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PASTORAL LETTER – APRIL 2021

Dear friend,

We are embarking on the liturgical season of Easter. It is a period in the church's calendar wherein Jesus spends 40 days on earth after his resurrection, making intermittent appearances before he ascends to heaven.

As Luke tells us in Acts 1:1-3, *“The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”*

In biblical literature, the number 40 appears 146 times, and it can represent a time of difficulty—a time that feels like it will never come to an end. For example, when the Bible says that it rained for 40 days and 40 nights during Noah's deluge, that means it felt like it rained forever. Likewise, it felt like Jesus was working forever and harder than ever to make things better during the memorable post-resurrection appearances, which took place over 40 days. Making things better is never easy but it won't happen unless we are committed to doing what is necessary to improve a situation.

Jesus's commitment to making things better is demonstrated in his appearance to and forgiveness of a friend named Thomas, who doubted him (see Mark 16:14-18 or John 20:26-29). Also, it was demonstrated in his forgiveness of a friend named Peter, who denied him three times. In an interplay of Peter's three denials, Jesus asks Peter three times to demonstrate his love and true repentance by becoming a spiritual leader of the early church as a shepherd (John 20).

It is worth noting that the post-resurrection appearances also give us the riveting story of Jesus appearing to 500 witnesses at once in order to establish the veracity of his resurrection (1st Corinthians 15:6).

To my mind, these post-resurrection stories not only demonstrate Jesus's triumph over death in a convincing manner, but they also demonstrate that we should take every opportunity that God gives us to pursue a fresh new start. As long as God gives us the gift of life and the opportunity to share this world—our world—with others, we should remain committed to the process of redemption, of making things better. This is possible as long as we have hope.

Bishop Desmond Tutu is credited with saying, ***“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.”***

Easter is hope. Hope keeps us going, and it allows us to grow.

I look forward to growing in Christ and service with you during this period as we discuss the memorable post-resurrection stories during worship. If you are not able to attend worship in person, please remain connected to us and these stories by visiting our church's website and watching the service videos.

He is risen!

Pastor Luis
