

Trinity Baptist Church
Sunday 24 January 2021
David Linley speaking on – The God of Hope

Reading: Psalm 42:1-5(NLT)

¹ As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.
² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?
³ My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”

And as we come to verse 4 we'll see that it highlights some of the things that we've been missing so much during this pandemic.

⁴ These things I remember
as I pour out my soul:
how I used to go to the house of God
under the protection of the Mighty One^[d]
with shouts of joy and praise
among the festive throng.
⁵ Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Saviour and my God.

The God of Hope

As I thought about what to speak on today, I gradually came around to the view that I should take a short look at the subject of hope, real hope. In these unusual and trying times it seems that it's something that we all need more than ever.

I suppose this point in the sermon would be where I should really break off to remind us all how difficult things are – a bit like one of the several news channels that seem to be in daily competition with one another to try to come up with the most alarming statistic or the most distressing news item. But I think that after over ten months we will know our current situation all too well.

But even if we put the present situation aside, it's also a sad fact that whether there is a pandemic or not, many people come to the point in their lives where they would say that they have lost hope. It may be through bereavement, disappointment, ill health or job loss etc, life for them has just not gone the way they expected – and, to be honest, they can't see any real chance of things ever changing.

Then there are others, whose compass always seems to lead them to the downside of life again and again and again. They just don't seem to be able to help it.

I wonder, are you a pessimist or an optimist?
Do you see your half-filled cup as always half empty or is it half full?

Well, if you're someone who is today trusting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, let me tell you that you have great reason to be optimistic.

If you're not, things are not looking so good for you! But that can all change today . . .

So then, what is Hope? There are two kinds:

1. The secular/worldly view of 'hope' is simply that it's something that you 'wish' for. Something that you really want to happen, but that is anything but certain!

Worldly 'hope' is actually no real hope at all.

2. Christian 'hope' is far, far different.

Let me give you an example of this, using a very personal reflection on my parents' Christian experience.

They were both good moral people. They lived good lives and were really good parents. And I loved them both dearly.

- My father became a soldier in his late teens and stayed on into his mid-twenties. He was taken along to church as a child and continued attending when he was in the army. He didn't really go to church after that, apart from weddings and funerals, but I remember him often singing along with the hymns on the radio Sunday by Sunday, but that seemed to be as far as he went spiritually.
- I must say though that my father was always very supportive of my decision to leave a promising management career within the motor industry to become a missionary, although he didn't really understand it.
- Dad was the sort of person who would easily get into conversation with strangers. Like he'd sit on a park bench and just start chatting.
- He'd often return home to tell mum of how he'd shared with a total stranger somewhere, about how his son was leaving a good job to join the London City Mission, only to find that they were Christians who were delighted with the idea.
- He died in 1974 after quite a lingering illness and did soften spiritually towards the Gospel over time. He and Mum even started reading the bible together. But, I just don't know if he purposefully trusted in Jesus as his Saviour before he died.
- My mother as a child would go along to the local tin hut church which was run by the Salvation Army and used to tell me that she always believed in God. Like Dad she never went to church as an adult and she never had responded to the Gospel.
- After Anne and I became Christians we would try to talk to my Mum and Dad but neither were receptive in any way.
- Sometime after my father died, Mum moved down to London and lived just down the road from us in King's Cross. She started to come along to the Sunday Services and Ladies Meetings at our Centre.
- When I visited her one day, she told me how my daughter Suzi (who was about five at the time) had given her a Gospel leaflet when she was at church. It was Suzi's favourite pastime at the end of each service to take leaflets off the table by the entrance and give them, with a smile, to any who would take one. Well Mum told me that she had read the leaflet and then prayed the suggested prayer, committing her life to Jesus.
- She said that she had felt different since and from that time on Mum began to grow spiritually.

Now, if you were to ask me if I hoped to see my Mum and Dad again in heaven one day, I would say ‘yes’ about them both but would mean that word ‘Hope’ in a very different way for each of them.

For my Dad I would mean ‘Hope’ as a wish in a worldly way – something that I really want to be true, but it may not be.

But for my Mum I would mean ‘Hope’ in the very definite and positive Christian way.

I could say that I know for sure because she told me but that’s not the only reason as we’ll see in a moment.

Just as an aside for a moment – let me tell you about Leroy.

He worked as a Railman at Euston Station when I was there as the Chaplain.

I went to see him in hospital when he was quite poorly with heart problems.

His wife was also there and was very worried about him, not just because of his illness but mainly because he did not share her Christian faith.

She said to me ‘Padre, can you have a word with him. He’s really ill and I want him to know about Jesus’.

I assured her that I would try and went into the ward to see him.

As time went by, I gradually turned the conversation to questions of faith and assurance and to my surprise and delight Leroy said that his wife had been talking to him about it and he had asked Jesus to be his Saviour the previous week. You can imagine the joy and relief when I returned to tell her!

NOW I HAVE A CHALLENGE FOR SOMEONE LISTENING TO ME TODAY

If you are someone who has the assurance that you’re going to heaven, do other people know that you are?

If not, can I challenge you to start telling your Christian friends at your earliest opportunity. (And not just your Christian friends, but everybody!)

I can assure you that you’ll be so glad that you did.

So how can you have any real hope in life?

And just why is it so different for a Christian whose hope is in God?

1. GOD IS THE GOD OF 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.” Romans 15:13 (NIV)*

Our God is the God of Hope.

Hope originated from Him.

It brings joy and peace as we trust in Him and in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ who freely gave His life for us at Easter, by dying for us upon the cross, and then being gloriously raised from the dead, on Easter Sunday.

2. HE HAS GREAT PLANS FOR YOU

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah 29:11 (NLT)

These are plans for our future life here on earth. Plans that are yet to be revealed.

They are also plans for our eternity.

"If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied."

"But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead."

1 Corinthians 15:19 and 20 (NLT)

3. COMMIT YOUR LIFE TO HIM AND SEE WHAT HE WILL DO

Submitting to God also means becoming aware of His plans for you.

An amazing thing is that when you look back over your past life in years to come, you'll often find that God was preparing you for your new life before you ever thought of Him.

And for we who already believe and have been looking to God for something that he has promised – we should know to wait patiently.

"But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently." Romans 8:25 (NIVUK)

"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." Romans 12:12 (NIVUK)

More than anything else, God wants us

- to know Him
- to love Him
- to serve Him
- and to follow Him

And He wants us to do that in a way that truly glorifies Him – in every difficulty, every trial and every joy.

And if this is new to you, or you've not yet done so, you can start your journey with God today.

I'm going to lead in praying the prayer on the screen. You can follow and make it your own.

Prayer

O Lord God Almighty

Thank you that you truly are the God of hope.

Fill us with hope today, whatever our circumstances.

I thank you that Jesus Christ, with His death upon the cross and His resurrection has opened the way to life for me.

O Lord, I am willing to commit my life to you today.

Help me to live for you and walk in all your ways from this day forward.

Help me to miss nothing of your good and perfect will for my life.

In Jesus' name

Amen.

If you prayed the prayer, please get in touch and let us know. We would be so glad to hear from you.