

A New Hope

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 December 2022

Preacher: Nick Louw

[0 : 0 0] Hope, at its most basic, means anticipating a future that is better than the present. That's really the root of what hope is, when you believe that your current situation is going to improve.

Either in your personal life or in the world around you, you have a sense that things are going to get better. That's what hope is, that your future is somehow going to be better than your present.

We often come across this word. In fact, we live in a region of the world called the Cape of Good Hope. There's a reason that it's called that.

It's not just a nice name. It's because when the Portuguese came in the 1400s and they discovered that as you sail down the Atlantic, you can actually turn left and go up to India, that gave them a whole new hope of new trade and fresh economic opportunities because a sea route was now open between India and Europe.

That's why they called this region the Cape of Good Hope, because they knew that the future was bright. Their future was going to be better in some way than their present. What's interesting is last year, when the new Cape Town City Mayor was put into office, in his inauguration speech, him and the city of Cape Town rebranded Cape Town with a new campaign calling it the City of Hope.

[1 : 2 8] The reason is because they've picked up on this idea of the Cape of Good Hope and they want Cape Town to be a shining light for the rest of South Africa. To show the rest of South Africa, you can actually have a city that's run with reduced corruption and with reduced load shedding.

They want to show that Cape Town is an example of how the rest of the country can be fixed, that problems, crime, poverty, corruption can actually be fixed.

They want to make Cape Town this city of hope as an example. And so everybody is wanting hope, whether it's for our lives, whether it's for our economy, whether it's for our world.

And psychologists say, actually, we need it. You know that. Psychologists, it's a common, well-known fact amongst psychology that hope is vital for a healthy mind.

It is vital for a human to believe that the future is better than the present. The problem is that real hope is also not something we can just drum up.

[2 : 3 5] It's not something we can just pluck out of thin air. Because we've got to be convinced that there's something to hope for. And that's why psychologists spend a lot of time looking at how people can have, you know, real hope because it's something our minds need for a healthy life.

But sometimes hope is very hard to find. Maybe you're in a situation now where hope is very scarce. As you look around in the world, as you look in your own life, as you may be struggling with a sickness, a chronic illness, there's so many reasons, there's so many things in this broken world that rob us of hope.

And so it's hard to find hope, especially when there's no good reason to hope. But this morning I want to talk about a different kind of hope.

Because the Bible also talks about hope a lot, but it talks about a different type of hope to the hope that we're used to in the world. It's not the same kind of hope, because the hope that we find in the Bible is a hope that can be had even when there's no good reason for it.

Or at least even when we can't see any good reason to hope. And this hope that the Bible talks about is available, but we have to find it.

[4 : 05] We have to know where to find it. And it's actually vital for us to have if we're going to live properly in a broken world that so often seems to have no hope. And so let's look at this idea of hope from the Bible and look at where we can find it.

So what is biblical hope? That's the first thing I want us to consider. What is biblical hope? Well, there's a major difference, as I've said, between biblical hope and the hope that you normally find in the world.

And the difference between the hope the Bible speaks about and the hope in the world is what it's based on. So worldly hope is based on observable evidence.

You get hopeful about something when you see a reason to hope. We need to see something in order to have real hope in the world.

So, for example, Cape Town can't be a city of hope for South Africa unless we see things actually improving in Cape Town, unless we see reduced load shedding, reduced crime, reduced poverty.

[5 : 07] That's the only way it can be hope is if it actually gives us some evidence to believe that. The Portuguese did not have hope that they would reach India until they saw the Cape of Good Hope through their telescopes.

You've got to see it to hope in it. That's what worldly hope is. It always needs a visible reason if it's going to work. But that's where biblical hope is different.

Because biblical hope is able to be had even when there's no visible reason to be hopeful. And that's the kind of hope we find in Psalm 130. So if you have a look there in your Bibles, this writer of this Psalm 130 is hoping, but he has no visible reason to hope.

So you can see there in the first two verses, out of the depths, I call to you. He's in the depths. He's in a really bad situation.

We don't exactly know what situation he was in, but he's in a bad situation. That there's no visible hope. It's the depths. And he says, Lord, listen to my voice. Let your ear be attentive to my cry for help.

[6 : 15] And then down to verse 5. I wait for the Lord. I wait. I put my hope in his word. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning. More than watchmen wait for the morning.

And so the situation that the psalmist finds himself in is that he's hoping, but he has no reason visibly right now to have that hope. But he's still hoping in the Lord.

But he's in a really bad situation. He has a hope before he has a visible reason to hope. But it's also not a foolish hope. Now, you can get a foolish hope.

There is such thing as a fool's hope. Like, I hope I win the lottery, right? That's a foolish hope. Because statistically, it's almost impossible for you.

And that's the kind of hope. You know, we're often confused. There is such a thing as a real hope, which is hope with a reason. But there's also just a fool's hope. You know, we hope Bafana Bafana can win the World Cup or something like that.

[7 : 18] We hope we can win the lottery. But that's not the kind of hope we're talking about. Right? And this hope, even though the psalmist has no visible reason for it, it's not a foolish hope because it still has a reason, even if it's not an immediately apparent reason.

And the reason is not his circumstances. The reason is his relationship with God. That's why he can hope. Did you see that? He addresses his hope to the Lord in verse 5.

I wait for the Lord. Now, what's interesting in Hebrew is that word wait and the word hope. They're both translated hope often.

So, they're these two Hebrew words that are typically translated wait and hope. But they both have the same meaning. They both mean hope. So, he's literally saying in verse 5, I hope in the Lord.

And not in my circumstances. I'm not hoping because I see something getting better. But I'm hoping in God. I'm hoping in this relationship that I have with God. And that shows us that there are actually two ways that you can have hope.

[8 : 27] You can have hope based on the circumstances you see. Or you can have hope based on a relationship you have. Those are two different foundations for hope.

So, an example of hope in a relationship. For example, if I was waiting for a lift at night in the rain on some street corner.

And my friend has promised me that they're going to pick me up at a certain time. Now, they've said that to me. And if that person, if I know them and I have a relationship with them and that person is reliable, then I can have real hope.

Even though I don't see the car. Even without any visible evidence, I can still have hope and I can wait there patiently in the rain. Without worrying. Without stressing.

Because I have a relationship with the person who's promised to pick me up. So, that's a kind of a hope that you can have based on a relationship. Even if there's no visible evidence to have that hope.

[9 : 33] And that's the kind of hope that the psalmist had in God. He knew God. He was in a relationship with God. And he knew what God had said to him.

And he knew God enough to trust him so he could wait without fretting. Even though there was no visible reason around him to give him hope.

He hoped in a relationship he had with God. And so he could wait patiently. And let me tell you, in a world that doesn't give us often very good visible reasons to hope, this kind of hope that we read of here is the type of hope we all need if we're going to navigate a broken world that has so little reason to hope.

And even when it does give us visible reasons to hope this world, even when it does give us reason to hope in circumstances, even when, you know, we go to the doctor and we hear that the condition that he diagnosed is improving, even when we see the economy improving, that hope is still just temporary at best.

Because next year it could just get worse again. And so the hope based on circumstances can never last. And that's why we need a hope in God. We need a hope in a relationship with God that is irrespective of our circumstances.

[11 : 03] Those are the two types of hope that are on offer. But only one is lasting. Only one provides for a solid life. A hope in God that he is going to intervene to make your future better than your present.

That is the only stable hope you can have in this life. That's the hope this psalmist has even in the worst situation. So how do we have that hope?

That's the second thing I want us to consider. How do we have this hope in God that the psalmist expresses here? Well, if it's hope in a relationship, if it's hope based on a relationship, obviously you need to have a relationship with God.

You need to have an active relationship with God if you're going to have any chance of having this kind of hope. Now the problem with that is sin. Sin is the thing that breaks your relationship with your creator and has been right from the moment you've been born.

This inclination inside us to not listen to God. This natural desire to live life our own way rather than God's way. To put him on the back seat and maybe just listen every now and again when we need a boost.

[12 : 26] But actually just to do our own thing. That is sin. This rebellion against our creator. This bold faced, just, I want to live life my own way.

I want to do my own thing. I want to pursue this pleasure because I like it. Even though God doesn't want it. That's sin. And it's in all of us. And that sin is what breaks our relationship with God.

And when we have a broken relationship with God, we can't have this kind of hope. We can't. It's not possible. You can't hope for a better future if you're not in the right relationship with God.

You can't hope for a better future if your sin is undealt with. The only thing that you're guaranteed is death and judgment if you have a broken relationship with God.

So the only thing that's guaranteed is a future that's worse than the present. Not a future that's better than the present. It's the opposite of hope. That's what sin does. It doesn't only take away any chance of hope.

[13 : 25] It actually puts us in the reverse position of hope where this is the best situation we can hope for. And it's only going to get worse when we die and when we face the God that we've been rebelling and trying to ignore all our lives.

And so there's no hope if we have sin that's undealt with. But going back to Psalm 130, do you notice, therefore, why the psalmist spends so much time talking about forgiveness?

This is a psalm about having hope in a bad situation, but it's woven into the psalm as statements about God forgiving sin.

Because hope and forgiveness are necessarily connected. You see, the psalmist knows the only way he can have a hope that can get him through the depths that he's in right now is to know that he has a right relationship with God.

That's why he says, look at verse 3 to 4, Lord, if you kept an account of sins, Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness so that you may be revered.

[14 : 38] And from verse 7, Israel, put your hope in the Lord. Why? Because there is faithful love in the Lord and with Him is redemption in abundance.

He will redeem Israel from all its iniquities. So in the psalm about hope, it turns into a psalm about God's forgiveness because you can't have hope without forgiveness.

They're connected. Real hope, real knowledge that your future is going to be better than your present is only possible if there is real forgiveness for sins.

But also notice, for the psalmist, that this forgiveness is a future thing. Yes, there was real forgiveness available for the old covenant members, people of Israel, but the reason why was something still in the future.

God's, what He expresses in verse 8, He will redeem Israel from all its iniquities. He will, future. He will redeem. There is something that God has promised through His prophets that He's going to do in the future that is going to make it possible to have hope in Him.

[15 : 52] To make it possible to actually really believe that our future is going to be better than our present. But for the psalmist, it was only promise, not fulfilled. So when did God fulfill His promises that brought hope into the world?

When Jesus came. When Jesus came to earth. See, that's why Christmas is a season of hope. Real hope.

This kind of hope. Because when Jesus came and stepped into this world, He began the fulfillment of all of God's promises promises. To bring redemption into the world.

To bring forgiveness into the world. To bring into the world a way that anybody from any country, no matter who they are or what they've done, can have a right relationship with God. And that is why at Christmas we celebrate real hope coming into our world.

Because through the cross, when He died an atoning death that only He has ever done, that no one else could do, when the Son of God died an atoning death for the sins of His people.

[17 : 01] And then when He rose again on the third day, He made this redemption that the psalmist is talking about. He made that real and available to people everywhere.

So that we can have real hope. Real hope. Not wishful thinking, but real hope that our future can be better than our present. That is why hope is so important in this Advent season.

But it's hope that's not based on circumstances. It's hope that's based on a restored relationship with God, which is what Jesus came to earth to bring us. Now as we turn to the New Testament, we read a lot of the writers of the New Testament expressing the hope that we have because Jesus came.

Because Jesus did what He did and died and rose, we have real hope. And so listen to how some of the New Testament writers, the verses will be on screen behind me.

Listen to how some of them express it. Peter, in 1 Peter 1 verse 3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of His great mercy, He has given us new birth into a living hope.

[18 : 19] Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. New birth into a living hope. Because of what Jesus did, we, people, humans, have been born into a new era where we can have real hope that our future can be better than our present.

Through the resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead. Because that's pointing, of course, to the resurrection of His own people. That death has been defeated. That death has lost its sting.

That even though we will have to go through death, there is real hope of real resurrection because it's really happened in our world. And Jesus has gone ahead of His people to show us that. And that means we can have real hope of a better future.

But listen, it's not just us and our bodies. Listen to what Paul says in Romans 8 about the results of what Jesus achieved on earth. Romans 8, 19 to 21.

He says, For the creation eagerly waits with anticipation for God's sons to be revealed for the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in the hope that creation itself will also be set free from the bondage to decay into the glorious freedom of God's children.

[19 : 40] Do you see the hope that is now available in the world because of the coming of Jesus Christ and because of what He achieved? Hope of real resurrection, real life after death.

Which means, just think of it for a second, what that means when you're going through suffering, when you're in those dark pits in life. When you have the hope of resurrection because you've trusted in Christ, then you know that whatever you're going through is temporary.

It does have an expiry date. Your suffering has an expiry date if you have the hope of resurrection that Jesus secured. And, when we look around in the world and we see all the problems and we're so frustrated that thousands of years have gone by and humanity still hasn't worked a way for the world to be fixed because it can't.

Because we're sinners. And yet, the hope of resurrection which points to the return of Christ to bring complete restoration and justice to this world is hope that the problems of the world will be fixed even when they look bad.

And so, because of what Jesus did, we can look at our suffering, we can look at the problems of the world and we can see through them to the other side. That's what Jesus achieved.

[21 : 02] This hope that is available through a restored relationship with God that is able to be had even when all our circumstances are pointing in the other direction.

But notice in Psalm 130 where the psalmist found this hope because it sounds like a really cool hope to have, right? To deal with the problems in this world and I might be talking about it but maybe in the back of your mind you're going, I wish I could feel that.

I wish my circumstances didn't always get me down. But they do. I want to have that hope. I know I should because I do believe in Christ but I just don't feel it.

Maybe that's you. So how could the psalmist feel it? Where did he get it from? Look again. Psalm 130 verse 5.

I wait for the Lord. I wait. I put my hope in His Word. In His Word. See, when the psalmist turned to God's Word, that's what fueled this hope that He had.

[22 : 12] And that's where we get this hope as well. And we increase this hope and we feed this hope by reading and believing God's Word. And when we do, it changes us.

And that's the last thing I want us to consider this morning. What this hope does in our lives when we have it. What this hope does.

So knowing and trusting Christ gives us a hope that the world could never give us. But one of the most important outcomes of having this hope is that it helps us to wait patiently.

just like the psalmist. Look at verse 5 and 6 of Psalm 130. I wait for the Lord.

I wait. I put my hope in His Word and I wait for the Lord. More than watchmen for the morning. More than watchmen for the morning.

[23 : 26] The picture he's painting there is something that is very familiar in the ancient world. a watchman, a guard on the walls of a fortress looking out into the dark night where there could be all kinds of dangers waiting.

And this watchman has to be vigilant and he's got the night shift and he's just staring out into the darkness and he doesn't know what's there. And he's waiting. And he really wants the morning to come.

He really wants to see that sky lighten. Because not only would it mean that he can see and navigate the dangers but it means he's off his shift and he can go to sleep.

He can rest. He really wants the morning to come. And isn't that a feeling that we have as Christians? We really want things to brighten.

Again, in Romans 8 verse 23 that's expressed. this deep desire for the morning to come.

[24 : 32] Paul writes, not only that but we ourselves who have the spirit as our first fruits we groan within ourselves eagerly waiting for our adoption the redemption of our bodies.

So having this contented discontentment is good and right. This hopeful waiting. This dissatisfaction dissatisfaction with the present.

That's the kind of waiting that's expressed in Psalm 130 as a watchman waiting for the morning. But you know how that watchman no matter how dark the night gets no matter how many scary sounds he hears coming from the darkness you know how he can endure you know how he can stay there and not run away because he knows the morning is coming.

that's the thing about the morning it always comes eventually it's a certainty and that's what gives this soldier the ability to wait that's what gives the psalmist the ability to wait for God the certainty that the morning will come and that's not a vain hope it's not a vain hope for the soldier to wait for the morning and it's not a vain hope for God's people to wait for him even though the night seems so long and that is what we are called to do as God's people we are called to learn the discipline of waiting patiently just as the psalmist waited for God to start fulfilling his great promises we look back on Christ and we wait for God to finish fulfilling all that he's promised all his plans for this world and for us and the redemption of our bodies and the redemption of this world from sin and brokenness we wait because we know that's going to happen and so that whatever life throws at us whether it's a scary diagnosis from a doctor whether it's losing your job whether it's all kinds of troubles that we can find ourselves in no matter how dark the night gets we can keep waiting for the morning because we know it's coming if we're God's people if we have a restored relationship with him we know the morning is coming so we can wait we need to learn to wait but it also means not only does having this hope mean we can wait patiently it also means we don't have to be like those who only put their hope in this world because with you see people without this restored relationship with this God of hope all they can hope for is their circumstances all they can hope for is what this world can give them and they're forced to put their hope in that and it means they'll just spend their lives running after the things that the world can give them to get these little slivers of hope that don't even last but we can be liberated from that if we have this kind of hope through relationship with God we don't have to live like those who only put their hope in this world listen to what Paul writes to the Thessalonians expressing this idea 1 Thessalonians 5

I'd like you to turn there in your Bibles and have a look at these words because they're really appropriate for Christmas and for what we were talking about earlier about light coming into the darkness I love how Paul expresses it here in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 it's a little little-ish book in the New Testament if you find one of the epistles starting with T then you found them all because they're all grouped together that's a little hint if you found Timothy or 2 Thessalonians or Titus then just stay you'll find it 1 Thessalonians 5 from verse 5 my words may be slightly different to yours based on your translation but look at what Paul writes here he's talking to Christians he's talking to those who have trusted and followed Christ he says for you are all children of light and children of the day we do not belong to the night or the darkness so then let us not sleep like the rest but let us stay awake and be self-controlled for those who sleep sleep at night and those who get drunk get drunk at night but since we belong to the day let us be self-controlled and put on the armor of faith and love and look at this and let us put on the helmet of hope of salvation the helmet of hope do you see how hope is also our defense against sin and temptation and evil it's described as a helmet you know if you're if you're a soldier in the ancient world going into battle you want to look around for your helmet

[29 : 49] I mean we still wear helmets today you know when you do some extreme sport your helmet why because you want to guard your head your head's pretty important that's why you have a helmet you know hope is described as the helmet that guards our minds as we try to live in this broken world where so many things could get there and get in our minds hope is the helmet we put on to guard our minds from those false thoughts from from that despair because because without real hope our desire to sin our desire to get as much as we can from this world will be too much it will overwhelm us unless we put on this helmet of hope because when we do then we know for sure the morning is coming so we don't need to give in to sin we don't need to give in to temptation that's what hope does do you see how important having this hope is in our lives it doesn't only help us to wait and get through all those deep valleys we will find in life but it helps us to put off sin and to protect ourselves from temptation this helmet of hope and so that's why it's vital that we are able that we become able to have this hope that you need to have this hope in your life not not a worldly hope that depends on your circumstances that changes your mood depending on what's going on in your life but a solid hope that we get from God's word which causes us as Paul says elsewhere to shine like stars in the darkness of the night that's what hope does you know

Dylan helpfully reminded us earlier that Christmas is a time when we remember Jesus coming as light into the dark world but then the New Testament teaches us that we are now the light and we shine in a dark world when we have hope in the darkest situations people can see that when you're in that hospital bed and your non-Christian friends or family come to visit you and you have real hope and you can see the morning and you know that your situation's just temporary because you know your future is secured by Christ they can see that that hope shines out when everyone else around you is despairing about the world but you have hope in the coming of a Messiah who will come and fix it all one day they can see that if you have this kind of hope it shines out in the darkness of the world we become the light and so do you have that hope this morning do you have that hope that transcends your circumstances because that is only available if you have a right relationship with God and that is what

Jesus came to earth to bring if you believe and you follow him that's the only way you can have this hope that will get you through the darkest of nights but I want to talk to those of you in closing who do have that hope who do have that faith in Christ who do follow Christ because what we see in Psalm 130 something very interesting is that this hope even for those who are in right relationship with God it's not automatic this hope doesn't come to you automatically because it's very easy and I've seen it for God's people who trust in Christ to still despair when their circumstances are bad and to forget their hope to forget the morning that's coming and to sink into despair and to let it overwhelm them and that is why at the end of the Psalm 130 the Psalmist writes in verse 7

Israel God's people God's covenant people Israel put your hope in the Lord it's something you have to choose to do it's an imperative to hope it's something God's people must consciously choose every day to put your hope not in your circumstances that day but in a person because those are the only two things you can put your hope in your circumstances or a person and if you're a Christian you need to choose to actually consciously every day put your hope in the person who has made promises to you in the person who came down in the flesh and died for your sins to secure your future and to guarantee that your future is going to be better than your present so that even when the night is at its darkest you can be one of those standing out in the world because you are waiting with eager anticipation for the morning to come will you be one of those people this week this month in the coming year let's pray

Lord you give us hope real hope because you have given us Christ our living hope and Christ has done everything to restore our relationship with you to wipe us clean of our sins to forgive us to bring us redemption and Lord help us to realize that it's because of those things we can have real hope but we pray that you would help us Lord to put our hope in you like the psalmist even when we're in the valley even when we're in the darkest of times Lord help us to remember not to put our hope in circumstances but to put our hope in Christ and to look towards the morning like that watchman waiting on the wall and to put on the helmet of hope to protect us as we wait and so help us to develop this discipline and as we do Lord help us to shine like stars in the darkness to those around us in Jesus name we pray

[36 : 23] Amen