

Holding Hope

A Holy Saturday Silent Retreat

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READ THIS PART:

Turn off digital notifications and music. If there is anyone at home, you need to let them know you will not be able to be reached for an hour -- go ahead and let them know.

Get settled. You may need to go for a walk to move your body or clear your mind before you settle. This might take longer than you think. Let “getting settled” come in its own time and use the spiritual practices to help you. At some point in the hour, choose to settle in solitude and quiet.

****Important: Go at God’s Pace.** The practices below are suggestions for making space for God to meet and speak to you. It is not required you do them all. When the Holy Spirit nudges you to pause, pause. If you feel the nudge to slow down, slow down. When it is time to keep going, keep going IN WHATEVER DIRECTION the Spirit has for you. The Holy Spirit is with you and directing you!

Holy Saturday Retreat #1: 12 People

8:00 Initial Check-in and Morning Prayer with your Spiritual Director (Pastor Jason)

8:15 – 9:45 90 Minute Holy Saturday Retreat

9:45-10:05 Wrap up and Sharing with the Retreat Group & Pastor Jason

Holy Saturday Retreat #2: 12 People

9:00 Initial Check-in and Morning Prayer with your Spiritual Director (Pastor Jason)

9:15 – 10:45 90 Minute Holy Saturday Retreat

10:45-11:05 Wrap Up and Sharing with the Group & Pastor Jason

Waiting in Hope: Solitude and Silence

Resting while waiting does not come naturally. The invitation from God on this Holy Saturday and the first Holy Saturday was to rest.

We wait in hope.

In order to slow down and rest, we need space and quiet. We may have space on a Saturday, but what about quiet?

As we slow down and quiet our souls, our bodies begin to communicate their weariness. Our minds show us the soil of our thoughts. Our hearts show us the heaviness we carry. Our souls reveal our discouragement and despair.

This slowing down can be scary. But this slow down can also be sacred. It is a sacred space that is Holy Saturday. This space between what was and what will be. This space between death and life. The space between (Friday's) cross and (Sunday's) resurrection.

Holy Saturday is a space of unknown, with an invitation to rest.

And, as we rest, we are strengthened in hope.

The practice of solitude and silence invites us to trust and wait by resting well.

As you begin your time of solitude and silence, read the Scripture below, slowly, a few times:

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.

The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God.

Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes.

But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. Luke 23:44-24:1

What stands out to you from this story?

What rest is God inviting you to?

Where do you need to cease from doing so you can rest in God?

Where do you need to engage in your world and trust God?

Pray through the text and your reflections. Use the back of this sheet to write down your prayer, if that helps.

The Strange Space of Hope: Prayer of Lament

Read the Scripture below, slowly, a few times:

*But we have this treasure in jars of clay,
to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.
We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed;
perplexed, but not driven to despair;
persecuted, but not forsaken;
struck down, but not destroyed;
always carrying in the body the death of Jesus,
so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.*

For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.

For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

So we do not lose heart.

*Though our outer self is wasting away,
our inner self is being renewed day by day.*

*For this light momentary affliction
is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory
beyond all comparison,*

*as we look not to the things that are seen
but to the things that are unseen.*

*For the things that are seen are transient,
but the things that are unseen are eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:7-18*

Often, our outer and inner worlds are going in opposite directions, at opposite speeds.

If there is dissonance/strangeness/incongruity between your inner and outer worlds, sit for a moment with this strangeness.

Or, if your inner world (anxiety, fear, worry) is matching the outer world (anxiety, fear, worry over coronavirus), sit for a moment with this strangeness.

As you sit, what is your response? What is God impressing upon your heart?

We are sitting in the reality of a global pandemic. One that does affect our bodies and our world. In addition to this pandemic, we have other sufferings: chronic pain, cancer, disabilities, emotional anguish, relational troubles, and more.

We are also given the reality of a hope to come when all things are made new and whole.

This is the space of hope. The strange space of hope. What seeds of hope are planted in you from the passage above of 2 Corinthians 4:7-18?

One way to strengthen our hope is through the practice of lament. This is counter-intuitive for our faith. Yet, in lament, we name the reality of hurt and pain in our lives and in our world.

How often do we do this *before God*? Typically, we despair internally or wear others out with our complaints. Lament is a complaint made *before God* and *in the presence of God*.

Yet, at the same time, lament holds fast to the promises of God and what is to come. As the African-American preaching tradition expresses so eloquently, *It's Friday...But Sunday's Coming*. Through lament, hope becomes familiar.

Lament is a practice of coming before God as fully as we can with our thoughts and feelings AND expressing hope and confidence in our God and what is to come.

Pray the Lament Psalm below by praying it out loud and pausing at any verse you would like to add expression, words, thoughts, or questions. Then continue praying the Psalm out-loud again, pausing and adding your prayers as you go. Included are suggestions where to pause if you would like to use those suggestions.

Psalm 13

How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

(Pause and add your prayers here)

How long must I wrestle with my thoughts

and day after day have sorrow in my heart?

(Pause and add your prayers here)

How long will my enemy triumph over me?

(Pause and add your prayers here)

Look on me and answer, Lord my God.

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,
and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

(Pause and add your prayers here)

But I trust in your unfailing love;

my heart rejoices in your salvation.

I will sing the Lord's praise,

for he has been good to me.

(Pause and add your prayers here)

Amen.

Holding Hope with Others: Hospitality and Blessing

Hope holds, even when we cannot hold it. Hope holds in community, in the community that Jesus has brought together. Hope holds in community, and for all the communities that Jesus has called us into. We hold it for one another, for our neighborhood, and for the world.

*We who are strong
ought to bear with the failings of the weak
and not to please ourselves.*

*Each of us should please our neighbors
for their good, to build them up.*

*For even Christ did not please himself
but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."*

*For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us,
so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and
the encouragement they provide we might have hope.*

*May the God who gives endurance
and encouragement
give you the same attitude of mind
toward each other that Christ Jesus had,
so that with one mind
and one voice
you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 15:1-6*

What stands out to you from this passage?

We hold hope together through the practices of receiving and giving hospitality and blessing.

In what weaknesses do you need others to hold hope for you? Who can you ask to hold it?

The women rested according to the Sabbath. And, they were also prepared to bless Jesus with spices (Luke 23:44-24:1). As you rest and wait in hope, ask God to bring to mind someone for you to bless. Write their names here:

Whether it is a text, FaceTime call, email, or handwritten note, take a few minutes to think and pray about that person. Write or come up with a plan to bless them.

Closing Blessing

As you continue to hold onto hope, be strengthened knowing that God holds you. Jesus holds you. He never wavers nor abandons you. He is with you. He is with our world.

*“I would have despaired
unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait
for the Lord;
be strong and
let your heart take courage;
yes, wait for the Lord.”* Psalm 27:13-14 NASB

Believe you will see the goodness of the Lord. Resurrection Sunday is coming. Wait for the Lord. Take Courage. Be Strong. Trust and wait in hope. Amen.