

EASTER 2021 – CBWC SERIES: DURABLE HOPE  
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**IN CHRIST ALONE.....MY HOPE IS FOUND:**

TODAY, THIS EASTER DAY, WE GATHER TO CELEBRATE THE JUBILANT TRIUMPH OF GOD’S WORK OF REDEMPTION, RECONCILIATION AND RESTORATION IN THE WORLD.

TODAY WE SHARE THE JOY THAT GOD “*HAS MADE KNOWN TO US THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL ACCORDING TO HIS GOOD PLEASURE, WHICH HE PURPOSED IN CHRIST, TO BE PUT INTO EFFECT WHEN THE TIMES WILL HAVE REACHED THEIR FULFILLMENT—TO BRING ALL THINGS IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH TOGETHER UNDER ONE HEAD, EVEN CHRIST.*”

THE LYRICS OF STUART TOWNSENDS HYMN, *IN CHRIST ALONE*, HAVE BEEN FLOATING IN MY HEAD SINCE THE BEGINNING OF LENT.

IN THIS TIME WHEN SO MANY PEOPLE ARE WEARY OF THE DEFERRED HOPE OF THE WORLD RETURNING TO SOME SEMBLANCE OF WHAT WE CONSIDER ‘NORMAL’, HOPE IN GOD’S GOODNESS TOWARDS HIS CREATION AND HIS CREATED REMAINS OUR PROPELLER TO KEEP GOING.

TOWNSEND WRITES IN THE FIRST STANZA:

*IN CHRIST ALONE MY HOPE IS FOUND,  
HE IS MY LIGHT, MY STRENGTH, MY SONG;  
THIS CORNERSTONE, THIS SOLID GROUND,  
FIRM THROUGH THE FIERCEST DROUGHT AND STORM.  
WHAT HEIGHTS OF LOVE, WHAT DEPTHS OF PEACE,  
WHEN FEARS ARE STILLED, WHEN STRIVINGS CEASE!  
MY COMFORTER, MY ALL IN ALL,  
HERE IN THE LOVE OF CHRIST I STAND.*

IN CHRIST ALONE OUR HOPE IS FOUND. LET’S BRING OUR FOCUS TO THIS STATEMENT SO THAT IN THIS SPACE, WITH THOSE WE ARE GATHERED WITH, WE TAKE A PAUSE TO REFLECT THAT THIS MOMENT IS SINGULARLY, SPECIFICALLY ABOUT CHRIST – OUR SAVIOR AND OUR LORD WHOM THE FATHER INCARNATED HIMSELF IN TO BRING THE GRAND REDEMPTION AND RECONCILIATION OF HEAVEN AND EARTH INTO OUR HUMAN EXPERIENCE.

THIS HOPE THAT WE FIND IN CHRIST IS NOT PERISHABLE. IT DOES NOT DEPEND ON WHETHER WE ARE EXPERIENCING TRIALS OR JOYS. IT IS SIMPLY IN THE MIDST OF BOTH TRIALS AND JOYS. OF PEACE AND SUFFERING. IT RESTS EASILY IN BOTH IF WE LET IT.

WE FIND THIS VIVIDLY PORTRAYED FOR US IN THE PASSION WEEK STORY. SOMEHOW AT THE UTTER DEVASTATION OF THE ONE SO MANY HAD PUT THEIR HOPE IN, NOW EXECUTED IN THE CRUELEST OF WAYS – ON THIS EASTER MORNING THOSE FIRST WITNESSES DISCOVERED HOPE AGAIN. HOPE THAT WENT BEYOND THE SUFFERING, BEYOND THE DREAMS OF THE PEOPLE AND RESTED IN CHRIST ALONE – STANDING AMONG THEM—RESURRECTED.

THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES SINCE, WE REMEMBER THE CROSS, THIS BRUTAL SYMBOL OF DEATH, AS A SYMBOL OF A HOPE AND A FUTURE.

- **THIS IS A LAMPEDUSA CROSS (INSERT PIC ON VIDEO)**
- **LAMPEDUSA IS A SMALL ISLAND IN THE MEDITERANEAN SEA BETWEEN LIBYA AND THE SOUTHERN TIP OF ITALY**
- **IT IS ALSO A PLACE OF REFUGE FOR THOSE FLEEING WAR, OPPRESSION, AND UNFATHOMABLE HARDSHIP FROM NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST**
- **IN 2013 A BOAT FILLED WITH DESPERATE PEOPLE WAS WRECKED OFF THE ISLAND. 311 ERITREAN AND SOMALI REFUGEES WERE DROWNED EN ROUTE TO EUROPE FROM LIBYA.**
- **THERE WERE 155 SURVIVORS RESCUED BY THE INHABITANTS OF LAMPEDUSA (66% OF THE PEOPLE HAD PERISHED IN THE SEA)**
- **HOPELESSNESS PREVAILED AMONG THE SURVIVORS**
- **, A LOCAL CARPENTER, (FRANSESCO TUCCHIO) “AFTER MEETING SOME OF THE SURVIVORS, WAS MOVED BY THEIR PLIGHT BUT FELT THERE WAS NOTHING HE COULD DO TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO THEIR SITUATION. ALL HE COULD THINK OF WAS TO USE HIS CARPENTRY SKILLS TO FASHION EACH OF THEM A CROSS FROM THE WRECKAGE OF THE BOAT AS A REFLECTION ON THEIR SALVATION FROM THE SEA AND HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.” (MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT NORTHWEST)**
- **WHAT HAS MADE THE CROSS A COMMON SYMBOL OF EXECUTION, OF DEHUMANIZING IT’S OCCUPANTS, OF SCORN AND SHAME BECOME A SYMBOL OF HOPE BOTH TODAY AND INTO OUR FUTURE?**
- **HOW CAN IT BE A VISUAL OF BOTH EXTREME GRIEF, LOSS, DISAPPOINTMENT, ANIALATION OF A FUTURE AND YET A PLACE WHERE WHEN VIEWED BY CHRISTIANS AND NON-CHRISTIANS, A SENSE OF HOPE ARISES, OF LIFE, OF A FUTURE RESTORED?**
- **THIS LAMPEDUSA CROSS ENDED UP IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM WHERE THERE ARE NO PHOTOGRAPHS, ONLY SYMBOLS/ARTICFACTS OF HISTORY.**
- **IT BECAME THE FINAL INSTALLMENT IN A COLLATED COLLECTION OF CROSSES THROUGHOUT THE PAST 2000 YEARS TITLED “SEEING SALVATION”**

- THE PRESS PANNED THE EXHIBIT AS A FAILURE AS WHO WOULD COME TO LOOK AT SYMBOLS OF PEOPLE BEING TORTURED TO DEATH...THAT WE WERE A FAR MORE CIVILIZED SOCIETY NOW AND COULDN'T WE JUST MOVE ON FROM THAT.
- THEY PREDICTED THE EXHIBIT A FAILURE
- SCHOLAR AND THEOLOGIAN N.T. WRIGHT, COMMENTING ON THE EXHIBIT, SAYS THIS:
- BUT PEOPLE CAME IN DROVES AND PEOPLE WERE VISIBLY MOVED AND LINGERED AND SOME PRAYED. SOMEHOW THE VERY IMAGE OF THE CROSS IN ITS MULTIPLE PRESENTATIONS (MANY DEPICTED JESUS ON THE CROSS) CARRIED IT'S OWN POWER. (NT WRIGHT)
- "SOMEHOW, THE VERY IMAGE OF THE CROSS ... CARRIED IT'S OWN POWER"
- THE EXHIBIT BECAME A THIN PLACE , A HOLY MOMENT - WHERE SOMETHING OF HEAVEN TOUCHING EARTH BEGAN TO HAPPEN
- SOMEHOW THE VISUAL EFFECTS OF THE SYMBOL OF DEATH, LOSS AND TORTURE STILL POWERFULLY ECHOED HOPE
- YET HOPE IS NOT ACTUALLY FOUND IN THE CROSS ... IT IS BUT A SYMBOL...A STARK REMINDER....OF GRIEF TURNED TO HOPE
- HOPE IS FOUND IN CHRIST ALONE
- THE CROSS ITSELF IS NOT OUR LIGHT, IT IS NOT OUR STRENGTH, IT IS NOT EVEN OUR SALVATION OR OUR CORNERSTONE
- ONLY CHRIST IS THAT
- YET, WITHOUT A DEATH, THERE IS NO RESURRECTION
- THERE IS NO RESURRECTION WITHOUT THE CROSS AND WITHOUT RESURRECTION, THE CROSS IS MEANINGLESS SO THE TWO ARE INTRINSICALLY TIED TOGETHER TO BRING HOPE. THAT IS WHY THE SYMBOL OF THE EMPTY CROSS CONTINUES TO BE SO POWERFUL FOR US FOR IT REPRESENTS BOTH THE REALITY OF SUFFERING AND THE PROMISE OF RESURRECTION.
- YET OUR HOPE DOES NOT REST IN THOSE TWO PIECES OF WOOD

- **OUR HOPE IS IN CHRIST ALONE - THE RESURRECTED AND LIVING CHRIST WHO CONQUERED DEATH ON THE CROSS TO ARISE TO LIFE - A LIFE AFTER THE ATTEMPT OF EVIL TO EXTINGUISH ALL HOPE FOR GOD'S HUMANITY.**

### **3<sup>RD</sup> STANZA OF TOWNSENDS HYMN:**

- THERE IN THE GROUND HIS BODY LAY,  
LIGHT OF THE WORLD BY DARKNESS SLAIN:  
THEN BURSTING FORTH IN GLORIOUS DAY  
UP FROM THE GRAVE HE ROSE AGAIN  
AND AS HE STANDS IN VICTORY  
SIN'S CURSE HAS LOST ITS GRIP ON ME,  
FOR I AM HIS AND HE IS MINE  
BOUGHT WITH THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST
- **IN THE EARLY COOL HOURS OF THE THIRD DAY, MARY MAGDALENE STANDS WEeping OUTSIDE THE EMPTY TOMB – HOPE IS LOST – THE MESSIAH HAS BEEN KILLED AND NOW HIS BODY HAS BEEN TAKEN.**
- **GARDNER APPEARS – REVEALS HIMSELF TO MARY – RABBONI!**
- **MARY RUNS BACK TO THE DISCIPLES HUDDLED TOGETHER IN A LOCKED ROOM**
- **SHE DOES NOT SAY “I SEE SALVATION”.**
- **SHE SIMPLY SAYS “I HAVE SEEN THE LORD!”**
- **HER HOPE BURST FORTH IN CHRIST ALONE.**
- **HER HOPE ISN'T IN SALVATION BUT IN THE LORD – SALVATION COMES AS A RESULT OF OUR HOPE IN CHRIST.**
- **IN SEEING THE LORD, MARY'S HOPE SOARED – SALVATION IS STILL WITH US! THE LORD, THE KING IS ALIVE!**
- **IN CHRIST ALONE OUR HOPE IS FOUND**
- **THE CROSS IS THE WAY, THE OPENING TO THIS LIFE IN CHRIST, IN THE FATHER, IN THE SPIRIT**
- **THE CROSS IS AN INVITATION - AN INVITATION TO MOVE BEYOND DEATH, DESPAIR, SHAME, DARKNESS, GRIEF, HURT, AND DISAPPOINTMENT INTO THE JOURNEY OF LIFE, LIGHT, STRENGTH, LOVE AND SHALOM CROSSING THE DIVIDE BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH**
- **THE CROSS IS WHERE GOD'S LOVE FOR US AND ALL HIS CREATION BROKE FREE OF RESTRAINT AND TOUCHED EARTH**
- **HOWEVER, THE CROSS IS NOT THE END OF THE STORY.**
- **THERE'S RESURRECTION**

- **LIFE AFTER DEATH**
- **THROUGH THE RESURRECTION WE HAVE BEEN ‘GIVEN NEW BIRTH INTO A LIVING HOPE’ (1 PETER 1:3). THIS NEW LIFE IS ETERNAL AND BEGINS NOW.**
- **WE, TOO, HAVE NEW LIFE**
- **THE REASON THOSE CROSSES IN THE EXHIBIT RESONATED WITH THE MILLIONS OF VIEWERS WHO CAME TO SEE THEM, IS BECAUSE IT IS A REMINDER THAT THERE IS *STILL* LIFE. THERE IS *STILL* HOPE.**
- **THE ERITRIEAN AND SOMALII REFUGEES SUFFERED HORRIFIC LOSSES THAT DAY, YET THERE IS *STILL* LIFE AMONG THEM. *THEY ARE ALIVE AND LIFE ITSELF, THIS GOD-BREATHED LIFE, GIVES HOPE – OF ANOTHER DAY AND OF A FUTURE OF DAYS***
  
- **IN CHRIST *WE* TOO ARE ALIVE.**
- ***WE* TOO HAVE LIFE.**
- **“THE CROSS IS NOT THE END OF THE STORY” – IN THAT OUR SUFFERING – ANY SUFFERING IS NEVER THE END OF THE STORY. LIFE KEEPS BURSTING IN WHETHER WE INVITE IT OR NOT – AFTER THE WORST LOSS WE FIND OURSELVES DELIGHTING IN A SUNSET OR LAUGHING WITH A GRANDCHILD. IN THE DEPTH OF THE DARKEST VALLEY WE CAN HOLD TO THIS HOPE – THAT GOD (SOURCE OF ALL LIFE) WILL BREATHE INTO OUR GRIEVING SOULS NEW LIFE – NEW REASONS TO LIVE. MUCH OF THAT MEANING WILL BE FOUND IN THE LIVES OF THOSE AROUND US AND THE BEAUTY THAT SURROUNDS US.**
- **GOD BREATHES INTO OUR GRIEVING SOULS NEW LIFE**
- **THERE IS, AFTER ALL, LIFE AFTER THE DEATH OF OUR HOPES, OUR DREAMS, OUR ASPIRATIONS.**
- **THERE IS, AFTER ALL, LIFE AFTER BROKEN HEARTS, AFTER GRIEF, AFTER PANDEMICS, AFTER THE DEVASTATION OF WHATEVER STORMS TOSS US INTO ROILING TURMOIL.**
- *CHRIST - THIS CORNERSTONE, THIS SOLID GROUND,*
- *FIRM THROUGH THE FIERCEST DROUGHT AND STORM.*
  
- **CHRIST ALONE IS THE CORNERSTONE, THE SOLID GROUND THAT NEVER SHIFTS, NEVER ABANDONS, NEVER FORSAKES – FIRM THROUGH THE FIERCEST DROUGHT AND STORM.**
- **CHRIST HAS TRIUMPHED OVER DEATH ITSELF AND NOW STANDS AMONG US – OUR GOD-WITH-US – EMMANUEL - RESURRECTED, THE SPIRIT BREATHING INTO US THE LIFE OF GOD TO RESURRECT US FROM THE ASHES AND THE MOURNING OF OUR BROKENNESS.**
- **WE ARE A RESURRECTED PEOPLE IN CHRIST ALONE.**
  - **ROMANS 6: (4-7) WE WERE THEREFORE BURIED WITH HIM THROUGH BAPTISM INTO DEATH IN ORDER THAT, JUST AS CHRIST WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD THROUGH THE GLORY OF THE FATHER, WE TOO MAY LIVE A NEW LIFE. IF WE HAVE BEEN UNITED WITH HIM LIKE THIS IN HIS DEATH, WE WILL CERTAINLY ALSO BE UNITED WITH HIM IN HIS**

RESURRECTION. FOR WE KNOW THAT OUR OLD SELF WAS CRUCIFIED WITH HIM SO THAT THE BODY OF SIN MIGHT BE DONE AWAY WITH, THAT WE SHOULD NO LONGER BE SLAVES TO SIN--BECAUSE ANYONE WHO HAS DIED HAS BEEN FREED FROM SIN.

- **HAVING BEEN BURIED WITH CHRIST THROUGH BAPTISM, WE ARE ALSO NOW UNITED WITH HIM IN RESURRECTION LIFE.**
- **WHEN OUR HOPE IS FOUND IN CHRIST ALONE, WE TOO, WILL EXPERIENCE BOTH DEATH AND RESURRECTION.**
- **AS CHRIST STANDS IN VICTORY – IN RESURRECTION LIFE, WE, TOO, SHARE IN THAT LIFE.**
- **THE WONDER AND BEAUTY OF THE CROSS IS THAT IN DEATH, LIFE BURSTS FORTH.**
- **AND WHERE THERE IS LIFE, THERE IS HOPE.**
- **CHRIST IS LIFE. CHRIST IS OUR LIGHT, OUR STRENGTH, OUR SONG.**
- **WHEN HOPELESSNESS PREVAILS, LIKE THOSE GRIEF STRICKEN REFUGEES, CAN WE LOOK AT THE SYMBOL OF HOPELESSNESS AND SEE CHRIST ALONE, OUR HOPE –**
  
- **CAN WE STAND ON THE LOVE OF CHRIST AS OUR COMFORTER, OUR ALL IN ALL?**
- **CAN WE FIX OUR EYES ON HIM AND EXCLAIM WITH MARY IN THE EASTER SUNDAY GARDEN “I HAVE SEEN THE LORD” AND HE IS WITH US NOW AND FOR ALL ETERNITY**
  
- **CAN YOU SAY THAT YOU HAVE SEEN THE LORD. CAN YOU SAY YOU SEE THE LORD. IN YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE OF JOYS AND SORROWS DO YOU SEE CHRIST WITH YOU, SHARING IN THE SAME SUFFERING JUST AS WE SHARE IN HIS?**
- **WE BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS ALIVE – A LIVING PRESENCE. HOWEVER, OUR HOPE IS NOT “WHAT YOU OR I BELIEVE” BUT WHO WE BELIEVE IN. IT IS NOT ONLY WHAT YOU KNOW, BUT WHO YOU KNOW. HAVE YOU MET JESUS TODAY AS A LIVING PRESENCE IN YOUR LIFE? DO YOU ‘SEE THE LORD’, HIS PRESENCE WITH YOU EVERY DAY? HIS IS NOT ONLY OUR HOPE ON THE DAY WE CHOSE TO FOLLOW HIM AS DISCIPLES, HE IS NOT ONLY OUR FUTURE HOPE – HE IS OUR DAILY LIVING REALITY.**
  
- **IN CHRIST ALONE OUR HOPE IS FOUND.**
- **IN THE GOD-WITH-US, THE CRUCIFIED AND RESURRECTED CHRIST WITH US, THE LOVE OF CHRIST WITH US, IN US AND FLOWING THROUGH US; IN THIS CHRIST, THIS LOVE, THIS LIFE, OUR HOPE IS FOUND.**

*IN CHRIST ALONE OUR HOPE IS FOUND,*

*HE IS OUR LIGHT, OUR STRENGTH, OUR SONG;*

*THIS CORNERSTONE, THIS SOLID GROUND,*

*FIRM THROUGH THE FIERCEST DROUGHT AND STORM.*

*WHAT HEIGHTS OF LOVE, WHAT DEPTHS OF PEACE,*

*WHEN FEARS ARE STILLED, WHEN STRIVINGS CEASE!*

*OUR COMFORTER, OUR ALL IN ALL,*

***HERE IN THE LOVE OF CHRIST WE STAND.***