

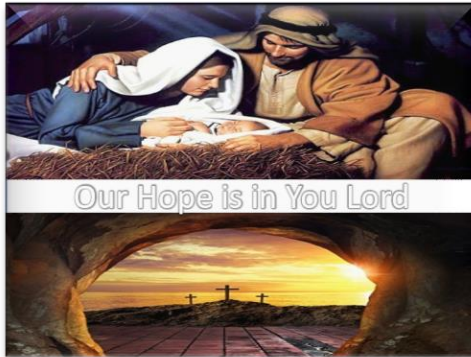
Our Hope is in You Lord

Romans 6:8-11

Online Sermon:

http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

Over 2,000 years ago a gift was given to humanity that would forever give hope to a world reigned by chaos, famines, wars, and debilitating diseases. This hope would not be found in riches, fame, or power that many of this world covet and see as



the key to happiness, but instead in a babe lying in a manger, rapped in swaddling clothes (Luke 2:12). And yet while “He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him,” (Isaiah 53:2) Jesus had a profound impact on those He met. While some were enamoured

by His ability walk on water, heal lepers, the blind, and even raise people from the dead; others became envious, fearful, and outright rejected and despised Him so much that they persecuted and hung Him like a criminal, cursed upon a tree (Galatians 3:13). Ironically it would be upon the cross that Christ would take upon Himself our pain and bear our suffering, and in being

stricken, crushed, and forsaken for our iniquities by His wounds we are offered healing not only of our minds but our very souls! During wars, famines, earthquakes, and diseases (Matthew 24:6-8) there is great hope for He who was, is and will forever be the Almighty (Revelation 1:8) offers us victory over tribulations and even death itself (1 Corinthians 15:50-55).

Praise be to God that once sealed by His Spirit (Ephesians 1:13) not even the spiritual forces of this dark world (Ephesian 6:12) can overcome the Lamb who was slain before the creation of this world (Revelation 13:8).

This is Easter and, in this sermon, I am going to introduce you to the eternal, unspeakable, glorious hope that can only be found at the foot of a cross and at the empty tomb!

Predictions of a King in Shepherd’s Clothing

Over 2,000 years ago we heard a voice of one dressed in camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, eating locusts and wild honey from the wilderness speaking words of great hope that will forever ring within our souls! John the Baptist told humanity to “prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him” (Matthew 3:1-3). He whom the prophets spoke of but never met and the angels who looked intently into His coming (1 Peter 1:12) had emptied Himself of the glory He had with the Father in heaven and was miraculously born both fully God and human (Philippians 2:6-8) from the virgin Mary (Matthew 1:18-

he could offer the Good Shepherd was profound, gut-wrenching agony and sultry tears from his three-time denial of ever having known Him (Matthew 26:57-75).

When darkness came over the land, the earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open I can only imagine the deep and profound sense of despair Mary and John must have felt when Christ spoke His last words, “my God, my God why have you forsaken me” (Matthew 27:45-54)!

And yet despite the events clearly pointing to Jesus being the Son of God the best humanity could offer was the dismal statement “He was.”

“Unrealized hope may be one of the most painful things that one can ever go through in life.”³ A person can handle a thousand cuts of affliction, if hope remains, but once one cannot see a better future, life truly becomes unbearable.

We have all experienced unrealized expectations in life that rattle our dreams and crush our hope that we will once again receive blessings. Sometimes our disappointments in life are rather small such as an empty cookie jar, a friend who forgets to call or our favorite team not winning a game and while these events shake our joy and sometimes put us in a bad mood they tend not to last very long. However, in the face of the Twin Towers crumbling, genocide ravishing our lands, going through a divorce, losing one’s job, being passed up for a promotion, and getting an

³ Ibid.

incurable, debilitating disease that ravages one’s body we often find ourselves filled with fear and overwhelmed with sorrow.



While the Bible says we are to “consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds” because when persevered in faith it leads to spiritual maturity (James 1:2-4), if we are truly honest this

Easter morning, we must admit tribulations of great magnitude often tend to throw our feet off the firm Rock in which we stand and flood our minds with so many negative emotions!

Looking up from the muck of our presumed, unconquerable desperation we can’t help but cry out to our Lord “help me with my unbelief” (Mark 9:23).

It is in our fear that the green pastures and still waters that You, my Good Shepherd, have promised (Psalms 23) to provide, truly seem impossible to every experience again!

He Rose from the Grave

The Good News at Easter is that not even death itself has mastery over our Lord! Even though His statement that He would destroy the Temple and rebuilt it in three days infuriated those who persecuted Him (Mark 14:55-59), what incredible sense of peace, joy, and hope we feel when we turn to Mary's story of an empty tomb! When Mary arrived at the tomb and

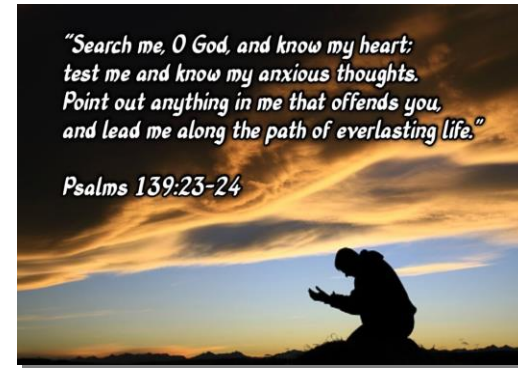


she saw the stone had been rolled away her heart sunk and she cried out in desperation, "they have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put Him" (John 19:2). With a broken heart and

tears flowing down her face she investigated the tomb and saw two angels dressed in white (20:11-12). Her heart was so focused on her Lord that not even angels could detract her from her mission to prepare His body. As she turned, she saw Jesus standing there (20:14) but did not recognize Him until the Good Shepherd called her by name and then her eyes were opened, and she cried out "Rabboni" and held onto her Lord with all her heart, mind, and soul (20:16-17)! Mary's encounter with the risen Lord reminds me of the words of Apostle Paul, "neither death nor life, neither angels or demons, neither present or future, nor any powers, neither height nor anything else will ever separate us for the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

The Great Exchange

Many of you have come to church today hard pressed on every side, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down by trials and tribulations but let me assure you that you are far from crushed (2 Corinthians 4:8-9) and your future is certainly not destroyed because the grave could not hold our Lord! While the "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12) have



struck the heel of humanity repeatedly throughout the generations (Genesis 3:15) by non-stop fiery darts of trials and temptations to sin that has made us too often estranged from our holy God, ironically it would be

at the cross that a once and for all sacrifice of the Lamb would forever appease God's righteous wrath.

His once and for all sacrifice divinely enable those born again to be free from sin that used to so easily entangle and reign their lives (Romans 6:10-14; Hebrews 12:1)! Praise be that "God made He who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Christ we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21)!

Even though Christ has conquered the grave and sin we come to the cross not to seek a life full of glory, riches, fame, or power that this world says is the key to happiness but to ask the Lord to examine our hearts. Like Apostle Paul we confess that we have a desire to do good but through our own effort we cannot stop sinning (Romans 7:8-20).

While His own and the Roman government failed Him, we must confess that it in our sin we too are responsible for picking up the hammer and driving the nails into our Savior!

So, we plead that You Lord to show us where we are still falling short of Your glory, and we humbly ask for forgiveness so that in the vine we might have fellowship with You and reach our full potential in Your name!

Our Prayer

We are Your treasured possession (Deuteronomy 14:2) and as such in the face of the severest of tribulations, when our hearts are fearful, crushed and we feel all hope is gone we call upon You Lord. We seek shelter today under Your wings while we stand on the Rock of our salvation that cannot ever be shaken or moved by anyone. We know that you did not promise us an easy life by human standards but instead one of persecution, great pain, and affliction. Despite the weight of tribulations upon our hearts we rejoice for You Lord have given us every spiritual

blessing imaginable in Your name! While we can't help but weep and mourn in the face of injustices, genocides, and debilitating, incurable diseases; may we never forget that even in greatest depths of sorrow and pain You are always present, and to those who call upon Your name You are always willing to



trade Your yoke which is easy for ours (Matthew 11:28)! We confess this Easter mourning that we often fall short of Your glory and are always in need of Your loving examination and

forgiveness when we turn from our evil ways. Lord as much as anyone else we drove the nails into Your hands and feet and despite us falling short of Your glory every day of our lives we get to rejoice in Your forgiveness and bask in Your ever-loving kindness, grace, and mercy. You are an awesome God! Our hope lies in You Lord for You alone conquered the grave, atoned for our sin, and made for us the only path to be right in Your Father's sight ... so we say thank you and rejoice that He who was, and is, will be forever more! Praise be Lord Jesus You rose from the dead so that we might too!