

Intro

Healing, Hope, Laughter, and Peace... if you have been around Carbondale Assembly of God for any length of time you have heard these words. They are an expression of who we are, what we are about, the direction we are moving. And as we gear up for our annual Day of Hope on September 16th we are taking some time to consider the idea of hope a little bit more carefully.

Day of Hope is an important day for us. It is a day that we invite our neighbors to come and be our guests here at Carbondale. We share stories, and groceries; we give shoes and haircuts; we share a meal together, we smile together in the portrait area, and we have an opportunity to pray together. But mostly we share hope with those who come.

And so all week I have been thinking and praying and considering what it means to share hope with people:

- Who needs hope?
- Who has hope to share?
- Where does Hope come from and how do we give it away?

And as I thought and prayed about these questions I kept coming back to this rather obscure observation about hope: in the Bible hope often appears as a part of a trio—faith, hope and love: these three seem to just go together. They turn up together in several places in the New Testament but the most obvious place that we see them in a group is in 1 Corinthians 13, after giving an extensive description about what Godly love looks like, the apostle Paul says this: *And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.* - **1 Corinthians 13:13**

So I've been thinking a lot about the connection between Faith, Hope and Love and how that connection can inform the way we share hope with the people in our lives.

The conclusion I've come to is this: **Faith produces Hope, and Hope points us towards Love.**

I. Faith produces Hope

- A. I know we have covered this ground already, but I think it is important enough that it bears repeating just what we are talking about when we say “Hope”.
1. When we talk about hope we are talking about something richer and stronger and deeper than a wish or a good feelings or some kind of fuzzy optimism about specific future events.
 - a. When we talk about Hope we mean more than: “I hope everything works out”...or “I hope my team wins” or “I hope it doesn’t rain this weekend.”
 - b. And we are certainly not talking about the kind of hope that comes as an “I hope so” answer to a question:
 - i. Is this milk still good?
 - ii. Do you think we have enough gas to make it home?
 - iii. Do you even know how to land a plane?
 2. That is not the kind of hope we are talking about. When we talk about hope in the church we are talking about a part of our salvation. Hope is an ever-present force that supports and undergirds every aspect of our lives!
 - a. **Hebrews 6:19-20** ¹⁹ *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain,* ²⁰ *where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf...*
 - b. Our hope is a “firm anchor for the soul” and it is based on the saving death and resurrection of Jesus. We do not hope in anything less than the great work of God to save the world from sin and invade this world with His Everlasting Kingdom!
- B. We can have this kind of deep and robust hope because we have faith in a loving and powerful God who secures it for us!
1. In this way, Hope is the fruit of Faith.
 2. Our faith is in God. Our Hope is the consequence of God.
 - a. I am not just hoping for Eternal Life. I have faith in God and that faith tells me that He has rescued me from my sin and rebellion against Him through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus...and that Jesus has already done all that is necessary to restore me to a real and living relationship with God! Because of that faith I have a deep and profound hope that I have Eternal Life!

- b. I am not just hoping I will have what I need. I have put my faith in God, and God promises that He will never leave me nor forsake me, He said He knows all that I need and He gave me His word that He will supply all of my needs out of His abundant riches! Because of that faith I have a deep and profound hope that I will have all I need!
 - c. I am not just hoping I can successfully navigate life. I have put my faith in God and He has promised to shepherd me, guide me, direct my steps, and lead me into righteousness for His name's sake. Because of that faith I have a deep and profound hope that I can make wise choices and live a rich and satisfying life!
3. Our faith is in the character of God; we trust what He said about Himself and what He said He would do. Because we can have a rich and profound faith in those things, we can have a rich and profound hope about our lives.
- a. For us, hope is not about wishful thinking or empty fantasies, it is about trusting that God does not and will not fail to keep His promises to us!
 - b. **Romans 5:1-2** ¹*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,* ² *through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.*
 - c. Our faith in Jesus leads to a strong and secure hope!
- C. This is the reason that we can invite our neighbors to be our guests here on September 16th and call it a Day of Hope—not because we think we have all the answers or solutions for the problems they are facing, but because we have faith that God is willing and able to do for each one of them what He was willing and able to do for each one of us.
- 1. This is why we can share hope not just on Day of Hope, but we can share hope with our friends, family and neighbors every day!
 - a. We have hope because we have faith, and our faith produces hope!
 - b. Now, if faith is the reason we have hope, then what do we ultimately hope for? What does our hope point us towards?

II. **Hope points us towards Love**

- A. Last week when Pastor Sarah was talking about Hope she said this: “What is hope? It’s knowing with assurance it won’t always be this dark...this bad...this painful...this sorrowful.”
 - 1. I like that—I think that is a pretty good way to define hope.

2. Hope tells us that what is broken in our lives won't always be broken. Hope is an expectation that an answer is coming—that a solution is on the way.
 3. So, if we are trying to determine what hope ultimately points us towards, we need to ask ourselves “What is the ultimate problem for which hope is anticipating a fix?”
- B. I think the problem we all need to have fixed is that we need is to be loved...Loved by God and loved by people.
1. I believe with all my heart we were all created to be relationship machines.
 2. Our primary purpose is to live in relationship with God and in relationship with each other!
 3. Listen to how the Bible tells the story of our creation:
 - a. ²⁶ *Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”*
²⁷ *So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them -Gen. 1:26-27*
 - b. You were created in the image of God—a God who has always and eternally existed in a perfect and loving community as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.
 - c. And you were set in a community for the purpose of living in relationship with God and in relationship with each other in order to live in harmony and governance over the natural world.
 4. We see the importance of loving community again when Matthew records this conversation where Jesus answers a question about which is the greatest of all the commandments:
 - a. ³⁶ *“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”* ³⁷ *Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”* ³⁸ *This is the first and greatest commandment.* ³⁹ *And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’* ⁴⁰ *All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”* – **Matthew 22:36-40**

- b. When Jesus was asked what the most important commandment was, He summed up the way God wants us to live by basically saying “Love God and love each other. That is what it is all about.”
 - c. The greatest need that each of us faces is a need to be loved!
5. What is broken in our world? What needs to be fixed? What is the thing that we need Hope to remind us “Won’t always be this way”?
- a. It is our isolation, our separation, our broken relationships with God and with the people around us.
6. What does the hope produced by our faith in God unswervingly insist can and will be fixed?
- a. Faith declares that God still loves you and that through Jesus, He is building a loving and generous community of people who love Him and love each other!
 - b. *⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. -1 John 4:9-12*
 - c. This is the hope that we have—we are deeply loved by God and because of that love we can generously love others.

III. Who needs this Hope?

- A. We see an interesting example of this interaction between Faith, Hope and Love in the story Jesus tells about the Prodigal Son (or “lost son). You can read the story in Luke 15.
 - 1. (Tell Story)
- B. Here is what I want you to notice this morning.
 - 1. First, notice that the son’s hope that he could go home was birthed out of his faith about the character of his father.
 - a. When the son was starving, he was motivated to go home because he knew something about the nature of his father.
 - b. He had faith that his father had the resources he needed.
 - c. He had faith that his father treated the workers in his household well.

- d. And the faith he had about his father gave him the hope that he needed to make the long journey home.
2. Second, notice that the son did not get what he hoped for—he got something far better... he got love.
 - a. The son hoped for an answer to his immediate need—he was very hungry.
 - b. While he hoped for some food, what he found was a place in the family!
 - c. To his surprise the father ignored his request for a place as a servant and immediately restored his place as a son!
3. The younger son needed hope to motivate him to leave the mess he had gotten himself into and come back to his father!
 - a. Lots of people still need that kind of hope.
 - b. They find themselves in empty and broken situations, maybe because they have made dangerous and foolish choices that squandered the good things in their lives or maybe because of forces outside of their control. Regardless how they got there, they now find themselves hollow and shattered and alone with no way out.
 - c. What they need is a little bit of hope—the kind of hope that is born out of faith.
 - i. They need to be reminded that God is still good. And God still meets needs. And God still has answers.
 - ii. Some of our Day of Hope guests will be in that kind of situation. (But the truth is, some of our Day of Hope hosts will be in that kind of situation.)
 - iii. Some of you might be in that kind of situation right now...shattered, empty and afraid. Desperate for hope!
 - d. So who is going to bring them the hope they need? Who is going to tell them and show them who God is and what He is like? (The answer is us!)
 - e. Every day we encounter people who desperately need the hope we have—a deep and profound hope birthed out of our faith that God still loves us, and He still loves the world, and He is in the process of fixing all that is broken and making things right!
 - i. We will encounter people who need this hope at work and at school, in our families and in our homes, at the restaurants we visit and the stores we frequent, and they will look back at us from the mirror every day.

- ii. We need to have this kind of hope...We need to be carriers of this kind of hope because the world desperately needs this kind of hope.
 - iii. And when people find hope, that hope will lead them to Jesus. And when they encounter Jesus they find far more than they ever hoped for! What they will find is love and forgiveness and family and Eternal Life!
4. But notice one more thing...there were 2 sons in the story. What about the older son?
- a. While we see the cycle of faith producing hope and hope leading to love in the life of the younger son, we see the cycle short-circuited in the life of the older son.
 - b. While it is easy for us to see that the younger son needed hope I don't want you to miss the fact that the older son needed hope too!
 - c. While the younger son's faith in his father's character birthed in him a hope that he could go home, the older son's wrong beliefs about his father kept him away.
 - i. The older son believed that his father was hard and stingy and cruel. He believed that his father's love and acceptance had to be worked for and earned, and because of this he never even hoped to experience all of the good thing that the father had to offer!
 - ii. How different the story would have been if the older son had a little bit of faith...
 - 1. Faith that the Father's reckless love and generosity with the younger son could have produced hope that lavish love and generosity were available for all!
 - 2. Faith that the Father's willingness to celebrate even the wayward son could have produced hope that the Father would be willing to celebrate all who came to him!
 - 3. Faith that the Father's extending a place in the family to one son could have produced hope that the Father was willing to love and celebrate all his sons.
 - 4. But the older brother didn't have faith in his father and so he had no hope and when the invitation for a celebration of family and homecoming and love was extended, the older brother refused and found himself in the same kind of situation we found his younger brother in at the middle of the story. He found himself hollow and shattered and alone.

- d. Don't be like the older brother! Don't let wrong ideas about God rob you of the hope that genuine faith will produce—hope that leads us into the celebration of love and family where we share in the goodness and joy of the Father!!

Conclusion

In a few weeks we are going to have our annual Day of Hope. We are really excited about it! You need to be a part of this—it truly is life changing!

When you participate in the Day of Hope (or when you are an agent of God's hope in any capacity) you will have opportunities to help people encounter the real and life-changing hope of Jesus—and in the process you will experience the hope of Jesus yourself!

Remember Faith produces Hope, and Hope points us towards Love and each and every one of us needs hope!

If you find yourself in an empty or broken situation this morning, remember: God is still good. And God still meets needs. And God still has answers.

Pray