrayal to so many of his followers – *because what do you do with a loss of that kind?*

In our discussions about the state of our lives and world over *Zoom* or the phone lately many of us have spoken about the “new normal” we now find ourselves living in.

And while some have said there is nothing normal about our lives right now – some have also shared, from the margins of our world, that there was nothing normal about the lives we were all living before this crisis even hit.

In a widely shared social media post last week, author Brene Brown commented, *“We [cannot] go back to normal. Normal never was. Our pre-corona existence was not normal other than we normalized greed, inequality, exhaustion, depletion, extraction, disconnection, confusion, rage, hoarding, hate, and lack. We should not long to return, my friends. We are being gifted the opportunity to stitch a new garment. One that fits all of humanity and nature.”*

So perhaps, in the midst of these very troubling times we have been offered a gift – if we can even dare to call it that. That like the disciples, we are being invited to imagine a new post resurrection future together here and now that looks drastically different from what we have been used to experiencing.

A future where we can name our new norms. Where we can share our grief over what has been lost. And where we can usher in hope, love, and joy in tangible ways. Where we as a church can rise, using our hands and voices to bring about the “new normal” we so wish we could achieve. A new normal where no one would have to worry about receiving adequate income or housing ever again.

A new normal where all would have access to proper medical, dental, and health care.

A new normal where we would no longer ignore those who have been physically or socially isolated due to their disability, mental health, addiction, or poverty.

A new normal where our economy wouldn't be placed before the lives of our most vulnerable people.

A new normal that states creation is not for sale in the midst of our desire for greater and greater consumption.

A new normal where sexism, racism, homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia would not deal their death dealing blows.

A new normal that finally breaks us from the chains of complacency that have kept us from truly working towards these changes before now.

Yes – I like many others believe this “new normal” is possible just as I believe the tomb is empty, Christ is risen, death has been defeated, our sins are forgiven, and love has won for once and for all.

I believe all of this.

And yet, I also believe that our journey doesn't start simply with the resurrection and shouts of Alleluia this Easter season – it begins with living that resurrection out in renewed ways in our communities.

So, people of God – people of resurrection and hope – dare to be the change you so long to see in this world. Join in resetting this “new normal” from one of despair to one of new life. And as we do may we be empowered to live out our lives as people God in renewed ways around this world.

And may this be so among us – amen.