

Scene 6 Hope

Where do we see ourselves spiritually at this point in the pandemic in relation to the Easter story? Are we – in pandemic terms – Joseph mourning Jesus' death and ensuring that he is buried appropriately; or the angel watching and waiting ready to reveal the truth and joy for others, or the women, possibly in denial about what's happening, coming with trepidation perhaps daring to hope that something good is imminent? Are we in mourning, denial, or anticipating? Is there a place for all three? And can we envisage hope on the horizon, in this Bible story and in our own lives?

The tomb – Mark 15.42-47

When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where the body was laid.



waiting to anoint his body and say goodbye. I can't bear to look Peter or John in the eye, there's so much suffering and loss – and guilt. Judas is dead, too, but it doesn't feel the same as losing Jesus. And yet... is it really the end? When he told us he'd die, he also said he would rise again. That was just as far-fetched as the idea of him leaving us. But I've seen him do so many impossible things, he's changed my life in so many inconceivable ways – could he really do it? Dare I hold onto the hope that I might see him again? Part of me wants to bury that memory away with his body, to forget he ever spoke those words. To hope and to be disappointed would be too much, I couldn't bear it. And yet, he doesn't feel truly *gone* – could he really come back to us? Might he really come and set things right? Is it possible to leave this sadness and bitterness behind and rebuild a new life with Jesus at the centre? I feel like hope is there, just over the horizon, silent and still, but there.

Conversation and reflection

- 1 How hopeful do you feel at this moment for the future?
- 2 Reflect and talk about what the atmosphere may have been like among the women and the disciples in those days, between crucifixion and resurrection.
- 3 How might we as a fellowship/church continue to support those struggling while being a signpost for hope? See 'Follow-up' activity below.

Listen

[See what a morning](#) Stuart Townend

[The Best is Yet to Come](#) North Point Worship

Voices

Here NHS vaccine-giver

It's begun! What we've waited and hoped for ever since this catastrophe started a year ago – the cure to this awful virus. There's scepticism, naturally, all of this has happened so fast and it's totally unprecedented, but there's still cause for hope. The possibility that soon we'll be able to meet, to hug, to find a semblance of normal, whatever that looks like. That perhaps we can put the majority of this strange time behind us. Of course, for so many families and friends who've lost loved ones, normal isn't an option, they've lost too much and it's too difficult to comprehend just now. We're still in the midst of suffering and loss. It's seemed never-ending, especially for those in the thick of it – hospitals, nursing homes, supermarkets, undertakers. Dare I trust that we can rebuild life again, with all we've learned here? Hope is there, peering, tantalising, just out of sight over the horizon.

There Mary or a disciple at the tomb

It's happened. The worst. We've lost our Jesus. He warned us, but when he was there, with you, being amazing, you couldn't believe what he was saying. Death – taking Jesus? It seemed impossible. And yet, here we are, by his tomb,

Prayer action

This prayer aims to speak into where your emotions are at this moment. If you are mournful and struggling, lay your palms gently on your knees. If you feel some denial and want to 'bury' away the pandemic situation, ball your hands into fists. If you are feeling hopeful towards the future, open your palms face up and lay them on your knees. Be sensitive to those around you – not everyone will feel the same as you.

Loving God, we come to you as we are – broken, weary, afraid, sad, hopeful, optimistic. Please meet with each of us in this moment, minister to us and those we love. Assure us that you are with us, and will never leave us. Show us how to heal, how to come to terms with loss, how to assist others, how to rest, how to slow down, how to look ahead with confidence in your goodness. Thank you, God. Amen.

Follow-up activity

Consider how your church and/or fellowship might be or continue to be, a beacon of hope for your community as the pandemic situation continues. As and when appropriate, arrange a further conversation to discuss how to take ideas forward.