

Community Church of Issaquah
Sunday, June 2, 2024

There Is Hope Within Us

Rev. Vincent Lachina

If you recall, during the Advent Season, one of the Sundays directed our attention to the theme of Hope. That word seems to be surfacing repeatedly lately, but usually in the form of the negative way of seeing things. You're familiar with that word, aren't you? Hopeless. We read or hear news and are overwhelmed with a sense of hopelessness. Things just seem out of control and there does not seem to be a person or a solution that can fix it. Often, I just want to throw my hands up and say, "It's hopeless. What's the use?" The future looks dark and dreary, and I can't seem to see the bright light at the end of the tunnel. So where is our hope in all these difficult days?

As we heard in our Scripture passage today, "We have this hope as an anchor for soul, firm and secure." The audience or the intended hearer of these words lived in an exceptionally bad time similar to our own. It's really hard for us in this day and time to imagine the circumstances that surrounded the lives of the Israelites when Isaiah spoke this prophecy about hope. Once a powerful nation with strong leaders, Israel had become little more than a combat zone. Warring tribes on every side made life uncertain and fearful for these people who called themselves "God's chosen." It had not be long before the Babylonians came calling, destroying the sacred city of Jerusalem and taking its people into captivity. They were

to become refugees in a foreign land with no hope of returning home. But they did return, and they did rebuild. Sadly, that didn't last long before the Roman Empire absorbed them and they were again in a similar position of hopelessness.

Sadly, as we read news reports today of all that is happening in the Middle East, it is eerily familiar, isn't it? Invaders. Refugees. Wars. It makes us wonder if the people there are feeling that same sense of despair and hopelessness. In a land that has been racked with war and hate since long before the foretelling of the hope of a Messiah, history continues to repeat itself over and over again. Now here is someone preaching that having hope is possible because the Messiah had come. Hope is found in Jesus. Hebrews words it this way: "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf."

What does all that mean? That's the focus of today's message, finding hope within us. The history of the Jewish nation before Christ was one of repeated dark days. In the midst of all the struggles and challenges, the prophets, like Isaiah, continued to tell the people to keep their hope on God. Even though they were told to just ignore what was going on, it was difficult to do when they were being persecuted, forced from their homeland, and constantly at war with some tribe that was seeking to take their land and imprison them.

What was their hope? It was that God would keep His promise and send a rescuer or savior to them, the promised Messiah. Their hope was that life would be better for them the moment that new ruler would appear and rescue them. Their hope was an anticipation of something that would happen for them when God would get busy and send them a savior. They anticipated an arrival of change, but this anticipation focused on the future. From these early Jews, we learned that hope wasn't in their present, but in their future.

For some of us, our hope is also an anticipation of something that we look forward to in the days ahead. Have you ever said something like: "I hope we get some warmer weather soon." Or "I hope everything goes well with your medical procedure today." Or silly things like, "I hope this is the winning lottery ticket." We engage in anticipating an outcome that is there in the future. Hope for many of us,, and for the early Jews was anticipating.

And then things changed, and hope was given a new name. As we heard in the reading of the passage from Hebrews, the Messiah had come. Jesus was the promised savior. The writer of Hebrews gives a very interesting description of what the coming of Christ had done. In the Synagogue or Temple, places of worship were divided by authority. If you were just coming to worship and were not a priest or rabbi, you were not given access to the inner sanctuary that was hidden behind curtains. Only the elite had access to that privileged place. But here was this man who claimed to be the Messiah and he entered the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, meaning he had authority to enter a sacred place.

It was done. God had kept his promise. Jesus, the Son of God, had come. Though he was not the king or ruler that many had hoped for, he was the Redeemer that was prophesized in so many of the Old Testament Books of Prophecy. God chose no longer were anticipating the coming of their Savior. It had already happened. There was no need to anticipate the event because it was done. As Hebrews says, *“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It (meaning Jesus) enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever.”*

How did ‘hope’ come to mean something entirely different with the coming of Christ? Hope changed from being something that was anticipated or something that would come in the future. Hope had become an assurance. The hearers of the words from Hebrews were made aware that the one big event they had been anticipating or hoping for was completed. Rest assured, the Promised One has come and all the prophecies you have been told have been fulfilled. The Messiah had been born as a human, had lived as the Son of God, had died as had been told, but had been raised from the dead. All the things that had been hoped for were completed. Anticipation had become Assurance.

Do you know the hymn, “Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine?” Have you ever thought of what that means to us today? We have the assurance that when we place our belief in Jesus, we need not try to anticipate what will happen to us on our faith journey. That, in itself, gives us

reason enough to finish that sentence. “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine.” This is a reminder that we need not spend our time anticipating our place in eternal life, or even on our daily walks with the Lord. Rest assured, Jesus has you.

So, back to the question I asked in the beginning. What does all of this mean? Simply put, it helps us to see that when we use the word “hope” it has two very different meanings depending on what we are hoping for. If we are engaged in anticipating, or looking to the future for something to happen in our life or someone else, that hope is anticipation or envisioning. “I hope you have a good day.” “I hope the weather gets better.” Or even more seriously, “I hope they will stop all that war and suffering in Gaza.” These are wishes that we would love to see these be fulfilled in the future.

And the other understanding of hope is that we have an assurance that God has secured our future. We are his children and Jesus has made the way for us to know what our future in Christ will be. Before we can even find hope or assurance, we have to truly believe that a loving God would not leave us in our darkest hour. There will always be a way to find the light when we truly trust God to help us get to it. When I began to trust in the loving God I had found through my salvation, I began to believe in my heart that I would make it through whatever life put before me. That is what hope and assurance have meant to me.

There is a wonderful verse in the book of Romans, chapter 13. It says, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and

peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” I’m learning that in order to overflow with hope, I have to fully understand that the hope I need is assurance and not simply anticipation. Hope -- anticipation or assurance. We get to choose.

Let me close with something I read recently:

Don't look back with regret.

Look forward with hope.