



Read Matthew 28:1-10

“But the angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.’” —Matthew 28:5-6

The women who came to the tomb on that first Easter day were afraid. Any hopes they had of Jesus being the long-awaited Messiah had been crushed only two days ago. When fear is substituted for hope there can only be trouble. Fortunately for them, the message they received from the angel flipped the script. Fear was replaced once again with hope.

I wonder what we are hoping for these days, and if the focus of our hope has shifted now that COVID-19 has thrown a monkey wrench into the way we were accustomed to living our lives. My guess is that we are hoping for the really important things: that our loved ones stay safe and healthy; that we will continue to be able to put food on the table, pay the mortgage, keep up with the utility bills; that our children will be able to return to school (if not in May, then certainly in September); that our spiritual lives not grow stagnant; that we will once again be able to shake hands, hug someone, be physically present with our families and friends; enjoy a night out, attend a concert, go to a sporting event.

Even though St. Paul wrote in his letter to the church at Rome, *“Now hope that is seen is not hope,”* I believe that hope *is* sometimes grounded in what can be seen and experienced. (In case you’re wondering, it is perfectly fine to question the veracity of the biblical authors. If we don’t, how will our faith evolve?)

When our Cleveland weather has cooperated I’ve been riding my bike in the Metroparks, and I’ve witnessed a change in the landscape. Trees are budding and blooming, early Spring flowers are poking their heads out of the ground, green is once again becoming the dominant color, all signaling a welcome transition to a new season. Even after the harshest winters, this passage occurs. Nothing is able to stop it from happening. Nothing. Not even the coronavirus.

I was reminded of the timeless tale of *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. After all of the Grinch's efforts to put a halt to the holiday he hated so much, when the date arrived he discovered an astonishing thing:

*Every Who down in Who-ville, the tall and the small,
Was singing! Without any presents at all!
He HADN'T stopped Christmas from coming!
IT CAME!
Somehow or other, it came just the same!*



There are some things that just cannot be stopped from coming. Like Easter. Easter came yesterday. Even though we couldn't be together in church to welcome the risen Christ, to sing our Alleluias, to join in prayer and thanksgiving, to feast at the Lord's table, to share the peace, to rejoice in God's victory over death, **EASTER STILL CAME!** Nothing can ever restrict or constrain God's power to fashion something new from what was once old and tired. The proclamation of Christ's victory over death continues to ring out in every corner of the world.

In the face of a daunting pandemic, **Christ is still risen!**
Despite the fear and trembling this awful virus has caused, **Christ is still risen!**
Even in our isolation, **Christ is still risen!**
In hospitals, where doctors and nurses are risking their lives to save others, **Christ is still risen!**
In the homes of firefighters, police officers, EMT workers, teachers, grocery store workers, garbage collectors, factory workers, small business owners, **Christ is still risen!**
In nursing homes, assisted living facilities, senior centers and apartment buildings, **Christ is still risen!**
On farms, in rural areas, in big cities, in suburbs and small towns, **Christ is still risen!**

Absolutely nothing can stop the good news of Christ's resurrection from delivering the only kind of hope that will see us through this difficult time.

In trust and hope,

Pastor Chuck

Let us pray. Living God, we thank you for the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and for the hope we always have in your promise of new and everlasting life. Amen