

6-6-21

Sermon- Invisible Hope

Scripture- 2 Corinthians 4: 13-18, CTW Ps138

Hymns- 433,75,65

Theme- How do we live in this world when people are so afraid of dying? Fearful of dying? What are we all in this together for?

I go to the eye doctor every year. "Which one do you like better? A or B? This one . . . or that one?" So it went for the next five minutes in an effort to try and figure out what prescription I would need for my next set of glasses. She is always giving me something to look at and focus on.

I. SO THE LORD GIVES US SOMETHING TO LOOK AT AND FOCUS ON, BUT IT'S INVISIBLE.

Imagine the eye doctor doing that. "Ok, I want you to look at this invisible chart. A or B? Recite the first row of letters that you can see." You'd call him crazy and tell him you're going somewhere else.

A. But that is exactly what God does. He doesn't show you something IMAGINARY that doesn't exist. He tells you to look at someplace you can't see: a place with angels and saints and into the presence of God Himself, with beautiful streets and perfect beauty: no more tears: no more pain: a mansion in heaven that never perishes, spoils, or fades: through the eyes of faith.

With a picturesque description He wants us to focus on being with Jesus in heaven and stay focused. If we start getting distracted with the here and the now, we easily lose focus.

B. When we Focus on the Invisible Hope We are focused on the future.

How do we get there? We get there through faith in the death of Christ for the sins of the world. We get there through the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection is the means to that end.

Jesus promised, "Because I live, you also will live." With this vision we have a GOAL in life. We want to be in heaven with Jesus. We want others to be in heaven with us too. We know where we are going. We are focused on the FUTURE.

That doesn't mean we don't think about the past. Without the past, we have no future. Jesus died for our sins in the past. So now we don't have to live with constant regret and sorrow over our past sins.

God says that in the death of Jesus He has forgotten those sins, so we can too! He rose from the dead in the past. Without that, we would have no future.

We are grounded in the past, but we are not living in the past. Nor are we only living in the present. The present is important. We are to make the most of our time of grace here. But we know that life is temporary.

What a contrast to someone who is constantly living from one thrill to the next, trying to get as much out of this life as possible, as if this was all we had.

What a contrast to someone who is constantly depressed about how sad their life is here on earth. The resurrection changes all this. It's easy to lose sight of this and forget about how temporary this life is.

C. It is a hope we are to speak about.

Paul says, Since we have that same spirit of faith, which corresponds to what is written: "I believed; therefore, I have spoken," we also believe, and therefore we speak.

Paul quoted **Psalm 116**. The Psalmist wrote about having been through some turmoil in life or difficulty. He thought he was going to die and he said, "I am greatly afflicted." But then, he spoke with confidence in the salvation of the Lord. He would walk before the LORD in the land of the living. The promise of eternal life gave him hope.

He spoke up and made vows to the LORD and made sacrifices to the LORD. His promise of life enabled him to live and to speak and praise the LORD, no matter what the circumstances. And that is what Paul says faith in the future does for us too. I believe, therefore, I have spoken.

II. GOD SPEAKS TO US IN ORDER THAT WE WILL SPEAK TO HIM AND ABOUT HIM. Paul writes that as grace increases, it will overflow to the glory of God, as more and more people give thanks.

A. Therefore we are not discouraged. Words matter.

When you're on a long trip and just one person starts complaining, it doesn't take long for everyone to get grumpy. It can make the shortest trip seem like an eternity.

Think about what you hear on the news. It's all doom and gloom. Granted, there is plenty to be gloomy and doomy about. But should that temper our hope of the resurrection?

Should that make us complain and moan as if God hated us and there was no hope? If we had stomped around the house and moaned and yelled at everyone and everything, the whole mood of the house would have been sorrowful and depressed.

But we should know after some hard work and time, it will be better. As a leaders of the household we need to speak like that if we want the household to follow.

B. The same rings true in how we are to SPEAK our FAITH.

Paul said that God's grace INCREASES when we speak of our hope in the resurrection, especially through trials. Paul had plenty more to complain about than any of us. He was constantly being threatened to stop proclaiming the Gospel. He was constantly being beaten and imprisoned.

He could have easily gotten depressed and felt abandoned. But Paul, with a sure hope and goal of heaven, never shut up about that hope. He kept on speaking. He wouldn't keep quiet. He couldn't keep quiet.

Ultimately, the devil wants you to be quiet. He wants to intimidate you. He wants to shame you into silence. Either that, or he wants you to join the cacophony of complaining and anger that we are experiencing in our world, instead of being filled with forgiveness and joy and hope in Jesus.

But when you BUCK the trend: when you speak up about your hope in Christ, GOD IS GLORIFIED, and it is INFECTIOUS! More and MORE people give thanks. Then WE AREN'T DISCOURAGED when we are attacked or ridiculed for what we believe. But a part of that is that we need to SPEAK UP! Keep focused on the resurrection, and it will change how you talk.

C. It is a hope that gives us a different perspective.

The resurrection also changes the way we look at life. God takes the top off of our world and enables us to see the big picture. It's kind of like looking at life through a drone.

Through the Word of God we SOAR above this world, and it makes all of the things that seem so big and scary as nothing but small little specks in the big picture of things. It changes our perspective. We see the big picture. We know the way.

Paul writes, even if our outer self is wasting away, yet our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 Yes, our momentary, light trouble produces for us an eternal weight of glory that is far beyond any comparison. 18 We are not focusing on what is seen,

but on what is not seen. For the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are not seen are eternal.

Our outer self is wasting away. It's hard to deal with sometimes. The inability to jump or walk. The loss of hair. The wrinkle that pops up here and there. The child that moves out of the house. The friend that moves away. Life shrinks you down to size.

Think about how when you grow older, you lose height. You start to shrink. Not only that, you also lose muscle volume. You lose fat too. You eventually become a shell of your former self.

But as you lose the things that you took pride in, you realize that you can't keep what you had and it was foolish to live for the here and now.

I think of an elderly man who never kept fighting to live. He worked in the yard into his nineties. But eventually, his body lost energy. His heart stopped working as well. He just couldn't do it anymore.

Throughout the process, he kept the faith. He kept focused on Jesus. When his body started to deteriorate, he didn't get depressed about it. He simply said with a smile, "I'm ready to go home." It's not always that easy, especially when it happens in your fifties or sixties.

III. Nonetheless, God works through our deterioration on the outside: He WANTS us to cling to Him all the more on the inside.

A. The more we decay, the more we GROW. Some of our most faithful Bible class attendees are often the elderly.

They want to know MORE of the Word the older they grow. I've had it happen on more than one occasion, that when I go to visit someone in the hospital, they are diagnosed with a deadly disease or sickness.

I expect them to be depressed and sad and despondent, but they are not. They are filled with hope and joy over what they have coming: an eternal lifetime in heaven.

Think of it, an ETERNITY in heaven. If you were to compare one year of life for a five year old vs. one year of life for a fifty year old, it doesn't compare.

I remember how SLOWLY life seemed to go when I was in school. There were some classes that I thought would never end. Now, the older I get, the faster life goes by. It is unbelievable.

B. So Paul uses a similar comparison when it comes to heaven. Yes, our momentary, light trouble produces for us an eternal weight of glory that is far beyond any comparison. Paul's troubles were anything but light from an earthly perspective.

Some of your troubles aren't either. Yet, if you put all of the troubles in a scale and compare it to all of the glory and joy that we will have in heaven, the scale will far outweigh any troubles we have in this life. They will seem like a drop in the bucket to what we have there.

The resurrection changes how we view suffering in this world. They make our suffering seem LIGHT and MOMENTARY.

Children have a hard time understanding this. They can't comprehend it. If one thing goes wrong, they break down and cry. They don't realize that after one hour something will happen to delight their hearts!. That's what it's like to be a child.

When you're not in the Word, when you aren't flying above the world and looking at life from the big picture of the Word of God who reveals the future in Jesus, every road closed seems like a dead end. It's not.

Paul realized that all of the detours in life, all of the flat tires, all of the breakdowns, they were only light and momentary troubles in the big picture of life.

IV. Conclusion: Next time you go through a seemingly heavy difficulty, talk it out. Say, "This is only temporary. This is only temporary." Or as they used to say years ago, "This too shall pass."

A. "We're all in this together." I'm growing tired of hearing that. Sooner or later, we need to live. We can't stay cooped up in fear of a virus. When the goal was to lessen the curve for a few weeks, I was ok with that.

But now the goal posts seem to have changed. What is the goal? To save lives. That's good. But at what point do we have to realize people are going to die? It is the nature of living in a sinful world.

Some have compared it to putting up a fence to keep the mosquitoes out. I want to be a team player, but I need to know what exactly we in together for? What is the hope?

B. God deals with disease and death in this world in a different way. He didn't immunize us from it or pretend that we can hide from it. He headed straight for it in order to conquer it. He conquered it by going through it and rising from the dead.

He takes us in the doctor's office and shows us Jesus. He says, "Here look at Him. Stay focused on Him, and trust in Him. Then you still go through death, but you end up in heaven.

Jesus came down here to suffer our disease and face His awful death on the cross, rising from the dead, to get us OUT of this world, not keep us here.

That's what we talk about. That's what we hope for, and that's what we're in this together for. We live in faith of hope and eternal life in Jesus. We don't need to live in fear. People need that now more than ever. Don't be afraid to talk about it, and don't be afraid to live for it. Amen? Let Us Pray...