

June 2, 2019

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Life is full of dreams and promises; many hold true. This is the wonder and possibility of our condition. In each life, there are promises made and dreams realized as well as intentions fizzled and, even, vows broken. Few of us can look back from the current vantage point and say, "Well, that went exactly as planned!" From relationships to vocation to gifts under the Christmas tree, most humans end up with a few quizzical looks and ponderings along the way. Life's unfolding is seldom dull.

People who identify themselves as being even remotely curious about or overtly connected with Jesus are not immune to such variables. Early on we may feel great sympathy for the first followers of Jesus, learning of the Creator of All's devotion to the creatures we call humans. Jesus embodied the Creator's passion for humanity's abundant life, mercy, care, and kindness to and for one another. In Jesus, the disciples gradually come to know themselves as one with all for whom Jesus came. We still grapple with the enormity of that realization.

Jesus' disciples had to be appalled, shocked, shamed, fear- and grief-stricken by the events surrounding the death and burial of Jesus. Reading between the lines, we can assume that, at that point (and likely off and on before), life was not exactly as they'd hoped. Dreams were dashed and promises broken. Was Judas the only one to bear the weight of their guilt? Would their eyes ever dare meet one another's (much less God's) eyes again?

And then, Easter! Not just the hour, day or season. Not just Jesus appearing to them on the road, at the seashore, at the breaking of the bread and sharing of the cup. He opened their mind to the scriptures, to the loving truths, the welcoming hope therein for them. The words it was impossible for them to understand earlier brought life to them now. Jesus loved and forgave them. The Crucified one was alive and set

them into life they'd never known before. The Risen One gave them Spirit and Sacrament, daily nourishment to assure Jesus would never forget them.

No matter where they went, their amount of strength or determination, or their sense of preparedness for tackling the challenges or rising to the occasions, Jesus would be with them, in body and blood and in prayer. Promise kept.

That's the word we take with us as we move forward this day into life. Jesus tells us as he told those first disciples, whether they fully understood in that moment or more in their earthly lifetime, he prays for them. He is in them. He is with them and all. Jesus tells them then and tell us now, that in this way of love and prayer, as Jesus is one in purpose with the Father, so Jesus is one in purpose and love with us, always.

However this day or week or year turns out for us, whether we are surprised by joy or laid low with pain, Jesus is in and for us, praying for our guidance and renewal, our forgiveness and joy. Jesus's promise is to love and be with God's people, with and for you and me and all those we (and Jesus) love. This promise is true for comfort and inspiration and strength to trust, adapt, and meet this earth's challenges. This promise, this Jesus promise, is yours and mine and here for all the world, by God's love, eternally. And the Good News? It is ALL true, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Leaning on that Promise with you,

Pastor Haller