

Sermon for May 26th

Acts 3:16-20a

The old Lutheran liturgical calendar has the 4th Sunday of Easter just gone as “Sunday Jubilate”

Joy Sunday! Celebration Sunday! The Sunday to be Jubilant! Every Sunday should be joy Sunday

Sunday as the celebration of the resurrection reminds us that despair, depression and doubt don't have the last word.

Joy is the hope and future for every baptized believing follower of Jesus.

Some time ago I read a book by Mega church pastor and international speaker, Wayne Cordeiro.

Pastor Cordeiro is the inventor of the journaling practice we know as SOAP.

Chapter one of his book is entitled “When the needle points to empty”

It is the account of His battle with burnout and his subsequent depression, loss of drive and extreme anxiety.

At the worst point He was told by his doctor that he would need at least 12 months to recover.

Does that sound familiar or ring any bells for you?

We've all experienced depression and anxiety at one time or other to one degree or another.

Some of us have experienced spectacular crash and burns that have left us unwell and in need of some serious R and R.

Mother Teresa once wrote “I know God will not trust me anything I can't handle. I just wish he wouldn't trust me so much.”

There are many famous figures who have suffered despair, doubt and depression as well as Mother Teresa.

The great preach Spurgeon, Abraham Lincoln, Civil rights campaigner Martin Luther King, Author Henri Nouwen, even Martin Luther the founder of the Lutheran Church.

Even some of the greats in scripture have suffered in similar manner.

Scripture describes what surely looks like burnout in the lives of some notable men of God.

Moses, Elijah and Elisha, Jeremiah, Job, and King David.

Even the disciples of Jesus experienced times of disappointment, depression, and downright despair – none more so than at the time of Jesus passion.

But in the midst of that darkness Jesus the light of the world appears to them in the upper room and gives them, as he gives to us, a reason to hope.

They had thought the events of the passion were a great disaster.

The two disciples on the Emmaus road expressed their disappointment when they declared, “We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel”

Their hopes had been crushed with Jesus crucifixion.

However Jesus appears to them alive and on several occasions he explains how all that has transpired has been part of God’s master plan since the dawn of time.

That plan was that Jesus would triumph through the unlikely avenue of his suffering and death.

So when Jesus appeared to the disciples in that upper room they were dumbfounded.

They were like the guy who jumped for joy shouting “I can’t believe it, I can’t believe it; I’ve won lotto.

Their response to Jesus resurrection is like that; sweeping away their despair, depression and doubt. Imagine their responses...

Jesus is risen! Who would have guessed it? I can’t believe my eyes, it is really him. Our lives will be forever changed.

Listen to what Peter says as recorded in Acts 3:16-20a.

That’s good news for everyone who has ever been at rock bottom.

Peter and John have just healed a crippled man while on the way to church. A crowd gathers and Peter seizes the opportunity to preach about Jesus; crucified, dead, buried but now alive.

Read verse 20a again. Wow did you see that?

Repentance and forgiveness lead to times of refreshing.

Have you ever felt emotionally or spiritually drained and burnt out? Maybe part of the reason is that your walk with God has become a crawl or like the cripple you've stopped walking with God altogether

Times of refreshing are available through repentance and a return to God's direction for your life.

After the crippled man had his encounter with Jesus scripture tells us that he went into the temple with Peter and John, walking and leaping and praising God.

Read Psalm 4:7-8

It tells us that times of refreshing are not based on material blessings. That kind of fairy floss happiness is fleeting.

Joyous times of refreshing come as a gift from God.

C. S. Lewis wrote a book about his journey from Atheism to Theism, to Christianity. He called the book, "Surprised by Joy"

Like the disciples he was surprised by the joy that everything that happened to Jesus was part of God's plan to save us.

As we embrace Christ as Lewis did we have God's promise that times of refreshing will come.

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Happiness may elude us like the sun on a cloudy day, but then again Jesus didn't promise happiness. He did however promise joy.

He promised times of spiritual refreshing for all who would turn to him.

St Paul tells us in his letter to the Philippian Christians chapter three and verse one...

"Whatever happens my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord".

People talk about things having a Wow factor. I think these things have the real Wow factor.

Have you ever lost your purse or wallet? Perhaps you have lost your keys or mobile phone. Then you find them. That's a wow factor.

Bill Fulton lost his wallet at a basketball match in 1945. Unbeknown to him it fell between some boards in the stands.

All he knew was that it was missing when he reached for it sometime later.

63 years later on June 17 2009, John Osborne, a worker contracted to tear down the old grandstand, discovered Bill's wallet – still in good nick, still with all his personal papers intact.

78 year old Bill said he was overjoyed to have it back.

Joy! Times of refreshing! Hope! God wants his children to have these things.

All you and I need do is turn to him each day and believe all that had been foretold about his son Jesus was done for us.

By the way, Wayne Cordeiro came out of his dark time. He rediscovered the source of real joy and those times of refreshing.

What about You?