



Where can we find hope in our world that is currently ravaged by the Covid-19 pandemic? Many countries are in lock down, and those that have loosened their restrictions do so with trepidation, fearing the dreaded second wave of the virus. Many have lost their lives to the virus, and many more will be impacted by the economic and financial fallout from this pandemic. How can we have hope in such dire and trying times? Where can we find hope today?

We are starting a new sermon series on this topic called “Unearthing Hope”. The title of the series is a play on words. First, we want to dig and “unearth” hope in the Scriptures, with all its fullness and splendour. Secondly, as followers of Christ, we realise that our ultimate hope is not grounded upon anything on this “earth”, and any hope that we have needs to be untethered and “unearthed” from the things of our world.

In the coming weeks, as we are able to gather again with our small group, let us come together to unearth our hope in the Scriptures. Even for those of us who have studied the Scriptures for decades, there is still more richness to be mined from God’s word to refresh, encourage, and lift our souls. Let us do that together, and help one another to lift our eyes away from the things of the earth, and focus on the source and author of our hope – Jesus Christ our Lord.

Launch

- 1) As the world goes through an upheaval because of the pandemic, what has it exposed about where people (or yourself) put all their hopes and security in?

UNEARTHING HOPE

Read Romans 8:18-28

- 2) What two situations is Paul comparing? (v18)
 - a. What is “the glory that will be revealed in us”? (cf. v23)
- 3) What reason does Paul give for saying that? (v19-20)
- 4) How does Paul describe our current creation in v19-20?
 - a. Who do you think is the one who subjected creation to frustration? (v20)



- 5) What metaphor does Paul use to describe the sufferings of creation? (v23)

- 6) Who are the ones with the firstfruits of the Spirit? (v23)
 - a. What do you think that means?

 - b. If we have the firstfruits, what then do you think the completed work of the Spirit will look like? (cf. v23)

 - c. What does it indicate about our identity and status in Christ if creation itself “waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed”?

- 7) What hope is Paul referring to in v24? (cf. v21)
 - a. What is the nature of this hope according to Paul? (v24-25)

- 8) What do we do with this hope? (v25)

- 9) What do we know as followers of Christ? (v28)
 - a. Why and how do we know that? (v26-27)

- 10) How can we wait patiently and eagerly for something that we do not have? (v26, 28)
 - a. How can we help each other to grow in our patient waiting? (cf. v26)



- 11) What are some of your present sufferings and what can you do to look to the hope that we have in Christ?

Conclusion

Paul himself lived during a time where he was constantly persecuted for his faith. He suffered for what he preached and what he believed. However, throughout his sufferings, he is always keeping his eye on the hope that he has in Christ. In fact, he compares the glory that will be revealed in us with the suffering that we are going through and concludes that they are not even worth comparing. Our glory will be so much greater than any pain that we will endure here. Even all of creation is eagerly waiting for the realization of our hope – the adoption to our sonship and redemption of our bodies.

It is in this hope that we were saved. This hope is only possible because of the work of Christ on the cross. Romans 8 is the climax of Paul's argument that began all the way from Romans 3:21. We have been justified by faith alone (3:21-29) and we are now adopted as God's children by his Spirit through Christ. We have the firstfruits of the work of the Spirit in us. It is an ongoing work of the Spirit in us now, only to be completed in the future. We may not see or have the consummated hope now, but we know it is certain because of what Christ has done for us. While we wait in our present suffering, we know that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him."

It is because of that hope that we can face this disease-ravaged world. Paul asks this question, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?" The answer? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us! Let us look towards that hope that we have in Christ. Let us wait eagerly, patiently, and faithfully for Christ to return. Let us "unearth" this hope and help one another to do so.