

MomenToUs



Season 01.Episode 03

TITLE: Restored Hope

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Welcome to MomenToUs! I am Pastor Rebecca Grate, the Pastor Mission Developer for MomenToUs and the host for our weekly podcast.

At MomenToUs, we believe that God is present with us in each and every single one of our moments: the moments of joy, the moments of heartache, the moments filled with relationships, the moments when we feel lonely.

We believe that our stories are connected to God's story and to one another's stories.

We believe that this connection and relationship changes our lives and our entire world.

Before we begin, I invite you to take a deep breath in, hold it while you count to three, and then slowly release that breath.

Earlier this week, I attended a retreat for clergy in their first three years of ministry. This was a retreat I attended as a participant when I

was one of the ones in my first three years of ministry, but this year, I served on the planning team and was able to attend as a staff person. During the week leading up to the retreat, we had five or six days in a row of absolutely glorious weather. It was sunny, breezy, and the high temperatures for every day was somewhere in the mid to upper 70s. This is the weather we have been dreaming about and praying for since winter in Ohio began.

When I was packing, I looked at the weather for the State Park in Indiana and noticed it was going to be quite a bit cooler, for literally only the three days while we were there. Neat. I woke up on Monday morning for the drive and was fairly grumpy at having to be awake that early, to have to drive through the morning rush hour traffic, just to go to a State Park for 3 days and sit in a conference room and it not even being warm enough to fully explore the lake.

Sure enough, on the drive to Indiana, it started to snow and the snow followed us the entire way to the State Park. A strange thing happened once I saw the snow. My grump disappeared. Because something held true for me then as it does every single time I see it snow. I was reminded of hope. Yes, I remained unamused at the temperature

and the early hour and whatever else, but the remembrance of hope persisted:

- Hope that reminded me that the One who created everything in creation made it possible for snow to water the ground so we have food to eat and pretty plants to look at in a few weeks
- Hope that this cold weather arrived close enough to winter that the warming shelters were still open and food pantries still had warm clothing to distribute along with food.
- Hope that we would arrive safely and we would have the chance to connect with friends and colleagues from around the region while we were at this event
- Hope that reminded me no matter how heated conversations and opinions get that we are continually called to love and that love has the final say

The retreat had a worship service every day. There was no overall theme for the retreat, so each group that led worship had a blank slate to start from. The group responsible for the closing worship service, the last thing we would do together as a group before we began traveling home, chose to read the readings that many congregations would be using for the upcoming Sunday, which was April 23rd.

Now many, though not all, congregations everywhere will use the same readings from the Bible when they gather for worship. In congregations that do, they are following something called a lectionary, which is a three-year cycle of readings for every single day, not just every Sunday. Congregations that follow a lectionary read through portions of the Bible, though it doesn't cover every story in the Bible.

Before we get to the Gospel reading, another thing to know is that congregations that are following a church calendar are still celebrating the Season of Easter. Yes, Easter Sunday was a few weeks ago and we celebrated then! But, in congregations that are following this calendar, the season of Easter continues all the way until Pentecost Sunday, which this year, is Sunday, May 28th. That is the Sunday where we remember the Holy Spirit arriving dwelling within all who believed, allowing them to speak and understand in many different languages. We will talk ALL ABOUT Pentecost when we get there.

During the season of Easter, we read many different accounts of Jesus encountering the disciples and other early believers in the time after Jesus rose from the dead before he ascended into heaven.

The Gospel reading for Sunday, April 23rd is from the Gospel according to Luke, Chapter 24, verses 13-35. This is a story that

chronologically occurs later in the day on Easter day, probably in the afternoon, maybe early evening. By this point Jesus had already risen from the dead, the women had gone to the tomb to anoint his body and care for it only to discover that Jesus wasn't there! The women ran back to the disciples, who did not believe them, and Peter, one of the disciples, went to the tomb and discovered the women were telling the truth. That brings us to this reading:

¹³Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" ¹⁹He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.

Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.” ²⁵Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. ²⁸As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions

gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.¹

So when we heard this reading during the closing worship service for the retreat, the words that jumped out to me were: “But we had hoped ...”

And then I remembered the snow and the hope that had reminded me of. And the moments where I had ever lost hope. And the moments where others I know and love had lost hope and trusted me with that knowledge so I could accompany them until they believed and had hope again.

Something unusual happened during this worship service. The preacher for the service didn’t preach a typical sermon. Instead, he told us to find 1-2 others sitting near us, to introduce ourselves to one another if we had not yet already met during the retreat, and to take a deep breath in because we were going to engage in lectio divina together.

This is a Latin phrase that literally translates to “divine reading.” Lectio divina is an ancient spiritual practice, that focuses on a word, a verse, a passage, or a theme found in scripture. This practice tends to be loved by those who are comfortable sitting in silence, answering the

¹ [Luke 24:13-35](#) (NRSV)

questions on their own and discerning whether or not that is what God is saying to them or if God is saying something different. This is a spiritual practice that is difficult for those of us who do not easily remain in silence.

Today, we're going to engage in this practice together, with a portion of the reading I read earlier. This might be strange to do on a podcast, particularly depending on where and how you are listening. So if you need to extend the time you are in silence, you're welcome to pause the podcast and continue as you need. If you are not listening at a place where you can engage in this practice because you're busy doing other things while you listen, that's okay. Come back to this podcast later when you can engage in this spiritual practice more fully. And, if you can participate fully now, it is okay to come back to this spiritual practice again and again, knowing that the things we have experienced in each day and the interactions with others we have had may change what we hear God saying to us.

Before we start, I also want you to know that if this feels new and strange, that is okay. New things sometimes feel weird the first several times we do them. If you notice your mind drifting to something that isn't related to the passage or to the question that was asked, simply notice it, take a deep breath to recenter yourself, and start again.

For this lectio divina, we are going to have four listenings. I will invite you to take a deep breath, listen to a portion of the reading we heard earlier, take another deep breath, and then I will ask a question. I'll give us about 30 seconds of silence during the podcast for each listening. If you need more, remember, you're welcome to pause the podcast and restart.

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What did you notice God saying to you in or through this passage?

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tomb early this morning,²³ and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive.²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.”

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What is God calling you to do because of this passage?

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What is God calling you to change because of this passage?

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Now, the beauty of lectio divina is I can't tell you if any of your answers to the questions are right or wrong. This is the beginning or the continuation of how you spend time with God; it's a continuation of how we learn to discern God's voice in the midst of the other voices and the other things that demand to be so important in our days.

This is also a way of dwelling with God and Scripture that doesn't require us to have advanced degrees in theology. This is a way that is easily portable, to go with you whenever you are able to engage with scripture, be that in a daily devotional practice, attending worship in-person or online with an actual congregation, when you hear scripture

read and interpreted in podcasts, when you see a bible verse or passage mentioned in a social media post.

This is a practice we will return to in future podcasts. But know, that when you engage in this practice, you are accompanied by the other members of the MomenToUs community and those who have used this practice throughout the centuries. And, best of all, even when we lose hope or forget to read scripture for awhile, we are never alone. God is with us every single moment.

A Prayer for When Hope Wanes

God, the source of our hope,

A lot of the time, we make plans for what our day will look like, or how a meeting will go, or what our career will be.

We are so good at doing the things we want to do.

We are so good at going, going, going all the time and never stopping.

We fear that if we stop, our plans won't happen.

We fear what might happen if our plans don't happen.

God, you continually call us to rest. Didn't you create something called sabbath where we are supposed to rest and worship you?

Help us slow down for some of our moments so that we can heal, restore, and spend time with you.

Help us recognize your voice, calling us to your plans for us, those plans that exist when our hope wavers.

Remind us you are with us every single moment.

Amen.

Thank you for joining us for our weekly MomenToUs. We are looking forward to growing with each of you and are so grateful you are a part of the MomenToUs community.

Thank you to our Mission Partners, the Southern Ohio Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Their financial contributions and prayer have been instrumental in bringing this new ministry into existence.

And, I want to say thank you to St. Paul Lutheran Church in Lancaster, OH for becoming a Starting Partner with MomenToUs by sharing a financial gift from their endowment. This congregation is not in the Metro Columbus area, but is excited about partnering with a new ministry and about how it can help members of their congregation and community grow in their faith. We look forward to visiting with this congregation and growing in this partnership as MomenToUs grows.

If you, your congregation, or your ministry would like to partner with MomenToUs, there is a partnership guide located on our website:

<http://www.momentous.social>. There are many different options for partnership: A Starting Partner, a Sustaining Partner, and a Grant Partner.

If you have questions, please send Pastor Rebecca an email at dailymomentous@gmail.com. We are looking forward to hearing and sharing stories from our partner congregations about how the MomenToUs community has impacted their community of faith.

We are also not limited to only these types of partnerships. Inviting Pastor Rebecca to supply preach or lead an education event or retreat or simply be present with you all for worship and to answer questions are additional ways that congregations and ministries can partner with MomenToUs.

However you are engaging with or discerning partnering with MomenToUs, we hope that it means you are growing in your faith and noticing God's presence with you. You can always share moments when you noticed God's presence by sending us an email at dailymomentous@gmail.com, sending us a direct message on our social media accounts, or sending us a voicemail.

Every time you interact with us online through social media, or sharing a podcast episode, or leaving us a review on a podcasting platform, it helps the algorithms know that this is resonating with you and noticing God's presence is something worth sharing online. Each interaction helps our community reach even more people, through your profiles and for how each platform engages with your friends and followers. We even got a notification that our Facebook account reached over 1,400 people last week!

If you want to support the ministry of MomenToUs, know that engaging with us online is one way to do so. If you are able to give financially, you can visit our website and use the donate link. Each one-time or recurring gift combines together to ensure the MomenToUs Community continues to grow.

We give thanks for every single one of you, for being a part of the MomenToUs community, for listening to God's call to try something new, and for beginning to notice God's presence even more frequently in your life, in our communities, and in our world.

Until our next podcast, remember to breathe deeply and to remember that God is present with you every single moment.

Music:

Best Moment - Music by [SoulProdMusic](#) from [Pixabay](#).

Please Calm My Mind - Music by [Lesfm](#) from [Pixabay](#).

Happy Moment - Music by [FASSounds](#) from [Pixabay](#).

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