

Pastor Josh – Sunday 18th Feb 2024

There Is Hope.

Luke 1:5-17

Christian Standard Bible

Gabriel Predicts John's Birth

⁵ In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest of Abijah's division named Zechariah. His wife was from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶ Both were righteous in God's sight, living without blame according to all the commands and requirements of the Lord. ⁷ But they had no children because Elizabeth could not conceive, and both of them were well along in years.

⁸ When his division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, ⁹ it happened that he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ At the hour of incense the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. ¹¹ An angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. ¹² When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified and overcome with fear. ¹³ But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. ¹⁴ There will be joy and delight for you, and many will rejoice at his birth. ¹⁵ For he will be great in the sight of the Lord and will never drink wine or beer. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother's womb. ¹⁶ He will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ And he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to make ready for the Lord a prepared people."

The Watoto Choir singing to us there is hope.

Story of visiting family and traumatising his sisters – talking to his children about growing up!

- An argument about whether or not toads can swim!
- One sister had a toad name pancake – because he sat very flat.
- Josh telling his sisters that pancake can swim!

- They said pancake never goes near water – and he doesn't/can't swim.
- Josh – toads were born in the water – they lay eggs in water to have little ones – toad can swim.
- Josh looking to prove his point grabbed pancake and threw him in the pond.
- Pancake entered the water and slowly made his way to the bottom ever so slowly.
- His sisters were very mad at Josh – Josh said no wait pancake will swim!
- His sisters not wanting to wait any longer through fear – jumped in the pond and rescued pancake – sure that he had drowned.
- Pancake sat in their hand for the longest time – Josh's sisters “look you killed pancake”.
- Then he slowly blinked an eye – then they knew he was ok.

They had lost all hope that day – thinking that pancake wouldn't be returned to them alive.

The story shared as a way of understanding how a lot of times we look at hope in this world.

- Josh had hoped that pancake would prove him right!
- His sisters had hoped that the waters hadn't killed pancake.
- There was a hope involved.

Our hope typically expresses an uncertainty!

- A negative sense in how we use hope.

Us – “I hope my family will arrive safely”.

- That means that there is a chance that they may not arrive safely.

Not saying with confidence – but that my desire is – that they would arrive safely.

In the book of Luke, we are looking at a couple who had hope in the midst of hopelessness.

- Luke a detailed account – as he was a doctor – of the things that we hold true – The gospel of Jesus Christ.

He centres on this – That the Messiah came to provide salvation.

- Messiah and Salvation mentioned in the book of Luke than in any of the other 3 gospels combined.

Referencing the book of Acts that Luke wrote – the second part to it – because he wanted to show that the gospel and salvation wasn't just for the Jews, but that they were for the world.

- Showing the progression of gospel spreading throughout the known world.

The bible says this in the book of Isaiah...

Romans 15:12 Christian Standard Bible

¹² And again, Isaiah says,

**The root of Jesse will appear,
the one who rises to rule the Gentiles;
the Gentiles will hope in him.**^[a]

Luke starts with Zacharia and his wife Elizabeth, rather than with Jesus.

Luke 1:5-11
Christian Standard Bible

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⁸ When his division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, ⁹ it happened that he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ At the hour of incense the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. ¹¹ An angel of the Lord appeared to him,

Dark days of Israel – giving a couple of details.

- A righteous God-fearing couple.
- They lived during the days of Herod.
- He served with the priests.
- They were childless.

Isaiah 9:2 Christian Standard Bible

²The people walking in darkness

have seen a great light;

a light has dawned

on those living in the land of darkness.

- Dark days nationally.
- Hope seemed dark.
- Israel due to their sin were slaves to Rome.

Israel had not had a prophet for 400 years – called the silent years.

- Before the times of John the Baptist and the last prophet in the Old Testament.

Canada is 150 – can you imagine for 400 years God had not spoken to them.

- Nationally hope seemed dead.
- Spiritually hope seemed dead.

The couple we see were both descendants from priestly lines.

- He was still a priest that served.

The state of the priesthood was down to being politician in our day and age.

- Whoever had the most influence – the most money.
- Not about who was the most godly – and who should be in power.
- It was who could manipulate the office to do what they wanted to do and to get rich.

The priests that stayed faithful to their calling were few in number.

- The priesthood not standing for what it used to be.

- Not following the role of being humble servants before God and serving the people.

Hope seemed dead personally.

Elizabeth speaks in verse 25 of the disgrace she felt being barren.

- In the nation of Israel, they said of being barren – that you were either sinful or God was judging you for some reason.

Both of them past the window of age for pregnancy and looking like there be nobody for them to care for, or to care for them, which was really important in their day as they got older.

They look around and say, “Where are you God, what is going on”?

Interestingly Zacharia’s name means this – Yahweh or Jehovah remembers.

There may have been times in his life when he said “God, have you forgotten me, do you remember me”?

- They could have grown old and bitter.

But instead, this isn’t what we find as we enter this passage.

Point #1 – Hope (Biblical Hope) Holds on When the Answer Isn’t in Sight.

- Scripture is clear that just because you have hope – you never doubt – like Peter, get discouraged like Elijah, or deny God like Peter did, or even demand like James and John.

But biblical hope in the bible will bring you through.

Hebrews 6:11-12 Christian Standard Bible

¹¹ Now we desire each of you to demonstrate the same diligence for the full assurance of your hope until the end, ¹² so that you won’t become lazy but will be imitators of those who inherit the promises through faith and perseverance.

- With biblical hope, faith is tied right into it.

You can't have biblical hope without having faith.

Without say... "I believe in God; I am confident in God".

Hebrews 10:35-38 Christian Standard Bible

³⁵ So don't throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶ For you need endurance, so that after you have done God's will, you may receive what was promised.

³⁷ For yet in a **very little while,**
the Coming One will come and not delay.

³⁸ **But my righteous one^[a] will live by faith;**

- God is saying right now you are in the moment where you are living by faith.
- You don't see it be sight, but you say, "I believe it and I know it will come one day".

Couple of characteristics of faith from Zacharias life.

1. Faith holds on when righteousness goes seemingly unregarded – seemingly meaning looking from our point of view.

Saying – "God I have done all these righteous things that you ask, where are the things that you promise me"?

- Where are my hopes – why is it not working for me? – you let my hope die!

Some people walking away from the faith saying...

"God, we had deal".

But with God it's not about a deal – that is religion.

- Religion says – God I am doing this and now you owe me.

The gospel says – I am doing this because you blessed me – to have been gracious to me – I want to honor and serve you.

But Faith holds on when righteousness goes seemingly unrewarded.

- The bible says that year after year this couple lived righteously, they served God and prayed faithfully to Him.

Job says this – “Though he slay me I am still going to trust God”.

2. Faith holds on when faithfulness goes on seemingly unrewarded.

Zacharia is still faithfully serving as a priest – he didn’t say “I quite – what can I accomplish – the priesthood and society are a mess; our family hasn’t materialised that we were planning.

- He is still faithful.

In Romans 8:18 Paul says...

From Groans to Glory

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us.

- Biblical hope says... One day I will see it.

Hebrews 11:13 Christian Standard Bible

¹³ These all died in faith, although they had not received the things that were promised. But they saw them from a distance, greeted them, and confessed that they were foreigners and temporary residents on the earth.

- They knew what was ahead, that God was a head, but they didn't see it.
- But they continued on faithfully.

We all like the first part of Hebrews, but then we read this...

Hebrews 11:35-40 Christian Standard Bible

³⁵ Women received their dead, raised to life again. Other people were tortured, not accepting release, so that they might gain a better resurrection. ³⁶ Others experienced mockings and scourgings, as well as bonds and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned,^[a] they were sawed in two, they died by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and mistreated. ³⁸ The world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and on mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground.

³⁹ All these were approved through their faith, but they did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰ since God had provided something better for us, so that they would not be made perfect without us.

Question – What is going on here?

- They were faithful to death, faithful to all these things – but they didn't receive the promise!

⁴⁰ since God had provided something better for us, so that they would not be made perfect without us.

- If God had of brought the kingdom in for them at that point – we would not have been a part of it.
- Because we are arriving on the scene later.

God is saying... *“This did not happen in their lifetime, because I wanted the members of Truelife church to be a part of it to”.*

Question – Why is he not coming by this date?

- Our response is – even so come Lord Jesus come!

God isn't slack as so men would count slackness, according to His promises.

Because God is long suffering, not willing that any should perish, but all come to repentance.

- He isn't slacking – he isn't delaying.

Faith Holds on When Time Goes on Unrelenting

- This is one of the hardest things – Letting God be God.

We say things like – God is sovereign over all things, including ourselves, that He is eternally wise.

Sometimes we struggle to submit to God or trust His ways!

Example given of going on a trip with kids.

The kids are like – How long is this going to be?

When are we going to arrive?

We may say in 3 or 4 hours – forty-five minutes what do we hear?

“Are we there yet”!

By hour 3 – we are saying “we will get there when we get there”!

- We are impatient with God but...

Faith Holds on When Time Goes on Unrelenting.

Secondly – Hope Rests in The Character of God.

¹² When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified and overcome with fear. ¹³ But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard.

- Don’t worry about it – your prayer has been heard – because you have been praying to God.

Was he praying the words of Jeremiah?

[Jeremiah 33:15 Christian Standard Bible](#)

¹⁵ In those days and at that time

I will cause a Righteous Branch

to sprout up for David, (this is Jesus – he is saying don’t worry about it, my promise will happen)

and he will administer justice

and righteousness in the land.

- Jeremiah was in prison in a courtyard – shackled in chains.
- The Lord came to Jeremiah a second time – saying “I am going to fulfill my promise in my time”.

God starts this with...

[Jeremiah 33:2-3 Christian Standard Bible](#)

² “The LORD who made the earth,^[a] the LORD who forms it to establish it, the LORD is his name, says this:

- Hope rests based on the character of God.

³ Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and incomprehensible things you do not know. – God says call unto me and I will let you know.

- This was probably in the mind of Zacharia – he knew the scriptures.
- Saying “I have been calling out to you for decades now God – when will your answer come.”

Then all of a sudden, the angel shows up and says, “God remembers – you can trust God – you can rest upon God – God has heard you and has an answer for you”.

This is why we as a church can have a confident hope today – because it rests on the character of God.

- God heard his prayer that had been prayed for 50 years, God heard the prayers of the faithful that had been prayed for hundreds of years.
- But God acted in his own time frame.

The bible says, “At the perfect fulness of time God sent forth the son born of woman to be able to rescue us”.

- When we wait and wait and wonder if anything has happened, rest assured that God is doing His work – because it is guaranteed by His character.

Watoto song – words – Give me faith to see you working, hope will hold my soul in the trials.

- We are believed God basing it on what He has said, on His character.
- This is our confidence and our hope.

Allow God to Shape Our Hope.

Luke 1:13b-16

Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. ¹⁴ There will be joy and delight for you, and many will rejoice at his birth. ¹⁵ For he will be great in the sight of the Lord and will never drink wine or beer. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother's womb. ¹⁶ He will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.

We don't know what Zacharia and Elizabeth had in mind when they first got married?

- Thinking about kids?

They were not thinking of this!

- Because if you were born into the priestly line what would your children be?

Priests or serving in the temple.

- This would probably have been His expectation.

God had a different plan! God is going to enable them to have a child at an elderly age – name him John – but he isn't going to be a priest!

But it is going to be some more incredible in the ministry than that, because he is going to be the one that turns Israel back to God.

- He is going to be the forerunner.
- He is going to be the announcer for the Messiah – the hope for the nation.

This is great news, although different news!

Let the word of God shape your hope.

That is why so many people didn't receive Jesus – because they were expecting a King that would come and crush Rome – establish righteousness for ever.

- They didn't want a suffering Messiah!
- But they needed a suffering Messiah – that is why Jesus kept saying to the disciples – “I am going to die, be buried and rise again, as the scriptures says”.

If when Jesus came the first to establish a kingdom – none of us would have been a part of it – because of our sin problem.

- The bible says – There will be no one that speaks a lie – there will be no one with sin in that kingdom.
- It was imperative the first time Jesus came that he came to be the suffering saviour.

But it was much different than what people were hoping for and so they rejected the hope of Jesus.

- We need to allow God to shape our hope.

Hope Has an Impact on Those Around You.

What did the angel say – “Zacharia because you have put your hope in God, because you have been faithfully praying and serving – saying I am going to trust Him, I am going to put my confidence in Him – you are going to bear a son – raise a son – that will have an impact on the whole society of Israel”.

We also know that as a forerunner for Jesus Christ he had an impact on the whole world.

“Zacharia – God is going to use you and your wife – to be a part of an incredible story of revival and renewal in Israel”.

Question Josh was asked a few days ago.

- What is your greatest fear?

His answer was this – *“That I will be successful in my life with things that really don’t matter”*.

- An illusion of success in his life – but it will be things that really don’t matter – all things that disappear once this world is over, and the eternal kingdom comes in.

Our hope as we placed our hope in God, is that we will be engaged in things that really matter.

Things that matter.

- What does the bible say? – What does it prophesied a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul.

You Cannot Have Hope Unless You Have Christ.

[Romans 5:5 Christian Standard Bible](#)

⁵ This hope will not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

- This is a secure because...

[Romans 5 Christian Standard Bible](#)

[Faith Triumphs](#)

⁵ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace^[a] with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Because he is in the centre of God’s grace.
- He knows that God is going to fulfill His work in him.

If Christ is our hope – the hope of our life – then first of all we need to love it out.

What do we find Zacharia doing in the advanced years of life?

- He was committed to praying.
- Everyone was in the courtyard praying.
- He was in the temple making the offering, praying for Israel.

This is why the angel said – Your prayer has been heard.

- He was serving.

If we have hope, these are two things that will define our hope.

- That we will be found praying.
- That we will be found serving.

Words of a great prayer warrior. Quote.

“Expect great things from God and attempt great things for God”.

If we are a church that has hope – prayer will be a priority for us.

- Because God has chosen to work through prayer.
- We live it out.

Secondly – Borrowing from our giving initiative – We Are Going to Launch Out.

We really believe that God is setting some tremendous opportunities before us and in front of our church.

We believe that God has given us an open door, we could say no we are going to stay tight and safe, that things are not looking good right now in the political situation for churches!

- But no, we are saying God has given us an open door lets walk through it.

Thirdly - Speak Out.

More and more what defines our young people is hopelessness.

So much anxiety and depression that medication is being sort for.

- Because they don't know the hope that is found in Jesus Christ.

We have that treasure – to be able to share it with the world.

1 Peter 3:15 Christian Standard Bible

¹⁵ but in your hearts regard^[a] Christ^[b] the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

- Because we live differently.
- Because we are hanging on even when we don't see the answer.
- Saying – “I believe it because it rests and trusts in the promises of God”.
- People asking – “What is different about you”?

It's because of Jesus.

We have hope – that Hope isn't for us – it is for the country of Uganda, and it is for the world.

Question – Will we live out and speak out that hope to the world.

