

Lenten Midweek Service 2 – 2026
The Crucifixion of Christ in the Life of Man
(The Crucifixion of Christ and the Essence of Hope)
Romans 8:18-25
1 Peter 1:13-25

Along with faith and love, hope constitutes our Christian existence. Hope is a priceless commodity. Hope is wind beneath our wings. Hope is spiritual adrenaline, spiritual helium. Hope is neither cocky nor uncertain. Hope has its eyes on the future, a divinely-given future. Christian hope is the expectation that God has extended to us something good, a tangible and real and certain good that is pure gift. A religion of works righteousness knows nothing of hope. As those who have been saved by grace, we depend on hope. We trust God's promises. We live inspired lives, lives inspired by truth, truth that gives rise to a living hope.

I woke this morning to a text message that told me that one of our brothers was in the hospital with a tumor on his pancreas. I'm going to tell you about him. The tumor is wrapped around an artery near his stomach, so surgery is not an option, at least at this point. His good-lady-wife tells me that it is indeed pancreatic cancer though no biopsy had been done yet. He's just a bit younger than me, with four beautiful daughters, the eldest was married in August. As a youngster, he was in a dysfunctional family situation. He was abused. St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Orange was his sanctuary, his place of peace. The school attached to the church was God's instrument to breathe hope into your brother. Our Good Shepherd was there. By His Word and Spirit, Christ the King built hope into a troubled young lad. And that hope was an anchor in a storm. That hope is still an anchor in a storm.

Call to mind the character traits of the hopeful. Are they sunny? Do you enjoy their company, sunny people? Does hope make us strong, resilient as well as cheerful? I realize that you struggle. Better men than us, better women than us have struggled when their circumstances turn dark. The Lord understands His disciples and our struggles. On the night in which He was betrayed, Jesus' disciples were anxious. The situation seemed to demand that kind of an emotional response. The religious authorities were becoming more bellicose. Jesus' antagonists had all the earthly power, and their threats weren't mere posturing. I'm about to quote some of what the Lord Christ said to them that night. Listen to it. Imagine Jesus' demeanor. Imagine the Lord saying these words knowing not only about His crucifixion, but about His resurrection. Imagine Him saying these words to our brother who is laying in a hospital bed this night.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.’ Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?’ Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’” (John 14:1-6). Why does He tell them this? What God demands, God provides. Trust in God. Trust also in Me. That Word gives birth to the trust that serves Christ's disciples when storms arise. Trust and hope are mirror images of each other. Hope; what does our brother need now more than hope? Hope is tied to the truth. Hope is tied to action, Christ's action. Hope is

tethered to a bloody cross, a crucified Savior, and an empty tomb. God created you to know hope, to experience hope, because He wants His Son's sacrifice to have a mirror image in your heart.

As our Creator, did Almighty God know that this world would fall, broken by rebellion in the Garden? Yes, He did. The gifts that He gave humanity, the emotional spectrum, the cognitive range, the intuition, the ability to trust, the ability to take stock of promises and embrace a future that is yet un-lived – God intentionally gave you the ability to hope because He knew that you would have to walk through a world that is dark and foreboding and perilous. God wanted to give you the ability to rise above pessimism and fear and anxiety. Hope is an element of your being that He always intended to fill with the blood of His Son.

What our Lord said to His disciples on the night that He was betrayed is often read at funerals. It is meant to capture the faith of the deceased. But more than that, it is meant to arouse hope in the hearts of the grieving who are faced with a casket, faced with loss, faced with death. Of all the people in the world, Christians know better than anyone: Death does not have the last word. That is power. That is power in the life of the believer. We do not grieve like the rest of men who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him (1 Thessalonians 13-14). Hope is your God-given awareness that your sins are forgiven and heaven in your home. Hope is flexed at Easter. Hope is unleashed at hospital beds and nursing homes and at altar rails by the proclamation of Easter. Hope is your God-given ally. Hope is nurtured in Sunday school classrooms. Hope in your heart tells you that Christ is near.

The wife of our brother has a job to do. Her whole life and everything she knows about Christianity has led to this job. All the love that God has given to her, all the humility and the intestinal fortitude and the desire to bless her husband is to be marshalled and conveyed to her husband. He needs her, now more than ever. And she him. Hope is alive in them. I saw it in their eyes this morning. With rapt attention, they listened to God's Word as I conveyed the veracity of our hope, our faith, our trust. The writer to the Hebrews explains it this way: Jesus has gone into heaven and He is our hope. We have an anchor for our soul. An anchor keeps a ship securely moored in a safe harbor. Our hope is anchored in heaven. We enter that harbor in the Divine Service. Christ has gone there on our behalf and has prepared a place for us (Hebrews 6:19). We can meet any challenge in this life because hope does not disappoint. We are strong and courageous. God's gift is most certainly ours. Heaven is the gift. Christ's crucifixion is what your hope is built on. God has awakened that hope in you and He will feed it as long as you live. We are strong and courageous. Hope is alive.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope” (Romans 15:13).