

6<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Bible reading: Isaiah 61

Theme: Hope

**A Definition: Hope** is an **optimistic** state of mind that is based on an **expectation** of positive outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one's life, or the world at large. As a verb, its definitions include: "*expect with confidence*" and "*to cherish a desire with anticipation.*"

**Examples:** *I hope (that) she'll win.*

*We have to hope **and pray (that)** the operation will go well.*

*They hope **to** visit us next year.*

People can often confuse the word hope for wishful thinking. If we hope something will happen, we have no control over whether or not it will take place.

But the **biblical sense of hope** is very different. Hope, in the Bible, exists as a secure assurance, a trust placed in a trustworthy God.

We have all heard of the saying; "Where there is life there is HOPE, well this morning we will see that where there is HOPE, there is life, abundant, eternal life!

Romans 15:12-13

*"And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; in him the Gentiles will hope." 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"*

God has not failed us in the past, and therefore, if He claims He will do something in the future, we can have the hope that He will fulfill that claim.

Biblical hope waits and endures. It isn't flimsy or merely wishful thinking. It can withstand trials, disappointments and heart aches.

It has always amazed me that God showed us a glimmer of hope as He chose to send His son into this earth through a family tree that was a little bent and scarred.

We saw it, when God chose a tribe that was small, and a city that was lowly. It can be seen when we recognize that God didn't send His Son to be birthed in a fancy palace among the wealthy and the elite, but our King of Kings and Lord of Lords was born among common shepherds and livestock in a barn.

It makes me realize that God is with us! Nothing is too difficult, too messy, or too dirty for Him. Jesus came to give us the gift of eternal life through the **salvation** that only our Heavenly Father can give when we believe on His Son, repent of our sins, and confess Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.

**It raises the question: How can you walk in hope when you feel hopeless inside?**

Hope in Jesus comes from more than just a belief that He was once a baby in a manger. This hope in Him has been called "*an anchor for the soul.*" It is something deep within that secures you through the storms of life.

Paul introduces us to a new title for God, "*The God of hope.*" He is the source of eternal hope for every believer.

This title was unknown to the Gentile pagans in Rome, but they did have a statue of a goddess called "Hope." It is interesting that her temple in Rome was struck by lightning and burned. Then shortly after it was rebuilt, it was again burned to the ground.

Paul was pointing the idol worshippers in Rome to the fountain of real hope that can only be found in Jesus Christ. Hope in the **Bible** is the confident expectation of what **God** has promised, and its strength is in His faithfulness.

In one word, the answer to confident expectation is, "JESUS" — the Jesus of Christmas.

Our passage today takes us to the book of Isaiah to the final sections of one of the most amazing texts of the scriptures. To many the book of Isaiah is the Romans of the OT. It is the proclamation of the Messianic Hope. It is filled with the truth of God bringing salvation to the Nations, through a Servant king who will suffer, rule, and today preach.

The context of this passage is that Israel is broken hearted, enslaved and grieving over the consequences of her sins. Israel is suffering because of God's judgment and discipline. God is disciplining Israel for her sins, but in His mercy, He sends Isaiah on a mission of mercy with a message of good news to restore them to his purposes for their lives.

### 1. He Proclaims Hope & Life v1-7

Isaiah's message is to a people with seemingly insurmountable problems. Yet, Isaiah's message portrays Israel's deliverance. He outlines a message of what God gives:

- Heals the broken hearted
- Gives freedom to the captives
- Release from the oppression of darkness
- God's vengeance on enemies
- Their enemies will serve them
- Comfort to those who mourn
- Provide for those who grieve
- Give them a crown of beauty for their ashes
- Gladness for their mourning
- Turn their cries of despair into songs of praise

We must believe that God can give us what Isaiah speaks of in these verses. Isaiah speaks of "*The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord.*" v1. The word "sovereign" means one that exercises supreme, permanent authority. Isaiah wanted the Israelites to know the Spirit of the Sovereign Lord was upon him as he proclaimed God's plan for them in their oppression. Isaiah's message was from the Sovereign Lord whose purposes could not be thwarted.

There is never a time in my life time when the world needs a clearer picture of God's sovereignty—that he is in control--than when we are hurting and struggling to maintain a witness within what Paul called "*a warped and crooked generation*". (*Philippians 2:15*)

Luke records that Jesus began his ministry quoting these exact verses we read from Isaiah.

Luke 4:16-22

*He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." Then he*

*rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.*

Jesus indicated these verses were being fulfilled before their very eyes. However, His message also goes to the end of the ages. Jesus Christ fulfills these verses for every generation—he brings good news to every life. It's a message of freedom. It is a sight for sore eyes. It is designed to release us from the world's oppression. He came to relieve you from the oppression you feel when you think the only way out is to swap lives with someone else.

God's message of freedom restores our sight—changes our thinking so we can remain free in Christ. If you went to the prisons throughout the country setting everyone free, how many of those freed prisoners would be back in jail by night fall—by the end of the week. Statistics tell us the vast majority would be back in prison in no time at all. Why? Their sight was not restored in their release. They would revert to the old way of living.

Isaiah's message was good news because God broke into their world with a word of rebuke to offer a word of correction, an invitation of mercy to salvage their lives. Sadly, they had been held captive by those who only offered religious rituals to practice with no concern for correcting the direction of their sinful lives.

We may think freedom from sin through forgiveness is the only important aspect of salvation. We preach forgiveness and the lost receive forgiveness. They are set free of their sins, but we turn them loose in the world with no idea how to live above the oppression of Satan. They end up living no better than they were before they were forgiven.

We cannot be set free without directing our steps in God's ways. Nothing less than divine thinking—divine revelation can set us free. This is why the gospel is good news to those who wish to see life from God's vantage point. God's righteousness brings healing to a hurting world.

## **2. He Acts for Justice v8-9**

*"For I the Lord love justice; I hate robbery and wrong; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their offspring shall be known among the nations, and their descendants in the midst of the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are an offspring the Lord has blessed".*

God Himself now enters the picture with the declaration of Why he is acting:

-He acts for Justice, -He acts for His People, -He acts to create a people, -A People who will inhabit the earth, -A people blessed by the Lord

Throughout the Book of Isaiah there has been the call that God would save the nations. In the previous section the idea of the nation's being servants reflects that God has brought all peoples to himself.

The message of Christ is one that sees the Father creating a new people. An everlasting kingdom of priests who will worship and praise Him.

He will be a blessing to all people and through His Son every nation is blessed.

Genesis 22:17–18 ESV

*“I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”*

All the nations are blessed by God through the Saviour who will bring us an everlasting joy:

### **3. He Brings Salvation v10-11**

*“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations”.*

Here is the voice of the redeemed:

- The work of God brings a song to our hearts:
- God will create in us righteousness and praise.
- Not our own but His son's

Revelation 19:6–8 ESV

*“Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints”.*

We can identify with the Exiles. There are times we feel oppressed by the expectation of others; broken hearted because of loved ones who can no longer celebrate this Christmas season with us; captive to credit card debt and prisoner to over scheduled calendars.

- There are times when our lives are cluttered
- At other times our lives are a mess, and
- Occasionally our lives are disasters.

The Lord did not abandon God's people during their exile nor does God abandon us in the messiness of life. Into those situations God speaks a word of hope.

Our lives have been touched by God. We have heard the good news. We have been given the strength and ability to endure with God's hope and encouragement when we have been oppressed. Our broken hearts have been comforted and we have been set free from fear, sin and death.

Now, it is our privilege to share the good news of what God has done for us. In this way others will hear the good news and they too will experience God's love and power in their lives

We rejoice because in this Season of Advent we hear the good news and see God's love and hope. Amen