

SERMON: "HOPE: A Future Hope"

Rev. Geoff Ross, Sunday, June 27, 2021, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Throughout history, humanity has wrestled with the twin forces of doubt/despondency: regardless of whether the discouragement was from within/without both cripple and erode our sense of self/our ability to hope/be hopeful, leaving us disturbed/anxious about the future/what's ahead/facing us/me/you. It doesn't take a long look around to feel that things are bleak/worse/darker than "they used to be." [FYI: "used to be" wasn't any better!] To counter these 'forces' many have looked to 'better times,' others long for an idealized vision of a utopian world apart from the darkness of the world. either way – this looking back/past or forward/future doesn't satisfy our need for hope; a need we fill with false idols/gods/hope.

[Week 1: Paul/Romans – suffering-endurance-character=hope/that doesn't disappoint – because it did not disappoint! W2: We heard how "the steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.... (and, because of God's past faithfulness): "therefore I will hope in him." (Lam 3:22-24) "Will"/future! W3: Then: Paul: wrote of having received/having "this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that" goes before us and intercedes/advocate for us. **HOPE:Future** = forward tense! To emphasize this: Birth imagery/metaphor.]

Just as I did two weeks ago, I would like to clear up another common misconception. Paul writes about the resurrection as having happened(historically), but it's not a one-and-done; its full effect is a future-deferred/longed/hoped for event that will set creation free. The fact that it happened saved us – but it saved us to the future glory of the fulfillment of God's saving plan for us. Timothy Keller, in his book "Hope in Time of Fear" makes it clear that the resurrection not only displayed God's power – but, rather than a one-off/suspension of the 'rules'/natural order, it was really God's unilateral act toward beginning the restoration of our fallen world/our fallen nature. What this means is that by the resurrection, Jesus inaugurated/initiated/introduced the coming of God's kingdom/the fulfillment of God's promises to restore/heal all of creation. In the resurrection we have a hope of/for/from the future: because God rose Jesus from the dead – after/after He took on our sins – we have the promise/pledge/guarantee that, through Jesus, we, too, will be resurrected.

[This 'here-but-not -yet' message/confusing. Jesus claimed to usher in the kingdom of God/He also made clear that its full coming was yet to come. (LP: "thy kingdom come") BUT Rather than being a contradictory, Jesus' incarnation (birth/to be God-with us) – after His death/resurrection – was seen by His disciples/Paul in terms of the promise/pledge of the offering practice of "first-fruits"]

When Paul talks about Jesus as the "first born"(reading)/"first fruits"(1 Cor 15:20) he's referring to the Old Testament usage of the term in which the first/best 'fruits' of the harvest/work were to be offered in thanksgiving – not just as a gift to God, but also as a "pledge" to give to give God the rest. When this "pledge"/promise – "assurance" – is used in connection to Jesus it means "that the resurrection of Jesus not only points to our future resurrection; it guarantees it!" (TK p.31) In other words: Jesus was God's 'first fruit' offering to us; that, by offering us His Son, God is showing to us His commitment to fulfilling His plan for our salvation and the renewal of God's creation. And, this is what Paul wants us to know/believe/hope in: that the promise of our salvation has come/IS ours NOW – but that it is also a future promise/pledge of even more/a

better/restored/redeemed/resurrected recreated/life – the way it once was/God planned it to be – that WILL BE!

[Repeat: “Hope” is not wishful thinking; “Hope” – especially Biblical/Christian/our “Hope” (“Elpida”/Greek) – is something else/different. The “Hope” of the Gospel/our faith is a “profound certainty”, a “fact that is true/going to happen”, that we can “trust in/know/count on.” (Greek: “elpis”)]

This is what the resurrection has done/will do for us: it has given/gives us hope! The Good News/Gospel is not only that Jesus’ resurrection, on our behalf, HAPPENED, it’s that because it/His happened, ours will too! This/our hope – our help in ages past/the foundation of our lives/what keeps us going/the antidote to sin/dispels the darkness of death – is in the knowledge/certainty that because He came, He will come again to bring about/usher in what we/all of creation have been longing/“groaning”/hoping for; *“the redemption of our bodies.”* “Called/predestined/foreknown” we will be *“conformed to the image of His Son”*/made new into the image of Jesus we will be set free from doubt/despair/even death. Friends, this is not just idle hope/wishful thinking; this is our certain – and future hope! Amen.