

HOPE IS ALIVE! – Matthew 27

Today we live in a culture of “hopelessness.” This *plague* of “hopelessness,” which we face today, is perpetuated by our *continual* rejection of the “truth,” and our *propensity* for convenient “lies!” A recent **Wall Street Journal** article entitled, **Truth Isn’t the Problem – We Are.** “*Politics has warped facts since the days of Pericles, (pear-i-clees), the ancient Greek statesman, but our ‘post-truth’ era offers a destructive new twist: defying facts as a badge of tribal allegiance.*” Truth is no longer important, our allegiance to our agenda is! **But Jesus said; (John 8:32) “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”**

It’s no wonder, *having rejected Christ in our “post-truth” culture*, that our “allegiances” have **not** produced “freedom,” but “bondage” to even *more* “hopelessness!” **The good news is, the “resurrection” of Jesus Christ is still the “antidote” to mankind’s hopelessness!** In **Matthew 27:55-61**, we find a scene of “hopelessness,” *whereby a “lie” seeks to destabilize the “truth.”* The one person I’d like us to focus on, *in this scene*, is “Mary Magdalene,” **(v.56)**. She, *as well as the others*, are “sick” with “hopelessness.” **(Proverbs 13:12) Hope deferred makes the heart sick, But when the desire comes, it is a tree of life.** Here “hope” had “evaporated,” before her eyes on Friday, but “Sunday” was coming! **(Psalm 30:5b) Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning.**

Mary Magdalene was from a town called “Magdala,” located on the southeastern coast of the Sea of Galilee. It was a fishing community, also known for “prostitution.” *There is nothing, however, in scripture which ties Mary Magdalene to a lifestyle of prostitution. Magdala literally means: tower, castle.* But, the “prosperity” and “vice” of Magdala provided no escape from the “hopelessness,” Mary lived with daily! The same applies today.

In fact, **Luke 8:2** tells us she was possessed by “seven demons.” She was a woman tormented by “evil spirits,” and “infirmities.” **Luke 8:2; Evil – hurtful,**

degenerate, diseased, morally derelict; Infirmities – feebleness of mind and body. Mary may not have been a “prostitute,” but whatever she was into, satan was comfortable with! The number seven in scripture is the number marking “completion”; Mary was “completely” demon possessed! ***You may feel “completely” hopeless today, but because He lives, you are never beyond the reach of God’s love!***

Through our “unbridled” *carnal passions*, our desire to be free of “godly” influence, we provide a *safe-haven* for the “tormentor” of our souls! Even “atheist,” *sometimes*, can see the “hand-writing” on the wall.

In an article dated March 22 - Richard Dawkins, prominent atheist author and evolutionary biologist, warned against celebrating what some call the demise of Christianity in Europe. Dawkins tweeted: ***“Before we rejoice at the death throes of the relatively benign Christian religion, let’s not forget the menacing rhyme, by Hilaire Belloc’s (Anglo-French writer and historian) who said; ‘Always keep a-hold of nurse – For fear of finding something worse.’”*** In this article Dawkins went on to lament the fact, Islam is replacing Christianity in Europe. He said; ***“...at present the most-evil religion in the world has to be Islam.”*** (Fox News – March 22, 2018). In rejecting the “truth,” (Christ), Europe, *as Eve did in the Garden of Eden*, has embraced a “lie!” **(Hosea 8:7a) “They sow the wind, And reap the whirlwind.”**

In Magdala, *as in the world today*, “hopelessness” had become the “norm.” But Christ came to replace the “norm” with a “new” and “living” hope! **(Jeremiah 29:11-13) For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. To seek Christ, is to know, “everlasting hope!”**

Notice: Mary Magdalene, and the other disciples had no earthly reason to believe their “hopelessness” situation would *ever* change. **(v.62-66)**. Satan did all he could to “deny” them access to “everlasting” hope! ***“Make it as secure as you know how!” It’s interesting that this group of “unbelievers,” who***

“mocked” Christ, thought it “necessary” to secure the tomb. Those who consider the resurrection a “benign” and *foolish* story, “instinctively” know the truth! Like the *chief priests and Pharisees*, they place “guards,” of *ideology, philosophy, and astrology* around the tomb, to ensure the “truth” never “gets out!” **But Jesus said: (Matthew 24:35) Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.**

They “secured” the tomb by “religious” and “political” authority! The Jewish Sanhedrin, and the mighty Roman Empire! *The Roman Empire existed for an estimated 1500 years; the U.S. has only been around for 242 years!* The tomb was secured by a stone, seal, and guard. STONE: (v.60) it was a “large stone,” rolled into a rut, making it *very* difficult to move. SEAL: (v.66) a Roman seal; possibly a “leather strap” placed across the stone; a seal representing the *power* and *authority* of Rome; the penalty for breaking the seal, *by moving the stone*, was “death!” GUARD: possibly a unit of 16 Roman soldiers governed by a set of strict rules; they could not sit down or *lean* against anything. If one soldier was caught sleeping, *according to Roman military law*, the whole unit would be put to “death.” (blueletterbible.org / Don Stewart)

Who would dare to move this stone? *Why even try? Give up! “Hopelessness” is the “new norm!”* These are the same “lies” people wrestle with every day! **Who would “dare” move the stone? Only the One who “made it!” (ttt)**
Psalm 2. (read) Matthew 28:1-7

(read text); in Luke 24 the “angel(s)” said to them; In **John 20:11-17 – (ttt)** Mary Magdalene’s “hopelessness” is *swallowed up* in “victory!” You don’t have to be “hopeless” today! Christ was “crucified,” and is “risen” that we might have *everlasting hope*, in Him! **(Romans 4:25) “...who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.”**

To move from hopelessness to eternal hope we need to remember three things: 1) Everlasting Hope is not found among the dead. The “remedy’s” offered by the world, *riches, fame, pleasures, self-worship, etc.* are among

the “dead”; they cannot produce *salvation* “eternal life!” (Luke 24:5b-7) “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’” 2) Everlasting Hope knows your name. “**Mary!**” God knows your name, *your DNA*; reputation, weaknesses, etc., and still He bids us to come! 3) Everlasting Hope changes everything. “*I’m ascending to My Father and your Father, My God and your God!*” We are transported from a relationship of “death” to one of “life,” as children of God! (1 Peter 1:3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

CONCLUSION: Hope is alive today! Because Jesus “lives” we “live” also! The seal has been broken, the “tomb” of hopelessness has been “vacated!” if you will place your “trust,” (faith) in Christ’ “**sacrifice**” for your sins, and His *glorious* “**resurrection!**” (Romans 10:9) “...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” ***This is where “truth” begins, and the “lies” end! Hope is Alive!***