

**SERMON:** FAITH & DOUBT: “Everyone Hopes....”

Rev. Geoff Ross Sunday, March 28, 2021 St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church.

*[As we begin, let me ask you: “What are you hoping for?” What would you say?/answer be? Money/Job/house/car/relationship? Maybe it’s your health/health of someone you love? Whatever it is – I can safely say; you’re not alone: We’re all hoppers! Right from an early age we form ‘hopes’ – something better/bigger/newer:but we outgrow stuff – but nobody outgrows hope:never too old – we all have needs/wants. So, what are you hoping for?]*

For many, the world is a desperate and despairing place that grinds/crushes/wears down everything; it’s dispassionate: it doesn’t owe us anything/care about us. And, it’s true:with the Fall, this life became a hard-scrabble struggle to exist in a life that consists of mere survival and the insatiable pursuit of pleasures. Without God, the only thing one could hope for was the make it through the day/night, only to wake up tomorrow to do it all over again. But the ‘hoping for’ things – things seen/held/owned – isn’t hope; it is a hope for the wrong thing/things:This is a want calculated by needs. What’s missing in this moment to moment/next moment – COVID-loop/Groundhog Day of despair – is meaning/purpose – transcendent/aspiring hope. This is why God planted a knowledge of eternity in us to act as a guiding beacon/drawing us to Him: maybe my question shouldn’t be “What are you hoping for?” but “What/Who are you hoping **IN**?”

*[2 Hopes: hoping “for” something/“in” someone. Hoping **“for”** something/hoping for a particular outcome. “I hope I get that job/that house/more money.” And, every “thing” we hope for will eventually disappoint us/fade/wear out/fall apart/melt down/disappear: hoping **“for”** is fleeting/internal/temporal/let you down/break your heart. Hoping **“in”** something/someone is different/sustaining/eternal:hoping **“in”** something/someone is about trust/faith – it’s external/bigger than us/eternal.]*

The Old Testament can be understood as a series of exchanges between God and the People of God based on trust/faith and hope – specifically God’s desire that the People of God would place their hope in Him, and not in their hope for God to supply their needs/wants/wishes. These exchanges reveal God’s promises/prophecies that God would bring about their salvation/usher in a new kingdom filled with justice/peace/prosperity – that God would send a ‘servant’/Messiah/anointed ‘king’/priest to restore/redeem the People before God up/into a place prepared for them, where they would be welcomed/loved/healed as the best of themselves. God’s hope was/is for His People to place their hope in Him/His Son/Jesus. This hope is the foundation of faith:without hope, there is no faith. This hope – then/now – is a faith in tomorrow/waiting; it is a belief in a better way/day/time/place. This hope is about where we entrust/place our heart.

*[Hope:1 of the 3 main defining elements of Christian theology/faith/practice/character – **faith/love/hope**:each can describe the essence of Christianity. Christ is the “object” of hope who’s coming fulfills the promises of God/hope of redemption/restoration of God’s kingdom. Christian “Hope” is “lively”/a living hope – not perishable/eternal; that is “set before us” as the object/goal/focus of our faith (Rom 12:12) “In/on” Christ we have the source/foundation of our hope/based on God.]*

As Regan said: Today we're celebrating Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. But Regan's question – 'why was it (His riding into Jerusalem from the east, upon a colt/donkey) so special/important?' – reminds us of the hunger/desire/desperation of the People for hope! The Zechariah reading details how the "king" will arrive: "triumphant/victorious" like a conquering warrior/king, yet "humble/riding on a colt/foal of a donkey". His arrival will fulfill God's "Covenant" with the People/prisoners will go free/the hungry will be fed/the defeated will be restored – and the conquerors, vanquished: bringing about the restoration of the kingdom of Israel AND the coming in of the new kingdom/order – one in which God's justice would reign. This is why the people along the 'parade' route were so happy/excited and singing "Hosanna"/"Save us" – and explains why the Pharisees were so afraid!

*[“**Hope**” is not a **wish**: Definition: “an invocation/recitation of a desire/expression/a want....” Wish/its strength is the strength of the person's desire. Bible “**Hope**”/Definition: “expectation/trust for a certain thing to happen/may help/save someone.” Hope/is the confident expectation of what God has promised: strength is in His faithfulness. Hope=Grace: Grace Guy! Glass-is-always-more-than-half-full! Hope is what gets me up in morning/grace helps me sleep.]*

On that day, I think – like it would be today – there were those who believed in Jesus as the coming 'king' promised by God, in/through Zechariah; and it's likely that there were many more who wished that maybe/possibly, this man could overthrow the Romans and restore Israel's fortunes – or didn't even care/doesn't matter – the more important question is: what about you? In/on what/who are you placing your hope? I know, it's still hope – not proof; but hope is the spring that launches the leap of faith! But, as we've heard, faith is not observed evidence/it's choosing to believe/trust in God's promises – it takes total commitment to trust in the hope that we have. God knows our fears/doubts – but that's okay; because to God, it doesn't matter how much faith/hope you have; everybody hopes: it matters what/who you put your hope in. Amen.