

Hope as a Sure & Steadfast Anchor.

Hebrews 6:13-20

I want to speak about Hope this morning: why? Well firstly because having reviewed all my preaching at Trinity Gosforth I realised that I had spoken many times on grace, and a few times on faith, but never on Hope & secondly because the last six months of our lives and ministry have been a spiritual roller coaster but our testimony is that our Hope in Jesus has never been shaken, the Jesus shaped anchor called Hope that Hebrews talks about is not just a nice picture it's an amazing grace and gift. So I want to remind you of this and help us to see how it's also this Hope that can transform our effectiveness as disciples of Jesus and congregations seeking to truly be the Body of Christ.

We live in an age which is running low on Hope: double dip recession, salaries and wages cut if you are lucky enough to remain in work, and no-one you talk to feels optimistic about the future. The likelihood is that it won't change for the next decade. Hope is one of the three great gifts given to all believers through the cross of Jesus. It requires of you and me a faith filled continual looking forward to eternity, which is not (as some think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do. If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next....all left their mark on earth precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of eternity that they have become so ineffective in this world. Aim at Heaven and you will get Earth 'thrown in': aim at Earth and you will get neither.

This is not about the victory of optimism over pessimism: the optimist says, the cup is half full, the pessimist says, the cup is half empty, but the child of God says: My cup runneth over!!

So let's start with our passage from Hebrews and take in the sweep of what the Bible teaches us about Hope, then with our Hope sure and steadfast, we can speak of it and offer it to Canterbury.

I loved what Lindall shared last Sunday, namely that we needed to wrestle for the Blessing, but once blessed we were to be a Blessing to others. In the first four verses of our passage we are reminded that God is the promise keeper: He keeps His Word and can never break it. How much do we miss out on blessing because we don't stand on God's promises. His promise to Abraham is still His promise to us: "I promise I will bless you with everything I have - bless and bless and bless!"™ The core of our Hope lies in the measure to which we choose daily to believe the promise keeper. TM goes on: v18 "We who have run for our lives to God have every reason to grab the promised hope with both hands and never let go. It is an unbreakable spiritual lifeline, reaching past all appearances right to the very presence of God where Jesus, running on ahead of us, has taken up his permanent post as High Priest for us, in the order of Melchizedek."

So let's look more closely at this Hope. There is only one Hope (says Paul in Ephesians 4:4) and it's Jesus shaped and it calls us Home. Kendrick's song "Heaven is in my heart" written in the 90's sought to capture this thought. Paul specifies the Hope in Acts 24:15 when he says to Festus that it's the same Hope the Apostles had, and it centres on the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. Jeremiah spoke of this Hope in Lamentations 3:21-23 and although 1 Corinthians 13:13 speaks of Faith Hope and Love as the trinity of grace, Colossians 1:5 makes it clear that faith and love spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven. Stored up for us in heaven: Wow! Romans 15:4 tells us that all of the scripture is to give us Hope so we might be encouraged and development true endurance.

Of course there is such a thing as **False Hope**. The Book of Job tells us this with candid realism: Such is the destiny of all who forget God, so perishes the hope of the godless (8:13), but the eyes of the wicked will fail and escape will elude them, their hope will become a dying gasp (11:20) & for what hope has the godless when he is cut off, when God takes away his life? (27:8). Paul describes our pre-Christian state in Ephesians 2:12: separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and with out God in the world. Paul appears to the Thessalonians later (1 T 4:13) "not to be ignorant about those who have fallen asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope". We live in a world of disappointed people who falsely hoped for so much because their hope was and is not in Jesus. Romans 5:5 "Hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us".

So this is **Hope for now** (not just pie in the sky when you die but steak on the plate while you wait). Its begins when we turn to Jesus and put on the Hope of Salvation as a helmet (1 Thessalonians 5:8). But it's not just a biblical truth and glorious promise, it's a Living Hope that is born out of your New Birth: that's how Peter describes it (1 Peter 1:3). Hope with latent renewing strength & Holy Spirit energy! Hope that kick starts the process in our lives of sanctification or to put it more simply, making us more like Jesus. 1 John 3:3 says Everyone who has this Hope in Him (Jesus) purifies himself, just as He is pure. When your focus and passion is Jesus and you home land is Heaven, you live differently, and you dance to the tune of the Kingdom. That's why Hope has be written through the core of your being and why you need the this anchor for your soul: "if you continue in your faith established and firm, not moved from the hope held out on the gospel (Colossians 1:23)." Now we need to offer that glorious

Hope of Salvation to as many as we can while we are on Planet Earth.

But the Hope is not just for now: Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:19 comments: if only for this life we have hope in Christ we are to be pitied more than all men.

Hope for now but crucially The Hope of Glory. Paul puts it beautifully when he sums up the Christian life as "Christ in you, the Hope of Glory (Colossians 1:27)." What you and I believe about the return of Jesus, the second coming, spending eternity with Jesus and each other, will totally set the agenda for what you do in the here and now. More about that another time but suffice it to say that this Hope takes you and me out of the rat race of our culture and gives us the perspective of heaven and eternity. God has set eternity in our hearts (Eccles. 3:11) and just like John in Revelation 4:1 we have been given ring side seats to 'come up higher' to see the world as Jesus sees it. Scripture describes this in various helpful illuminating ways: Paul speaking to Titus (1:2) says it was promised from the beginning of time, and speaks of the Blessed Hope of the appearing of Jesus (our Great God and Saviour) (2:13). Paul tells us to eagerly await the return of Jesus (Galatians 5:5) and Peter says to 'Prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given to you when Jesus is revealed (1 Peter 1:13).

God has told Lorna and me: to **love my people and love my city**. This we will do. But we can't be more loving than to encourage you to truly be what you are in Jesus: a people of Hope. Be that people and the whole of Canterbury will want what you have. There is Hope for Canterbury and His name is spelt JESUS. The best you and I, and the whole Bride of Christ in Canterbury, can do is to be Jesus-shaped. In John the Baptist words we all need to decrease so that He will increase.

And sharing the Gospel of Grace is best achieved by our embodying it, and then when given opportunity sharing the difference Jesus has made to us. Something we can all do! And how does Peter describe that process? Surprise, Surprise: he says: in your hearts set apart Christ as lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. (1 Peter 3:15). Do this and we will see the multitudes coming to Jesus in our day and generation. For we are God's Hope Filled Children.

When I was preparing this word for today I sensed that the Lord wanted to speak a word of Hope over St Andrews: it's a word you need to test but I sense it speaks of a new chapter the Lord will write in our midst over the coming days: from Hosea 2:14/15.

"Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her. There I will give her back her vineyards and will make the valley of Achor (which means trouble) a door of Hope. There she will sing as in the days of her youth as in the day she came up out of Egypt".

Remember Fear can hold you prisoner but Hope can set you free! So be encouraged and rise up and truly become a people of Hope who open the door of Hope to let this City taste and see that the Lord is good.

We are going now to listen to a song on the screen called the "Voice of Hope": as it is ministered receive a fresh baptism of Hope. Then as we move in the Communion I am going to ask you each to come forward and receive the bread and wine at the front from one of two stations, as they share the bread and wine they will also lay a hand on your head and speak the words: Receive Hope as a Sure and Steadfast Anchor for your Soul.

Pastor David
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