

June 5

“Anchored Hope”

Hebrews 6:16-20a

Today we are beginning a series on Hope. Because our hope is not in ourselves or just wishful thinking, but is anchored in Christ, we are people of hope. God's gift of hope is needed today when so many people feel hopeless. Let's begin with a prayer.

“Jesus, you spoke to storms. Speak to ours. You calmed the apostles. Calm the chaos in us. You told them not to be afraid. Say the same thing to us. Lord, fill us with hope and give us your peace. Amen.”

The Michigan District Convention begins at the end of June with the theme, “*People of Hope: It's Time.*” This theme reflects two realities. First, because God loves us, forgives us, and gives us life, we are people of hope. Our hope is in Jesus Christ. The second is that it is time to tell the world about the hope we have in Christ. People of the world need hope. God's gifts of faith, hope and love last forever. Everyone needs to put their hope in Jesus.

Hopelessness is a reality for many people today. You may be experiencing it yourself.

- Studies show that our nation is facing an epidemic of loneliness that was on the rise before Covid and only made worse by the isolation brought on in response to covid.
- The suicide rate in the U.S. has been steadily increasing since 1999. It is now the second leading cause of death among people 15 to 34. It is estimated that 60% of people who commit suicide are suffering from depression.
- The mass shootings in our country, the war in Ukraine, the political gridlock that prevents our leaders from addressing real issues can be overwhelming.
- The rising costs for gas, food and other necessities can cause problems for people whose financial resources are already stretched too far.

These things can all contribute to feelings of hopelessness.

Hopelessness expresses itself by saying things like, “Things will never get better.” “I will never be happy again.” “Everything is going downhill.” “There is no hope for me.”

We are not the first people to feel hopeless. The prophet Jeremiah wrote Lamentations after the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, and took the brightest and best into captivity. Talk about a reason to feel hopeless. Things got to Jeremiah and he wrote, “**I cry out, “My splendor is gone! Everything I had hoped for from the Lord is lost!” The thought of my suffering and homelessness is bitter beyond words. I will never forget this awful time, as I grieve over my loss.**” (Eccl. 3:18-20) Maybe you feel that way too.

But Jeremiah did not stop there. Even though things were bad, Jeremiah did not lose hope in the Lord. “**Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this: The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning. I say to myself, “The Lord is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!”**” (vss. 21-24)

Did you hear the word “Yet?” With the word “Yet,” the Holy Spirit gave hope to Jeremiah. The Spirit gives hope to you and to me too. We are “Yet” people because of God’s great love and compassion. Jesus’ followers had lost all hope on Good Friday after Jesus’ died and was buried. Yet the women went to the tomb, found the stone rolled away and heard the angel tell them Jesus had risen from the dead, just as He promised.

The book of Hebrews in the New Testament tells us about the hope we have in Christ. **“So, God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us.”** (Hebrews 6:18-19) When God makes a promise, He keeps it. God cannot lie. That means we can hold onto the Hope that God gives us, hope for this life and the hope of eternal life to come.

The world tells us to look inside ourselves for hope. But that doesn’t work. How can I find hope inside when I am broken and hurting? The world tells us that everything has a purpose. But does it? Tell the parents that have lost a child to a crazed gunman. There is no explanation for this evil other than sin. People who think this life is all there is, who believe there is no God and no absolute rights and wrongs can do terrible things that cause other people to suffer.

People also say everything works out for the good. This is a distortion of the promise that God gives to His people. The Apostle Paul tells us, **“We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.”** God can work everything out for our good, for the good of those who believe and trust in Him. Paul didn’t say that everything works out for the good of everybody.

Paul tells us that God always loves us. **“I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love.”** (Romans 8:38) God’s unconditional love makes the difference in our lives. Because God loves us, we can put our hope in Him.

The book of Hebrews continues. **“This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls.”** (vs. 19) When a boat is tied to an anchor, it is secure. A boat that is not anchored can be pushed around by the wind and the waves. Hope that is wishful thinking is no good. We can hope that the Tigers make the playoffs this year, but it is not likely. We need an anchor in the storms of life. Hope in Christ is more than wishful thinking. It is hope anchored to Jesus’ victory over sin and death.

Jesus can give us calm in the storms of life. Jesus tells us that He is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25-26), that He will give us rest when we are tired from trying to carry more than we can handle (Matthew 27:27), and that He will always be with us (Matthew 28:20)

Jesus is our Great High Priest. Hebrews tells us Jesus “**leads us through the curtain into God’s inner sanctuary. Jesus has already gone in there for us.**” (Hebrews 6:19-20) The author is writing about the temple in Jerusalem. The inner room of the temple was called the “Holy of Holies.” It was the place where the Ark of the Covenant was kept, was separated from the rest of the temple by a thick curtain, and was the symbol of God’s presence with His people. Only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies once a year to offer prayers for the nation and a sacrifice for the people of Israel. But this had to be done every year because the sacrifice was only a symbol. Jesus sacrificed His life on the cross once and for all people.

The curtain was torn in two when Jesus died. Hebrews 9:12 tells us that Jesus, “**With his own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever.**” Jesus offered the perfect sacrifice for us. He is our High Priest who intercedes for us.

Because God keeps His promises, we can put our hope in Him. Because of Jesus, we are welcome in the Lord’s presence and can call Him our Father. There is no better place to find hope in the storms of life. When our hope is anchored in Christ, He gives us the peace that world cannot give. He gives us hope that last forever and never disappoints us.