

A Little Bit of Hope For 2018

I love sermons about hope and since I missed the sermon series because of my surgery and Pastor Sarah and Brian got to preach about hope, and because last Sunday was our Day of Hope, and because I'm the pastor so I still get to decide a few things, I'm going to preach a couple more sermons about hope!

Your body can live weeks without food, days without water, minutes without air, but your soul simply can't survive without hope. Hopeless people wither and die and we live in a world full of hopeless people, overwhelmed by circumstances, constantly battling, weary, exhausted, trying to go on but almost paralyzed by the hopelessness of their circumstances. Five years ago we called 2013 the year of hope and made hope a frequent preaching theme. One of the messages I preached I titled A Little Bit of Hope. I still remember a woman I had not seen before come to me after the service and tell me her daughter was a heroin addict struggling with addiction. I'll never forget her saying, "this morning, I've got a little bit of hope." Some of you know what I'm talking about this morning. There is a mountain in your path, you're facing the biggest trial of your life, wishing for an answer but everything seems hopeless. You need a little bit of hope this morning and let me tell you, hope can make all the difference! I want to visit that thought again about a little bit of hope.

Webster defines hope as, **Hope = "A desire for some good, accompanied with at least a slight expectation of obtaining it or a belief that it is obtainable; confidence in a future event."** The Greek word often translated as hope in the New Testament is typically defined as **"Happy anticipation of good; a favorable and confident expectation."**

I like that. "A favorable and confident expectation." We are expecting, by faith, with confidence, a better day, an answer, a healing, deliverance, salvation for our loved ones, God's intervention in our circumstances. We are hope-filled, expecting and anticipating with confidence our ultimate redemption by his grace and heaven for eternity. That's our hope. We have hope, a favorable and confident expectation that anything and everything is possible to those who walk with God and trust in him. And here is the important thing to remember: **It matters on what and in whom you have placed your hope.**

You can put your hope in all kinds of things. Acts 16 tells of a slave girl who had an evil spirit that enabled her to predict the future. She made a lot of money for her owners. Paul cast the demon out of this girl and delivered her. Look what the bible says of her owners. **"When**

the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.” Acts 16:19

These men, like a lot of folks today, placed their hope in money. They thought making money would solve all their problems. The casinos are full this morning of people who are placing their hope in money. There are folks working in their office this morning, neglecting church and family because their hope is in making more money. Churches are full of folks like this as well. Paul told Timothy, **“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God.” 1 Timothy 6:17** Putting your hope in money and possessions is uncertain. It matters where you place your hope.

The religious Jews in Jesus’ day placed their hope in Moses and their ability to keep the law. Their hope was they could keep the law perfectly and be saved by their good works. Jesus said to them, **“But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set.” John 5:45.** Jesus was saying they had set their hopes on their own ability to keep the law. They thought obedience to the law of Moses, good works and good deeds would be enough to save them but the stark truth is none of us can keep the law. None of us are righteous or good enough on our own. The bible tells us we are all lawbreakers. We’ve all sinned and missed the mark. We all need a Savior. It matters where you place your hope.

The apostle Paul wrote, **“If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.” 1 Corinthians 15:19.** Some folks have put all their hope in this life alone but have no hope for eternity. They are hoping this is all there is and they’re holding on to all they have with all their strength but none of us are getting out of here alive. We need a hope beyond this life. It matters on whom or on what you have placed your hope. It determines the outcome. It effects how we live our lives. What is the basis of our hope?

Here is what the bible says regarding the basis of our hope. **“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope!” 1 Timothy 1:1.** Our hope is in the God who created us and in the One he sent to save us from our sins.

Paul spoke of circumstances that caused him to “despair of life.” **“We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life... But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope**

that he will continue to deliver us...” 2 Corinthians 1:8-10.

What is the basis of your hope? Is it in the One who raises the dead? The one who delivers us and will deliver us? I understand about despairing of life like Paul. I need a little bit of hope this morning and the only certainty I have is that Christ alone is my hope! Not money, not my good works or acts of charity, not life itself but Christ alone. He is our hope.

I'm glad Paul was honest with us about despairing of life. I'm thankful the bible isn't a book of platitudes but it gives us a real look at real people in real situations. Look at **Psalm 42**. Here's the cry of a heart filled with anguish, raw emotion. **V3“My tears have been my food day and night.”** He can't eat. Crying, in anguish. Tormented. Men say to him **“Where is your God?”** He feels abandoned. But hear his instruction to his own heart and soul: **V5“Put your hope in God!”** What do you do when tears are your only food and you feel hopeless and in despair? You put your hope in God. And when you do, it isn't just placing your hope in a memory verse from Sunday school, you are basing your hope upon the very nature and character of God! You put your hope in the one who is faithful. Always. **“If we are faithless, yet he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.” 2 Timothy 2:13.** Need a little bit of hope this morning? Let the one who is always and forever faithful give you hope today.

The bible says our “faith and knowledge [are] resting on the hope of eternal life which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time.” Titus 1:2 Do you need a little bit of hope this morning? Let the one who does not lie, the one who is the way, the truth and the life give you hope today. You can trust him and his word. He doesn't lie!

After Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BC, reflecting on the destruction and despair, Jeremiah said, **“I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them and my soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, ‘The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.’ The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him.” Lamentation 3:19-25**

Put your hope in the Lord and in his unfailing and faithful character, in spite of your circumstances, in spite of what you see. As you do, you put your hope in the steadfast character of his word, his promise to us. The one who cannot and does not lie has promised us in his word. We hope in the Lord and his unfailing promise.

The bible tells us in Jeremiah 1:12 that the Lord watches over his word to see that it is fulfilled! What is the Lord's word to you? Stand on that word. It is a foundation for hope in your life. The Psalmist said (in 119) "My eyes fail looking for your promise...but I have put my hope in your word." He is saying I haven't seen the answer yet and my eyesight is failing, but I still have hope that because you promised it will come to pass. My hope is in the Lord and in his word so I won't give up. Heaven and earth may pass away but his word will abide. He is watching over it to see that it will be fulfilled in your life. "Forever O Lord your word is settled - established - in heaven." What is the basis for your hope? 1)The Lord's nature and character. 2)The Lord's promise, his word. And 3)you can put your hope in the Lord's unfailing mercy.

The Psalmist wrote, "**The Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love [mercy].**" **Psalm 147:11.** Our hope is in the mercy of the lord, his unfailing love. If we confess our sins he is faithful and just and he will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. By faith he then imputes or gives to me his righteousness. I now have right standing with God through faith in Christ. My hope is in the mercy of the Lord alone. Not my performance, not my ability to keep all the law, but in God's mercy and redeeming grace.

What is the basis of your hope? My hope is in God, his unfailing nature and character and love. My hope is in God's word, his faithful promise that is steadfast and will not pass away. My hope is in his unfailing mercy and grace. It matters where you place your hope. If you are placing your hope in anything or in anyone else, you are going to be disappointed. But the bible says "**Hope does not disappoint us because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.**" **Romans 5:5.** Hope won't disappoint us because it will carry us all the way into his presence in heaven one day.

You say, "yeah, that's all well and good, but that's theology. That's your philosophy of life based on hope in the words you found in some ancient book." But I want you to understand this book, the bible, is more than a book for theologians. This is a book for people in hopeless situations. This is a book full of stories of people just like us, desperately in need of a little bit of hope. Just read through the gospels.

John 5 tells about a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years. That's a lifetime isn't it? 38 years of waiting for a miracle that never came. Paralyzed, unable to walk or care for himself. It was a hopeless situation. Nothing could be done in the first century for someone paralyzed and 2,000 years later, in spite of all the medical advances, very little has changed.

This man in his hopeless condition apparently had friends that had hope for him because they brought him to the pool of Bethesda. It was a beautiful pool surrounded by five covered colonnades. The blind and crippled were brought here because of a legend that at times an angel would stir the waters and the first person into the pools after the water was stirred would be healed. This paralyzed man was there day after day. He still had hope, but it was misplaced. His hope was in the miraculous stirring of the water and it appears to have been only a story, a legend. But something extraordinary happened according to John's gospel. Jesus, the giver of hope came by one day and spoke to this man in his hopeless condition and told him to take up his mat and walk and immediately the bible says he was cured.

Do you need a little bit of hope? Jesus brings hope to the hopeless. Maybe you've been waiting for 38 years like this man in John 5. If so, don't give up. Put your hope in God. He still heals. This book is full of stories of hope for hopeless situations.

Mark 5 tells about a demon possessed man who lived among the tombs and caves along the eastern side of the sea of Galilee. He would scream and cry and cut himself. He was driven to madness by demonic forces. You may not be demon possessed, but perhaps you can relate to the hopelessness of mental illness or compulsive behavior, being driven to despair, injuring yourself like this man perhaps with drugs or alcohol or cutting yourself. You feel out of control, desperate, trapped in a life or lifestyle that controls you instead of you controlling it. You are living, but it doesn't feel like much of a life. This man was living in the cemetery. Maybe life has taken you somewhere you never thought you would be at this stage of your life. Bound up, alone, dying, hopeless, but then the giver of hope came by and brought deliverance and healing to this man. Jesus set this man free and told him to go home to his family and his friends and tell them how much the Lord had done for him and how he had shown mercy to him.

No one is beyond the reach of hope this morning. Maybe you feel as hopeless as the paralyzed man or perhaps as hopeless as this man driven to madness by the devil but when Jesus comes, there is no such thing as a hopeless case. He offers hope today.

Mark 5:24 tells about a woman with what the bible calls an issue of blood. She had spent all her money on doctors and medical treatments but she seemed to be incurable. Hope was fading for her, but then she heard Jesus was coming. If she could just touch the tassel of his garment, his prayer shawl. She fought her way through the crowd that day in hopes of getting to Jesus. She was driven by the little bit of hope she had left, and friends, that little bit of hope is

all you need. She touched his garment and Jesus stopped the crowd, looked at her and said, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

She must have felt hopeless at times, chronically ill, but she thought, “maybe Jesus can make the difference. I won’t give up hope, not yet.” I know you are thinking, “Yes, but you don’t know my situation...” It doesn’t matter. By the end of Mark 5 Jesus raised a dead girl back to life. Your situation isn’t more hopeless than that is it? He raises the dead, he heals the sick, the chronically ill, the paralyzed, the mentally ill, the demon possessed. He can do anything. Put your hope in the lord. What you need this morning is a little bit of hope! He is a giver of hope and a provider of help to all who put their hope in him. Exercise that little bit of hope.

Weary, broken, betrayed, addicted, confused, sick, tired, sick and tired, depressed, in despair, battered and overwhelmed by life. It feels hopeless, but I refuse to say it is hopeless. Why? Because I know the God of hope! I know his promises to me are certain and sure. Because I know of his unfailing love and mercy. I know his compassion never fails. Are you with me? Can you hope with me?

How many of you need a little bit of hope this morning? Because I am convinced that a little bit of hope, placed in Jesus and his word, can make all the difference for us today.

“Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.” Psalm 42:5