

## INTRODUCTION

The Bible says laughter is good medicine and we laugh a lot here at Green Acres. In fact, to increase your Easter laughter quota I want to share with you ten of the funniest “Church Bulletin Bloopers.” These misprints actually come from church handouts:

1. This morning’s message is, “Jesus Walks on the Water.” Tonight’s message is, “Searching for Jesus.”
2. Tonight’s sermon topic is: “What is Hell?” Come early and listen to our choir practice.
3. Ladies, don’t forget the church rummage sale. It’s a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Don’t forget your husbands.
4. This being Easter Sunday, we will ask Mrs. Lewis to come forward and lay an egg on the altar.
5. The Pastor would appreciate it if the ladies of the congregation would lend him their electric girdles for the pancake breakfast next Sunday morning.
6. Saturday is the family hayride and bonfire. Bring your own hot dogs and guns.
7. This evening at 7 p.m. we’ll have a hymn sing in the park across from the church. Bring a blanket and be ready to sin.
8. Bertha Belch, a missionary from Africa, will be speaking next Sunday. Come hear Bertha Belch all the way from Africa.
9. The low Self-esteem Support Group will meet Thursday at 7 p.m. Please use the back door.
10. A new loudspeaker system has been installed in the church. It was given by one of our members in honor of his wife.

Today I want to talk to you about “Hope for Your Broken Heart.” It’s a great theme for Easter because there’s a story from the very first Easter Day about two people who were desperately in need of hope. They were followers of Jesus and had watched in horror as their hopes disappeared as Jesus was nailed to a cross and died. When Jesus died, their hope died as well.

In our passage, these two heart-broken people were walking back to their home in a town named Emmaus, about seven miles west of Jerusalem. As they walked, a stranger joined them. They didn’t realize this stranger was Jesus who, just a few hours earlier, had been resurrected from the dead. Jesus listened to them talk about the events that had taken place over the past few days, and with a twinkle in His eye He asked what they were talking about. Let’s pick up with their conversation in Luke 24:19:

“‘What things?’ he asked. ‘About Jesus of Nazareth,’ they replied. ‘He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.’...”

As they continued to talk about the death of their hope, Jesus started teaching them in verse 26: Jesus said, “Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?”

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. In other words, Jesus started with Genesis and went through every book in their Bible teaching them that it was all about the Messiah. They finally arrived at Emmaus and they invited Jesus to join them for supper. Let's pick up the story in verse 30:

“When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?’ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, ‘It is true! The Lord has risen has appeared to Simon.’ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread. While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said them, ‘Peace be with you.’”

This is a great Easter story because it reveals the basis of the Hope we have as Christians.

I love Biblical art and one of my favorite works is the painting entitled, “The Supper at Emmaus” by the Spanish artist Diego Velázquez. He has captured the exact instance when the two astonished disciples recognize Jesus. One of the details I like is Velázquez showed a nail-print on the back of Jesus’ right hand. The next time you’re in New York City, you can see this painting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

These two disciples had quite a day! Their day started with broken hearts and broken hopes but within a few hours they had burning hearts full of hope. A person can live about forty days without food, about four days without water, and about eight minutes without air. But you can’t really live one second without hope. If you find yourself in need of hope this Easter, here are three principles that can help you move from desperation to celebration.

### **(1) In a messed-up world, it’s easy to lose hope**

Can you hear the note of hopelessness and they said, “We had hoped he was the one.”? (Luke 24:21) Is there something you’ve been hoping for but haven’t found yet? How would you complete this sentence: “I had hoped...”? Maybe you’re thinking, “I had hoped my life would be different.” Maybe you’ve lost hope for your career, or lost hope for you health, or lost hope for your children. One reason it’s easy to lose hope is because we live in a messed-up world that is waiting to be redeemed.

Bill invited his boss to dinner at his house and was hoping to make a good impression. His wife prepared an excellent meal. Eight-year old Adam was scrubbed clean and was warned to be on his best behavior. After introductions, Adam wanted to impress his dad’s boss so he ran into his room and grabbed a deck of cards. He brought them out and gave them to his dad’s boss. He said, “I want you to have these because my dad says that you aren’t playing with a full deck.” But the truth is, that we’re all a few cards short of a full deck. We’re all sinners and we live in a fallen world full of trouble. Job said, “Man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward.” (Job 5:7)

How many of you have seen the movie, “Avatar”? It’s now the highest grossing motion picture in history. It cost about \$300 million to make, and it has already earned box office receipts of \$2.6 billion worldwide. I saw the movie in 3D, which was a neat experience. The plot isn’t new, it’s simply a makeover of *Dances with Wolves* where Kevin Costner is a soldier sent to destroy the Native Americans and he ends up joining them. *Avatar* is the story of Jake Sully, an ex-Marine, who infiltrates the Na’vi people so the evil corporation who hired him can access their natural resources. Like *Dances with Wolves*, Jake ends up helping the Na’vi fight against the human invaders.

When I watched *Avatar*, I couldn’t help but notice it was full of spiritual themes. Whenever I watch a movie, or read a book I always filter it through my Christian world-view.

I think this movie is a reflection of the deep spiritual hunger most Americans have. *Avatar* certainly isn’t a Christian movie, but it touches on some Biblical themes. For instance, there’s a Tree of Souls the deity, Eywa uses to connect people and give life. Eywa isn’t simply a personification of nature; instead she’s a goddess who comes to the aid of the Na’vi in the final battle. I’m not the only one who noticed Eywa is a rearrangement of the letters of the Old Testament name for God: Yahweh. James Cameron wasn’t exactly subtle in his themes. The planet is Pandora, the goddess from Greek mythology who opened a Pandora’s box of evil that was released into the world. Sigourney Weaver’s character is named “Grace Augustine.” If you know your church history, Augustine was a 4<sup>th</sup> century theologian who developed the doctrines of Total Depravity and Grace.

Like the Tree of Souls, there’s a Tree of Life in the Bible. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve are driven away from the Tree of Life because of sin, and in the last chapter of the Bible, Revelation 22, the redeemed are invited back to the Tree of Life.

But the strongest spiritual parallel was when Jake Sully was told he needed to be born again. As he spends time with the Na’vi he learns, “Every person is born twice. The second time is when you earn your place among the people forever.” So where do you think Cameron got that idea? Right out of John 3:7 where Jesus told Nicodemus, “If you want to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, which is an eternal kingdom, you must be born again.” Jesus says if we want to live eternally, we must be born twice as well.

In the end, Jake Sully chooses to be transformed into a Na’vi, a stronger and better being. In the beginning of the movie, he was physically disabled (sullied). Confined to a wheelchair, he was ignorant and arrogant. But as He submitted to Eywa’s power he is changed.

Now, watching *Avatar* won’t change your life, but Jesus really can transform your life. We’re all sinners (sullied) and we live in a world that is full of evil. When Adam and Eve sinned, it was as if a Pandora’s box of evil was released into God’s beautiful creation. But because of what Jesus did on another Tree of Life, the old rugged cross, He can transform you from a disabled, arrogant person into a strong, humble person. The Bible says, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17) By the way, do you remember the

names of those beautiful hanging mountains? They were called the Hallelujah Mountains. As a follower of Jesus I enjoy the Hallelujah Mountains every day!

As the pristine world of the Na'vi was assaulted by those huge machines, it was almost as if you could hear nature groaning in response. You may think that's a far-fetched theme, but that idea is in the Bible as well. In Genesis 3 God said part of the curse of sin was that the ground would be cursed. Before Adam and Eve sinned, there were no sharp thorns, entangling thistles, or choking dust. There was no sickness or death. Just as humanity is crying out for hope and salvation, so is the physical creation.

Have you ever wondered why we have some many natural disasters like hurricanes, earthquakes, tornados, and volcanoes? It's because creation itself is groaning for redemption. This isn't a Hollywood plot; it's in your Bible. "For the creation was subjected to frustration... in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time." (Romans 8:20-22) We live in a messed up world. All of creation was wounded by the sinfulness of humanity. That's why there is a continual sense of global groaning and the Bible says creation itself is living in hope for renewal. Creation isn't waiting for more environmentalists or the next Global Warming treaty. It's waiting for Jesus. The only hope for all of creation is Jesus Christ. Nothing will really get any better until Jesus returns to create a new heaven a new earth. That's why creation, along with all of us are looking for that "blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:13)

## **(2) With a broken heart, it's hard to find hope**

When Jesus first encountered these two disciples, the Bible says they were standing there with their faces downcast. In other words, not only were their hopes gone, but their hearts were broken. Life is hard even when things are going well. But when your heart is broken, it makes it even tougher. Your heart may be broken because someone you love dumped you. Or your heart may be broken because of the grief you're suffering from the death of someone you loved. Your heart may be broken because you feel a deep sense of loneliness. Maybe you didn't make the team or the cheerleading squad. Maybe you didn't get that promotion. A thousand things can break your heart. A broken heart is such a common experience that hundreds of songs have been written about it. Years ago the Temptations recorded a song that asked the question, "What becomes of the broken-hearted? Who had love that's now departed?" Today, the band The Script sings: "I'm still alive but I'm barely breathing; Just prayed to a god that I don't believe in; 'Cause I got time while she got freedom; 'Cause when a heart breaks; no, it don't break even."

One of the most valuable commodities in this world is hope, because it's so rare. And the Bible promises you can find hope in Jesus Christ. In our vocabulary, we've reduced the meaning of hope to something that may or may not happen. We say, "I hope I'll pass that test." Or "I hope we'll win the game." You can ask someone, "Are you going to heaven when you die?" And their answer is, "I hope so!" We've diluted the word hope until it's something you *want* to happen, but you aren't certain that it will. But in the Bible, hope carries the meaning of absolute certainty.

Let me give you an acrostic to help you understand the Biblical meaning of hope. The four letters in HOPE stand for Having Only Positive Expectations. Mignon McLaughlin has written, “Hope is the feeling we have that feeling we have is not permanent.” (*The Neurotic’s Notebook*, 1960) The only source of real hope in this world comes from a personal relationship with God. Religion won’t give you hope, it only gives you a list of things to do. But when you know God, then you can find hope.

If you go out into the playground between the Worship Center and the Lighthouse you’ll see the original bell tower from the first building constructed here on this property 55 years ago. On the stand you’ll see one verse engraved that has become a theme verse for our congregation. It’s from Jeremiah 29:11 which says, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Our Heavenly Father isn’t an angry God who wants to make your life miserable. He loves you deeply and wants to give you HOPE and a future.

Two days before Christmas in 1927, the U.S. submarine S-4 collided with the U.S.S. Paulding, a Coast Guard destroyer, off the coast of New England. The submarine sank to the bottom of the ocean and rested on the sea floor 100 feet below the surface. A rescue mission was organized and as divers reached the disabled submarine they could hear someone inside the sub tapping out a message in Morse code. The message was four words repeated over and over again. “Is there any hope?” Sadly all forty sailors died before they could be rescued. But that is the same question millions of people are asking today, “Is there any hope?” The answer from God found in Jeremiah 29:11 is a resounding “YES!” Here’s how you can find hope for your broken heart:

### **(3) If you give Him all the pieces, Jesus can mend your broken heart**

After recognizing Jesus, these two broken-hearted disciples were filled with hope. It was as if their hearts were set on fire. They said, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:32)

One of the most popular groups of the 1970s was the Bee Gees. The name of the group was an abbreviation for “The Brothers Gibbs.” They sang a song that asked five questions and added one plea: “How can you mend a broken heart? How can you stop the rain from falling down? How can you stop the sun from shining? What makes the world go round? How can you mend this broken man? How can a loser ever win? Please help me mend my broken heart and let me live again.” The better question is not “how” but “who?”

The Bee Gees never answered that question. But there’s another song by one of my favorite Christian songwriters, Twila Paris. She sang, “For the young abandoned husband left alone without a reason; For the pilgrim in the city where there is no home; For the son without a father, for his solitary mother; I have a message: He sees you. He knows you; He loves you. He loves you! Every heart that is breaking tonight; Is the heart of a child that He holds in His sight; And Oh how He longs to hold in His arms; Every heart that is breaking tonight!” Jesus sees you in your pain and He cares about your pain.

Children were lined up for lunch in the Catholic Elementary School and there was a pile of apples at the beginning of the food line. A nun placed a note there that said, “Take only one apple—God is watching.” At the end of the food line there was a pile of chocolate chip cookies. A little boy had penciled a note there that said, “Take all the cookies you want. God is watching the apples.”

The good news is God can watch over more than one person at a time. Even though you are one of 6.4 billion people on this planet God cares for you and loves you as if you were the only person alive. Is your heart broken? Do you need hope? Here’s God’s promise found in Psalm 147:3: “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.” Jesus can heal your broken heart today if you give Him all the pieces. To receive this hope you’ve got to be willing to surrender all that you are to him. What if your car wasn’t working and you had it towed to a mechanic? You wouldn’t say, “Here, fix my car, but don’t touch the engine.” No, you’d say, “Here it is, whatever you need to do, fix it.” That’s what you need to say to Jesus. “Here is my broken heart. Here is my messed-up life. I surrender it to you. Please heal my broken heart. When you do that, Jesus starts the healing process and infuses you with hope.

## CONCLUSION

Did you notice how Jesus restored hope to these two heart-broken disciples? Their hearts were burning as Jesus took every book of the Bible and explained it was all about Himself. The Bible can be a confusing, mystifying book. Some people pick it up and start trying to read it and they get bogged down and give up. The key to understanding all the Bible is to realize all 66 books of the Bible point to Jesus.

The Old Testament says, “Someone is coming.” The Gospels say, “Someone has come.” And the epistles and Revelation say, “Someone is coming again!” I wish I could have been there to hear how Jesus explained that the entire Bible was about Him. If you know where to look, you can find Jesus on every page of the Bible. You see, hope has a name and His name is Jesus.

In Genesis Jesus is the ram at Abraham’s altar; in Exodus He’s our Passover Lamb; in Leviticus He’s the High Priest; in Deuteronomy He’s the City of our refuge; in Joshua He’s the scarlet thread out Rahab’s window; in Judges He’s our judge; in Ruth He’s our kinsman redeemer; in first and second Samuel He’s our trusted prophet; in Kings and Chronicles He’s our reigning king; in Ezra He’s the faithful scribe; in Nehemiah He’s the rebuilders of everything that is broken; in Esther He’s the Mordecai sitting faithful at the gate; in Job He’s our redeemer who ever lives; in Psalms He is my Shepherd and I shall not want; in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes He’s our wisdom; in the Song of Solomon He’s the beautiful bridegroom; in Isaiah He’s the suffering servant; in Jeremiah and Lamentations it is Jesus who is the weeping prophet; in Ezekiel He’s the wonderful four-faced man; in Daniel He’s the fourth man in the midst of the fiery furnace; in Hosea He is my love that is forever faithful; in Joel He baptizes us with the Holy Spirit; in Amos He’s our burden-bearer; in Obadiah our Savior; and in Jonah He’s the great foreign missionary who takes the Word of God into all the world; in Micah He’s the messenger with the beautiful feet; in Nahum He’s the avenger; in Habakkuk He’s the watchman who is ever praying for revival; in Zephaniah He’s the Lord might to save; and in Haggai He’s the restorer of our lost

heritage; in Zechariah He's the Fountain and in Malachi He's the Son of Righteousness, risen with healing in His wings.

In Matthew Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God; in Mark He's the miracle worker; in Luke the Son of Man; and in John He's the Door through which every one of us must enter. In Acts He's that shining light that appears to Saul on the road to Damascus; in Romans He's our justifier; in first Corinthians He's our resurrection; in second Corinthians He's our sin-bearer; in Galatians He redeems us from the law; in Ephesians He's our unsearchable riches; in Philippians He supplies our every need; in Colossians He's the fullness of the God-head bodily. In first and second Thessalonians He's our soon-coming king; in first and second Timothy, He's the mediator between God and man. In Titus He's our blessed hope; in Philemon He's the friend who sticks closer than a brother; in Hebrews He's the blood of the everlasting covenant; in James it is the Lord who heals the sick; in first and second Peter He's the Chief Shepherd; in first, second and third John it is Jesus who has the tenderness of Love. And in Jude He's the Lord who comes with ten thousands of saints. And in Revelation, lift up your eyes, church, for your redemption draws nigh. He is King of kings and Lord of Lords! Stand up church and declare that there is no other name like the name of Jesus!

There is no other name for hope when your heart is broken! There is no other name for help when you are in trouble. There is no other name for healing when your body is in pain. There is no other name for direction when you lose your way. There is no other name for salvation than the name of Jesus! There is no other name for forgiveness than the name of Jesus! There is no other name for grace than the name of Jesus! Cry out to Jesus today and worship Him who was dead and is now alive forever more!

## OUTLINE

### (1) In a messed-up world, it's easy to lose hope

"For the creation was subjected to frustration...in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time." *Romans 8:20-22*

### (2) With a broken heart, it's hard to find hope

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." *Jeremiah 29:11*

### (3) If you give Him all the pieces, Jesus can mend your broken heart

"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" *Luke 24:32*

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." *Psalms 147:3*



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes