

The Hope Shaped Life

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[0 : 00] Father, we thank you that we can be in this place, a warm enough place and a dry place, after a wet couple of days and a cold sort of morning. Thank you that we can be here.

Father, more than the place, we give you thanks and praise that we can be together to be here in the name of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit to be in your presence.

And we ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would move mightily in our hearts, that your Holy Spirit would be poured out into our hearts to prepare our hearts and set our hearts to know that we are in your presence, to be receptive to the grace that you desire to give us this morning and to respond to you in a worthy manner.

We ask, Father, that as part of your grace that you help us to fall in love with the Christian vision of life and more and more and more to live out of that vision of what life really is.

And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. So those of you who've gone along with us, we're finishing 2 Timothy today.

[1 : 10] We're going to be looking at chapter 4. Just a bit of a heads up that starting next Sunday, we begin a brand new sermon series. And with a nod to Kanye West, the sermon series is going to be called Jesus is King.

And with a bit of a break in the latter half of December and the first Sunday of January for seasonal types of sermons, we'll start this.

And on Palm Sunday, we'll conclude the first half of Mark's Gospel by Jesus' prophecy. The turning point in all of the Gospels is when Jesus reveals for the first time explicitly that he's going to be crucified, he's going to be dead for three days, and then he's going to rise from the dead.

And that prophecy of Jesus that he makes is the turning point in all of the Gospels. And sort of the first half will go right up to that. That's on Palm Sunday. And then we'll finish the rest of Mark, I don't know, some other time later on, 22.

Unless Jesus comes back first, which would be a vastly better outcome. But if he doesn't, we'll keep working through. We'll do the second half of Mark, which then the second half of Mark will be called Jesus the Crucified King.

[2 : 23] Jesus is the Crucified King. So that's going to be the title. So we're going to... You know, you're never supposed to begin a sermon by talking about boring stuff like that.

There's a Christian vision to life that is completely and utterly transformative.

And often people don't realize we get it in bits and pieces. We get it through stories. We get it through the scripture text. We get it through songs. But there's this very, very deep Christian vision that's transformative of life.

And it's shown up here in a very, very simple and unique way. Actually, the doorway into this Christian vision. And once you understand the Christian vision, the other things in the text, which seem very odd, become clearer to you.

And it's partially caught up by a Jewish expression. I don't know how many of you have had the privilege of being able to go to Israel. I know some of you have. If you ever go to Israel, I highly, highly, highly, highly, highly recommend that you do two things.

[3 : 32] First is that you don't just go to Jerusalem and some of the tourist sites, but you also go to Tel Aviv. Because, in a sense, Tel Aviv is the real Israel. If you go to Jerusalem, that's where all of the Orthodox Jews live.

Obviously, non-Orthodox Jews live there as well. But it's very striking. You go to Jerusalem, and everybody, no matter how hot it is, is dressed quite modestly.

And you don't see anybody with tattoos. Or you see very, very few people with tattoos. Because in the Old Testament law, tattoos are forbidden. You go to Tel Aviv. And it's sort of like being in

Montreal or Toronto or New York, but it's only on the Mediterranean.

Piles and piles and piles and piles of people have tattoos. And they don't dress modestly. I mean, many of them do, but lots of them don't. And you really get, in a sense, the sense of what current Israel is like far more if you go to Tel Aviv.

But even more important than all of that, if you only have time just to go to Jerusalem and see a few other things, like the Sea of Galilee, it's really important to take a couple of hours out of your day, and you go to see Yad Vashem.

[4 : 41] And I apologize to my Jewish friends if I'm not pronouncing these words correctly. Yad Vashem. It's really important. It's known as the Holocaust or the Shoah Museum. And it's worth setting aside about three hours in your day to go there and to go through it.

It's profoundly, profoundly moving. And for people like us in the First World, given that, like, Germany was the elite country in terms of culture, and yet they were able to go and do something so horrific, it is really important to take time to go see it.

Now, one of the things that people don't always know is that I think often in this side of the Atlantic, people tend to refer to it as the Holocaust Museum. And the word Holocaust has two meanings in English.

One of them is a Holocaust is a mass killing, like a killing of many, many, many people. But the other sense, the original sense, is actually that it's a sacrifice. It comes from the Tanakh.

It comes from the Old Testament. It's a type of a sacrifice which is made on the altar, where the sacrifice is completely consumed by fire. And so as part of the sacrificial system, it's partly how people are reconnected to God, how they're made right with God.

[5 : 55] And that's the sense, the original sense of Holocaust, that it's a sacrifice. And sacrifices aren't pointless deaths. They have meaning and significance. But in fact, at a national level, when they remember what happened to the Jewish people under the Nazis, it's not referred to primarily as the Holocaust.

It's referred to as the Shoah. Once again, my apologies to my Jewish friends if I'm not pronouncing this correctly. And the Shoah is a very, very radically different word. Shoah means catastrophe. It means disaster. And there is a huge world of difference between understanding something like this as a sacrifice or as a catastrophe and a disaster.

The official day in Israel is marked as a national sort of day of remembrance and prayer and all. And it's actually called specifically the Shoah. That's the day that it's called. That's what it was set aside as by the Israeli parliament. And that's a very, very different...

[7 : 05] You can just automatically understand. It's a very, very... It's like to go on the direction... I love this analogy. And some of you have heard it so many times it puts you to sleep.

But if you go on the Trans-Canada Highway and you're driving west, I can't remember where it is. I think it's somewhere just past North Bay. There's a sign on the side of the road saying that you've hit the watershed.

And that up until this point on the road, if you're going from Ottawa towards North Bay, up until this point in time on the road, the water, any river that you see is flowing south. But after this point in time, when you see a river, it's flowing north to the Hudson's Bay.

It's a watershed going in radically different directions. And the same it is. To understand an event as a catastrophe is a radically different way to understand the event and life than to understand it as a sacrifice.

And it's this bit of a difference which is captured in this text, believe it or not. And if you see the difference, it helps to make everything else in the whole letter. And in fact, it's a doorway into starting to understand the difference the Christian vision makes as it captures you and as you surrender to it.

[8 : 17] So if you would turn your Bibles to 2 Timothy 4, verse 6. We're going to look at this, and then we'll go back and we'll read the whole chapter. 2 Timothy 4, verses 6 and 7.

And it's just a small little bit, but it actually opens up into this. It's a watershed moment in the text. It's the watershed between a Christian vision of life and a Canadian vision of life.

And it goes like this. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. And just to sort of pause here.

I've said throughout these sermons that Paul knows that this time, God is not going to miraculously deliver him from jail. That this time, when he leaves the jail, it's only to take that short walk to where

the executioner will kill him.

And this is the heart of the text that Paul understands this, as well as the final bits at the end of 2 Timothy 4. The word for departure is a perfectly good word, but in the original language, there's an image attached to it.

[9 : 25] And for those of you who are boaters or canoers or sailors, it's when the image is of untying the ship or untying the canoe from the dock to begin the journey, to leave the solid land to go on a journey.

And so that's what Paul is saying. My time, in a sense, to be untethered from this world is about to come. I'll read it again. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.

It's arrived. He doesn't know if it's going to be next week, next month, a couple of months later, but it's arrived. Verse 7. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race.

I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness. Oh, that might not be on your text up there. I'm sorry. Henceforth, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Now, this particular thing in verse 6, for I am already being poured out as a drink offering, that is literally a reference to the Old Testament sacrifices.

[10 : 39] And he's comparing the end of his life as being the same as a sacrifice. And in fact, in the original language, you can see this here in English as well.

It's partially captured it. It's passive language. It's not that he has made his life a sacrifice for God, as if he could just sort of determine that.

I'm going to make my life a sacrifice for God. No, what the language is passive is God has made his life a sacrifice, an offering to himself.

It's passive language. And so what Paul is understanding is that here he is. He's in jail. He's in a dungeon. He's going to be executed.

But the way that Timothy is to understand this is in keeping with the Christian vision. His death isn't a catastrophe. His death is not a disaster. His death is to be understood as a holocaust, as a sacrifice, as an offering, given by God, made by God.

[11 : 48] It's something that God has done in his life. It's taken the bits and pieces of Paul's life.

And this is a very, very, very important thing for all of us to understand, especially those of us who know a little bit about Paul.

You see, I'm going to talk in a moment about hope, but this is really, if I put you to sleep for the rest of the sermon, this is something which is really important to understand, that when God takes you, when the triune God takes you, when Jesus takes you, and he takes your life, and your life can start to become a sacrifice, in a sense, that your life now has a type of a meaning that comes from God, it takes all of your life and redeems it, both before your conversion and after.

You see, the thing about Paul is that Paul was complicit in the murder of Christians. Paul was complicit in the murder of Christians.

And Paul was a persecutor and a tormentor. And yet the final word about Paul isn't that he's a persecutor and a tormentor, but this is the final word about Paul.

You see, this is really important for us to understand. Some of you are young, haven't made that many horrendous mistakes yet. Maybe some of you have. Those of us who are a bit older, you know, maybe our kids didn't turn out right.

[13 : 16] Maybe we never were able to have children. Maybe we were never able to marry. Our finances might have not been entirely good. We've had alcohol or drug or gambling issues in our lives.

There's lots of things about our life which we aren't particularly proud about. But the point of this, you see, is that when God takes your life, when you get taken up, in a sense, into Christ's sacrifice, and when you get, in a sense, Christ takes a hold of you, that not only are those things in the past that you've done that are wrong or the things that are shameful, are they dealt with by Jesus on the cross, it means that whether or not you have a week left or a month left or a year left or five years left in your life, that because God is making your life a sacrifice, there's still things that you can do that can, in a sense, completely redeem and have the final word about your life be a very, very different type of word.

Maybe you've been a racist and you come to faith and you've even been a racist for a while as a Christian and then finally you get convicted of the sin of racism.

Well, then maybe one of the things that God is going to call you to is a deep financial generosity, not only for efforts that try to deal with reconciliation, but also to minister to people of very different color, people that you would have hated before, or to become a very, very important financial contributor to an immigrant church, the same people that you would have hated or despised.

Maybe you've never been blessed and you view it as a deep failure to have been able to have had children or that you've been involved in alcoholism or some other types of things like this.

[15:08] But the fact of the matter is that after your conversion, there's ways that you can be maybe as a mentor, a supporter, a financial giver, pouring your life into children or ministries to children or to teenagers or to university students.

Paul went from being a person who persecuted Christians to being a person, and this is part of God's profound sense of humor, that Paul was the one out of all of the apostles who had the greatest role in bringing the Christian faith to the pagans that he despised before his conversion. And here he is dying in jail. He's about to die and he's in jail. His life has not been a catastrophe. It's not been a disaster. He has been caught up by Christ and his life has meaning.

You see, behind all of this text is something very different. The Bible doesn't condemn hope. One of the things is we all know that hope is needed to live. If we have a friend and they start to talk in terms of having absolutely no hope in life, it's a very, very difficult thing for us.

And one of the things that we try to do if we have friends who go through a very, very dark season, first of all, we call it a dark season. We don't call it a light season when a person loses all hope. To not have any hope is to fall into despair.

[16:32] And when people fall into despair, when they fall into hopelessness, we try to cheer them up. We try to think of reasons why they should have hope. You should hope that you can see your sister again or you can see your best friend or you can go out or whatever.

We try to give them hope because we understand at a very, very deep level that to live a life that is... to be able to live, you need to have hope. But at the same time that we have this...

I mean, here's the thing. If at the end of the day... The average Canadian, when they talk about death, talks like this.

Your granny or your mom... Actually, I shouldn't use a woman as an example. I use myself. You know, your father, your papa has died and he's gone to a better place. He's in the trees.

He's in the wind. He's in your heart. He's watching over you. Because as Canadians, we have a very, very hard time actually saying, your dad's died.

[17:39] That's it. It's all over. It doesn't exist anymore. Because we have a very, very basic sense that if actually that's what death really is, it's the final word, it's the end, then really, what do a lot of these other smaller, more minor hopes actually mean?

They end up being like Disney types of things, greeting card types of things, things to help us pass the time and get through the day. But if at the end of the end of the end of the end, all that means is that you die and your death is final and your death is the final word about you, we all instinctively understand that to come to think about that would mean that hope is not real and that our lesser hopes aren't really hopes at all.

They're not really hopes. They're just distractions that distract us from the true and final word about every human being, that every human being dies. And when they die, that's it.

The Christian message is, amongst other things, is that there's a reason that human beings hope for the future and need hope to live. That's an event and sense how God wired you.

He wired you for more. If you ever read the Narnia Chronicles and you come to the seventh and final book of the Narnia Chronicles, which talks about basically the end of all things, it's in a sense a Christian version of the, a mythic type of story version of the book of Revelation.

[19:20] Once they've come to the new heaven and the new earth and they've died and they're in the new heaven and the new earth, there's this constant phrase. I think it goes higher up and farther in.

Those of you who are Narnia Chronicle experts, that it is higher up and farther in. That it's not as if death, and in a sense death and the new life isn't the end. I mean, one level it is the end, but another way for Christians to understand it is it's actually the beginning.

It's the real beginning. And C.S. Lewis has perfectly captured this by this image that we are to go higher up and farther in, higher up and farther in. That higher up there's even more glories, farther in there's even more glories.

And that you go with this type of hope and expectation of that there's more, there's more, there's more, there's more. And that everywhere you are is a place of joy, but you go to even greater joy, deeper joy, higher joy, farther into joy.

And that's how God has designed human beings. And so in a sense, what to understand the Christian faith and the Christian message and the Christian vision is this, is that hope became fact. [20 : 26] That if you understand the fact that we human beings understand that there's a need for hope, it's hard to ground hope, but because, you know, in some religions like in Islam where everything is just fate and most people don't end up going to whatever the, to be with Allah, but most people are fated to be apart from him, especially women.

I think in Islam, I don't know, it says very, very, very few women will actually be in their heaven. And in Buddhism and Hinduism, the end of all of the cycles of death and rebirth and death and rebirth and death and rebirth is really, in a sense, a final death, a merging with the one where you lose any type of being yourself or being unique.

It's just another way to describe death, but it's trying to describe death as if it's somehow a positive thing, but to completely and utterly lose your existence and lose your identity is just the same as a secular understanding of death.

And so we have this sense of hope, all of these hopes, and in a sense, what the Christians understand is is that hope became a fact. Hope took on flesh.

Hope walked among us. And it's emphasized because in the New Testament, time and time and time again, they don't just talk of Jesus, although they use his word, and they use Jesus and they add the word Christ.

[21 : 40] And it's really important that those two words go together. You see, the word Jesus emphasizes the fact. It means that if you were able to go back in time and see Jesus and you were able to learn the language that he spoke, you'd be able to ask him, and he would tell you precisely why his mother's hummus was better than anybody else's hummus.

And he would be able to tell you in Jerusalem where the best baker was to get the absolute best bread. And he would be able to tell you the types, how much garlic he liked in his tabbouleh.

One of the wonderful things about the Bible is that it doesn't tell us those things. I mean, otherwise, we'd all have to have Jesus's taste in garlic in our tabbouleh.

Some of us don't even like tabbouleh. I love tabbouleh, by the way. Some of you don't like it. Some of you wonder what's tabbouleh. You can go and look it up. Go to a Lebanese restaurant. Have some. It's delicious. But the point is that Jesus is historical.

You go back. He had a beard. He had skin. He cried. He was hungry. He had to walk places. He talked. He did things in the real world that there's even pagan sources that talk about the reality of the Jesus that actually existed.

[22 : 51] But Christians never just refer to him as Jesus. They also call him Christ. Christ Jesus or Jesus the Christ. And Christ is just sort of a different way of saying the word Messiah.

And what the Jewish people come to understand is with the word Messiah, it technically just means anointed one. But what it means for Jewish people is that in a sense, all of the hopes of the Jewish people, all of the promises that God has made to the Jewish people, all of the meaning in life that God has said is available to the Jewish people in their scriptures, that all of those, in some sense, they all know that that has been incomplete.

They're waiting for it to come to complete and utter fulfillment and fruition. All of the longings, all of the hopes, all of the dreams, all of the sense of redemption and of the new heaven and the new earth, all of these things get captured with this word Christ, Messiah.

And when Christians say Jesus is the Christ, they're saying that this man, the Christ, all these hopes, all these dreams, all these promises that they hope will be fulfilled, that this hope becomes fact.

And the hope that becomes fact meets death. And hope wins.

[24 : 12] In fact, to sort of just play with a phrase, it looks at first as if Jesus is just like every other man and death is swallowed.

Jesus. But what we understand is that on the third day, as a fact, the grave is empty. On the third day, as a fact, the stone is rolled away, not so Jesus can get out, but so people can come in to see that the grave is empty.

And what we know as a fact is the body was never found. And what we know as a fact is that Jesus appeared alive, resurrected, to many different people over quite a period of time.

We know the body was never found. We know that these are facts. And so it looked, on Good Friday, in fact, it appeared, on Good Friday, that death had swallowed hope.

But Christians now understand that hope swallowed death. And this means that there is a hope which is true, a hope which is thick, a hope which has substance, a hope upon which you can base your life, a hope that can draw you into the future, a hope that is connected to meaning and significance and direction that can start to understand and become the lens by which you look at politics and you look at COVID and you look at economics and you look at the arts.

[25 : 39] It's a hope that not only is talking about these things, but can be something that can be the guide to having your family and how you, to shape and structure your marriage, that there is this vision that comes that hope is real, not just any hope, not just, you know, there can be vain and cruel hopes.

The Nazis had a hope that they could exterminate the Jewish people. That's a vile, repulsive hope. Slave owners and racists had vile, repulsive hopes of diminishing and destroying and treating human beings as if they're even worse than animals.

And those are vile, destructive, evil hopes. And what basis do we have to say that those are vile, destructive, evil hopes? We have a basis to say that because hope is a fact and hope met death and triumphed over death and swallowed death and that true, deep hope is the hope that judges all human hopes.

To show some is vain, some is completely and utterly foolish and some is deeply evil and to be completely and utterly rejected by Christians and all people.

But we should be the leaders in rejecting cruel, evil, false, vain, self-flattering, deceptive, delusional hopes.

[27 : 11] Why? Because hope became a fact and met death and defeated death and that's the Christian vision. And in this Christian vision, when we understand that hope has triumphed, it's come, it's a fact, it's triumphed, it starts to mean that the things in your life don't necessarily have to be things without meaning or things without hope.

they don't have to be understood as a shoah but can be understood as a sacrifice, something that God takes and redeems and can bring good out of.

Let's just finish by looking through the whole text. So if you turn in your Bibles or read the whole text just to bring a few comments to it as we bring it to a close because, you see, once you understand this thing about the difference between a shoah and a holocaust, it helps you to understand how Paul says the things he says and it helps to get more shape to the Christian vision of life.

Verse 1, Notice that, Christ Jesus, not just Jesus but Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead and by his appearing in his kingdom preach the word.

That word preach, by the way, could also be translated as herald, not H-A-R-O-L-D the name but herald as in the town herald. A herald is one who doesn't invent something, a message, but carries a message from the king to the people and that's, in a sense, what a church is to do.

[28 : 56] We are, in a sense, these next nine things which are to be described as imperatives, it's helping us to understand what the local church is to be like, that the local church is to study the Bible, to study the word, to understand the gospel and then it's not so we can, you know, I think I could improve on that, I think there's ways that we could make that like a little bit better, I need to wordsmith this stuff for God because he got it a little bit right, I need to be a spin doctor for God.

No, the goal of the church is to actually try to hear the Bible more and more clearly and as we hear the Bible to look out at the world and see how things are wrong and be willing to say things even if it offends people.

Like, one of the great mysteries of life is that how is it that Alabama could be one of the most evangelical states in the United States but also have so much racism?

Like, how is that possible? And we want to be a people who look at the word and even if the world doesn't want us to talk about sexuality or doesn't want us to talk about euthanasia, it doesn't want us to talk about abortion, it doesn't want us to talk about certain types of things, we need to be people who look at the word and then use the word to judge and understand the world and not to

condemn the world in a way that doesn't have it hope but to come in and to be salt and light and say, listen, you know, the Bible doesn't even have the category of race.

Do you realize that? The Bible doesn't have a category for race. There's only one category in the Bible and that's human. That's the only category. And it doesn't matter if you're in China or if you're in Nigeria or you're in Argentina or you're in Malaysia, it doesn't matter if you're in England or France or Canada, there's only human.

[30 : 50] And every human being, whether it's in the womb or a person with severe mental illness or a person at the end of life ravaged body with disease, you're made in the image of God and have a worth and a dignity that should be respected.

And even if the world doesn't like that, we shouldn't be shaped by the world. Our goal is to understand the word and to faithfully proclaim it. That's the job of the church.

Preach the word, be ready in season and out of season. That means if it's 1951 and Christianity is on the rise or if it's 2021 and people don't like Christianity, do the same thing.

Reprove is another word for correct. Rebuke is rebuke. Exhort is another word for encourage. You do this with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into the myths.

Myths of the prosperity gospel. Myths of racism. Myths of class superiority. Myths that upper class people are worth more than working class people.

[32 : 12] As for you, always be sober minded and endure suffering. Do the work of evangelists.

Fulfill your ministry. The evangelist says that we're to look beyond. You see, it's not just a matter to say to the Nazi or to the communist that what you're doing is evil.

What's more important is not only say that it's evil but that God loves you and he wants you to be his child by adoption and grace.

He wants you to lay down your racism, lay down your communism, lay down your greed, lay down your lust for power, lay down your ungenerous heart and allow the loving arms of Jesus who died for you, who defeated death, to put his arms around you and to include you in himself so that you will have a hope that is stronger and deeper than death.

Verse 6, Here's one of the things.

The Bible doesn't say that all of our lesser hopes don't matter. What it does is it reorders our hopes in light of this ultimate hope of being reconciled and reunited to God in a sense that when we die and when the new heaven and the new earth comes, our cry will be farther up, higher in.

[34 : 03] And we run that race and swim those rivers and climb those mountains with redeemed humanity. But in the meantime, our other hopes are put in proper place and put in order and sometimes we will sacrifice them for that great and supreme hope.

And in the same way, the Bible doesn't tell you that you never pay attention to what other people think. It doesn't want you to be completely and utterly antisocial as if you were a person who cannot pick up on social cues.

But what the Bible wants you to understand is how people think about you need to be put in order and what ultimately finally matters is the final word about you is made by the Lord Jesus Christ and His word is the word that matters the most.

And you are to hear the words of other people in light of your knowledge of what His final word will be about you. Verse 9, Do your best to come to me soon for Demas in love with his present world has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.

That's bad. Crescens has gone to Galatia. See, here it is that Paul knows he's going to die but he sends Crescens to Galatia a place in what we would now call Turkey.

[35 : 15] He sends Titus to Dalmatia what we would now call Croatia. Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you for he is very useful to me for ministry. Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus and when you come bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas also the books and above all the parchments.

Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm. The Lord will repay him according to his deeds.

Beware of him yourself for he strongly opposed our message. At my first defense no one came to stand by me but all deserted me.

May I not be charged against them. But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it so I was rescued from

the lion's mouth.

The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. Just pause here as part of this Christian vision.

Paul the people who put him in jail the people who were charging him the people who wanted to put him to death what does he say?

[36 : 25] I want them to hear the gospel. If you go back and you look at all of those names there's people who had been pagans their entire lives people who had been Jewish people from many many people different people groups and as you'll see at the end when he mentions these last few names in a moment what does he call them all?

He calls them his brothers and sisters. that's the Christian category brothers and sisters that's the Christian vision and it's the Christian vision that it would matter to you I mean God will deal with those who completely and utterly reject all of these things and at the end of the day will choose greed over hope true hope they'll choose racism over true hope they'll choose oppression over true hope they'll choose personal power over true hope and that's in God's hands but can I tell you about Jesus?

Verse 19 greet Prisca and Aquila it's men and women as well in the household of Anisiphorus Erastus remained at Corinth and I left Trophimus who was ill at Miletus do your best to come before winter Eubulus sends greetings to you as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers and sisters the Lord be with your spirit grace be with you just two final things and it's in closing you notice what Paul has done he's talking about the people who are with him now he just said earlier that those nobody stood by when he actually got arrested and almost got killed right the first time he uses this powerful image of being in the lion's mouth but God does something to drop him from the lion's mouth to give him this extra season of time to proclaim the message including the message to the lion and what does he say now about these people who've now come back around and he doesn't say you dirty rats why did you abandon me he calls them his brothers and sisters he forgives them like isn't that a captivating vision that you could be so have hope swallow you up true deep hope swallow you up in such a way that when you think of others at the end of your life it's not it's not gosh I wish

I could have gotten them gosh I hope terrible things happen to them but that the final word that's on your that the thoughts in your head and the words on your lip are forgiveness like isn't that a more powerful vision to live by that hope became a fact that hope swallowed death that there is that there is a true hope and that as you're shaped by that hope your words are words of forgiveness and then the very final word the Lord be with your spirit grace be with you that the final words that we have the words of Paul now come to an end he obviously spoke others but the words that are recorded his final words are words of blessing isn't that a compelling vision to live a life that is marked more and more by the ability to forgive that's more and more concerned with reconciliation that is more and more concerned to bless and it all emerges out of true hope please stand for those of us who are Christians every Sunday is an opportunity to renew the vision that's why we need to gather in church whether it's in person or through YouTube we need to renew the vision and all I can say is if you are on the outside of the Christian faith you don't know where you are with Jesus all I can say to you is this is a very person and you know maybe if you're a type of a visual person or a person who likes to do things like empty your hands and get on your knees and say hope please take me and capture me

Jesus you are the true hope take me and capture me you know my fears about being captured by you you know my fears about belonging to you you know my fears that I will be thought of as weird Father Jesus I fall on my knees I can't capture hope but I believe and trust what the Bible says that you can capture me and I surrender to you let's bow our heads in prayer Father we ask that this vision of what the Christian life is this vision of Holocaust of sacrifice versus Shoah of catastrophe and disaster Father it's hearts we long for this at the same time Father it can be hard to keep it and Father we give you thanks and praise that you know this about us you know how weak we are it was your intention that we have mentors and discipleship and small groups and spiritual friends and weekly worship to be recaptured to recapture the vision to rekindle the vision rekindle the hope [41 : 53] Father we give into your hands those things that we despair of those things that we confused about and we don't know what to do Father we give them into your hands and we ask Father that you fill us with hope a hope that allows us to press into these things and to walk towards them and to deal with them all for your glory and the furtherance of your kingdom and we ask all

these things in the name of Jesus your son and our savior and all God's people said amen