



Living Ink

Learning to Live in God's Story

A Worship Series

Lent-Easter 2016

Easter Sunday | Surprised by Hope

Living Ink | Lent to Easter 2016

- Lent is a 40-day season when the church commemorates the time Jesus spent in solitude, in silence, and fasting in the wilderness. Jesus prepared himself in the wilderness for what the Father had for him in his life and ministry.
- In this season of wandering and preparation, we are invited to make room for God's Spirit as we allow him to become the source of our strength and the Lord of our lives.
- In our *Living Ink* worship series, we have been discovering through the Scriptures that God is the Author of a grand narrative—a tale that encompasses all our struggles, pain, joys, and victories. This Author calls us to co-authorship, using our very lives to continue the Kingdom mission and vision of Jesus in a world poised for resurrection.

Easter Sunday | Surprised by Hope

- God's story reaches its climax in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Easter Sunday is the promise of God to redeem humanity, to stay with us in our darkest moments, and that there can be a happy ending to your story.
- In *Surprised by Hope* (7 of 7), we will see that just as Mary Magdalene was surprised to meet the resurrected Jesus in her lowest moment, we too can be surprised by the hope of new life, even when we feel we've reached an end.
- This Easter morning, you're invited to open your heart to the saving power of God, even when all hope seems lost.

Have you ever met God in the darkness?

John 20:11-14 NIV

¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³ They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

John 20:15-18 NIV

¹⁵ He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”).

¹⁷ Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.



Appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene after resurrection – Alexander Ivanov, 1835

Acts 10:34-38 NIV –

Peter sums up the gospel at the house of Cornelius

³⁴ Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵ but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.

³⁶ You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ³⁷ You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

Acts 10:39-43 NIV

³⁹ “We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, ⁴⁰ but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. ⁴¹ He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

1 Peter 1:3-5 NIV

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

1 Peter 1:6-9 NIV

⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

How God Uses Our Darkness

Some of the greatest stories of hope and transformation have come out of darkness. Why is that? How can it be?

1. The darkness (loss of sight) heightens our senses to realities that often go unnoticed, i.e. God's presence; God can get our full attention in our darkness
2. The darkness pushes us toward the light, when we might not otherwise notice it, or we've taken it for granted
3. In the darkness we are aware of our immortality, the void in us (God-shaped hole), our own spiritual poverty, and our dependency on and desperate need of God

James 1:2-4 MSG

Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

Paul, Philippians 1:6 NLT

Learning to Live in God's Story

“Surprised by Hope” reflection questions:

1. As you peer into the darkness this morning, are you prepared to be surprised by the God who raised Jesus?
2. Paul says his life (and ours) should bear the marks of Jesus' sufferings? In the same way, does your own life-story bear the evidence of Jesus' resurrection?
3. The resurrection of Jesus means that we can now know how God's story ends: Light overcomes the darkness! What would it look like for you to believe & live in the hope (promise) of Jesus' resurrection?



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Sermon audio & slides in PDF can be downloaded at:
www.christiansburgmennonite.org