

Reflection & Prayertime: The Instillation of Hope

Scripture: Luke 24:1-32

8-17-20

Luke 24: 1–32: 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. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again. Then they remembered his words.

When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?”

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the

only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

"What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

It seemed that hope had been slain along with Christ. Women are talking about a missing body and a risen Christ, but none of it was making any sense. Accepting the resurrection of Jesus as a concept or possibility, much less an actual happening, stretched the mental and spiritual capacity of the disappointed and disenchanted followers beyond all limits. Perhaps Emily Bronte's poem captured their mood, "Hope whose whisper would have given balm to all my frenzied pain, stretched her wings and soared to heaven, went and ne're returned again!" There was no playbook for resurrection.

And yet resurrection did take root. Wendell Berry, a well-known Ky writer, challenges us in his poem, *Manifesto: The Mad Farmer's Liberation Front*, to practice resurrection. How could the disciples and how can we practice resurrection?

I was once helping with a Journey tour of the Unity House family shelter in Louisville, and at the end of the tour one of the women who left the shelter over a decade ago shared her story. Shameka Sells-Moore and her children left an abusive situation and with no significant financial resources, spent two nights in their car before the shelter had an opening. She shared that her daughter asked her for \$25 for a hoodie with her school's name on it as the days grew colder and Shameka said it might as well have cost \$2500, as she couldn't afford it. A wonderful colleague at VOA worked it out for the hoodie to be doable

and Shameka said she always viewed that as a symbol of hope that their life would be normal and good again some day. Shameka and her kids moved into affordable housing and she continued pursuing her education, completing her bachelor's degree and beginning her master's in counseling. She shared that she got back in touch with VOA in 2013 asking if she could do her student internship at VOA in 2014 and she did, counseling homeless parents including women who were trying to escape domestic violence. She graduated with her Master's degree in Dec 2014 and in 2015 began work on her PhD and continues to pursue it while having her own counseling practice. She's completed her PhD coursework, passed the comprehensive exam, is working on her dissertation. Shameka has experienced unimaginable pain, losing a 4 year grandson in a car wreck and later her daughter, the grandson's mother, last October. How can someone experiencing such grief experience hope? She shared during that Journey tour a few years back that she uses with her clients a technique that she benefitted from herself while in the shelter, the instillation of hope. I believe instilling hope is practicing resurrection. Shameka still instills hope today with the women who've completed treatment and live in our Transitional Living.

‘The instillation of hope offers a path back to a sense of possibility in our lives when almost all seemed lost. It’s about relief, restoration. And the chance, once more, to look forward – to wonder, when we’re in a barren place, what might be over the horizon (and to be given the strength and sustenance to keep putting one foot in front of the other in order to find out).

Yet sometimes instilling hope is also about looking *backward*, too. Looking back to remember how you might have handled situations or problems like this one before. To recall which qualities came to your aid at that time, and to know that you can access those again. For the simple fact of having negotiated tough terrain before can instill the hope that you can do it once more.

Erick Erikson said that “hope is both the earliest and the most indispensable virtue in the state of being alive..if life is to be sustained, hope must remain, even where confidence is wounded, trust impaired.”

When I first heard the term instillation of hope, I thought it was installation of hope. And I believe we can both instill hope in people and that we can install hope in the structures and systems around us, building an infrastructure of hope. If we had the collective, corporate will to install

mechanisms of hope in our community and our world, we could and sometimes we do.

One of our founders of national Volunteers of America was a woman named Maud Booth. When Maud and her husband Ballington broke away from General Booth and the Salvation Army and started their own organization, Volunteers of America, they wrote into their governance documents "it is to be distinctly understood that the Volunteers of America recognize woman as man's equal, and she is to be given every right and privilege enjoyed by him in this organization." This was in 1896, 24 years before women were given the legal right to vote in elections, the 100th anniversary of which happens this week! Maud instilled and installed hope with women who could envision the possibility of a world of equality with men and may it be realized in its fullest expression in the coming years.

Also in 1896 Maud received an invitation from a prisoner at Sing Sing to speak to the prisoners there. At this point in time, there was no parole system to help men newly released from prison and few had help or support to ease their way back. Maud stood up in Sing Sing's gloomy old chapel on Sunday, May 24, 1896 and spoke words of encouragement. She wrote later, "I thought how I should feel if I were in their place and realized that what they needed from my lips was something that would carry their thoughts away beyond the gray walls and some message of Christ's dear heart of love."

In the Sing Sing chapel, she told the convicts:

"I do not come here to prevent you from paying the just penalty of your crimes; take your medicine like men.

"When you have paid the penalty, I will help you.

"I will nurse you back to health. I will get you work. Above all, I will trust you.

"It depends on you whether I keep doing so or not."

Afterward, in response, five inmates came forward to declare commitment to turn from their former unlawful ways and to follow instead the ways of the Lord and His law of loving service to others.

These five became the initial nucleus of what they called the Volunteer Prison League. Essentially a mutual support group of

convicts committing themselves to change for the good, they adopted as their motto "Look Up and Hope."

She spoke to many prisoners and was nicknamed "Little Mother" by the men she encouraged. She went on to establish four Hope Houses, places where men newly released could live while they were assisted in finding jobs and housing. By 1912, 7500 men had graduated from the Hope Houses, with 60-75% of them succeeding in contrast to 60 to 75% of other prisoners after release becoming repeat offenders with many incarcerated

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