

# Wise Hope

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Date: 13 June 2021

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[ 0 : 00 ] Father, we ask that the Holy Spirit would fall with fresh power upon us at this time. We are here to be in your presence, to receive from you in a worthy manner.

Help us, Father, to be here, knowing that we are in your presence, that we are in the presence of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. And, Father, we ask that you speak to us through your word, that your word would come deeply into our hearts, and that we would respond in a way that is for our true good, for the good of this city, the good of creation, and for your great glory.

So, Father, do that wonderful work of your Holy Spirit, we pray. And we ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen. Please be seated. One of the things I tell people, sometimes if people are asking me for a little bit of advice about how to handle a Bible study or a small group, or for sometimes when I'm talking to people about sermons and how to do them, is to, I mean, there's lots of different questions that we can ask, but one of the questions to ask is, or just to realize, that everything in the Bible is always speaking about something in our human condition.

It's speaking about some loves that we have, some fears that we have, some hopes or yearnings that we have. It's speaking about problems that we face.

It's speaking about the human condition, speaking about human problems, the human experience. So part of the thing you can do is ask yourself, like, just for a second, well, what human, and it can be more than one, so what human thing is actually being addressed in this text?

[ 1 : 34 ] We're preaching through the book of Haggai. We're going to be doing a series in the summer called Knowing God, where we'll look at a range of different texts about who God is. But we're going through the book of Haggai. And the text that we're looking at today actually speaks, not actually, as if it's, well, what a surprise.

This week it does something different than the other weeks. I have a bad habit of saying actually when I shouldn't. This text talks about a very common human problem. Maybe some of you are dealing with it now or have dealt with it in the past, but if you haven't dealt with it yet, you're going to deal with it.

And the human problem is that you think about the situation you're in, and the past was way better. Either the present sucks, and the future either is just going to continue to suck at the current level or it's going to even suck worse.

So you're in this situation. The past was great. The present sucks. The future sucks. So how do you deal with that? Like how do you have hope when it just seems to be, and not only that, it's not only that you know that the past seemed to be way better.

The present sucks. The future sucks. But the people around you would say the same thing. Yeah, yeah, George, the past was way better. Your current situation sucks. And I don't see much hope.

[ 2 : 51 ] All I see, as far as I can see, is just it sucks. And how do you deal with that? How do you live? Or how do you actually try to do some things and actually accomplish something if that's the situation that you're in?

And that's the situation that, in fact, one of the things that's so interesting about this story is that's the situation, and God speaks into it. And I think if we look at it, if you start to think, okay, well, that's what's going on in this weird-sounding story with these names that we can't pronounce, you start to realize that the Bible says something very profound and powerful and wise about the human condition and about hope, because we need hope to live.

So if you turn in your Bibles to Acts, I'm not Acts, Haggai chapter 2, let's look at the text together. Haggai chapter 2, verses 1 to 9. And just the context, some of you, I know, are visual, very visual people.

And so if you're trying to imagine this text, imagine photographs of Aleppo in Syria. Imagine an area which has been completely and utterly devastated by war, where, you know, there's the odd wall standing up, but there's rubble everywhere.

And that's the context of what's happening here. And the context further is that this is taking place 66 years after Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians.

[ 4 : 16 ] And so Babylon had destroyed the nation. Jeremiah had prophesied that that was going to happen. And it came true. But Jeremiah also prophesied that God was going to do another miracle, that God was actually going to help some of the people would maintain their Jewish identity and their worship and their reading of the Torah, and that some would actually return to this place, and that Jerusalem would end up eventually being rebuilt.

And that was partly what... And so here we are, 66 years later, we have a situation where people have come back to the city of Jerusalem, and it's all in rubble.

They began to rebuild the temple, but they got very severe pushback by the locals, and so they gave up. And it was in this context that Haggai begins to speak to them. And first of all, he confronts them and says, you need to put first things first.

If you want to have God bless you, you need to put first things first. You need to have...you need to rebuild the temple. And his word convicts them, the Holy Spirit convicts them, and they start to rebuild the temple.

Just sort of before we go any further on that, there's...you know, you've heard me say this a lot, but it's well worth being... I mean, one of the things we do about on Sunday mornings is we come to be reminded of the truth that we need to be reminded of.

[ 5 : 30 ] And what's at work in all of this is that the people have forgotten God. They've forgotten the Lord. And because they'd forgotten him and rebelled against him, they came under his judgment. But the Lord had never forgotten them.

And the Lord had never forgotten his promises to them. And here's the Christian context for us. And this is very, very important to remember. The Christian life is not about how strong your grip is in Jesus' hand.

The fact of the matter is, there will be times you really think, yeah, I'm really holding on to Jesus really tight. But there's going to be times when you've let go completely or your hand is very weak.

But what matters isn't how strong your grip is in the hand of Jesus, but his grip.

That's what matters. That's your hope. My hope is not that I have a really strong grip on Jesus. My hope is that he has a very strong grip. He has my hand and he will never let it go. That's my hope. And so it's in this context.

There's ruins. They're just starting to rebuild. It's been seven weeks since the last prophecy.

They've just begun to try to build and clear up the things and to start to build the temple.

[ 6 : 33 ] And it's in that situation that this text comes. And here's how it goes. In the seventh month, on the 21st day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai, the prophet.

Now, just sort of pause here. This little seemingly meaningless little piece of information is actually quite significant for a variety of reasons. So first of all, it's telling us that there's been seven weeks. In that seven weeks, there's been some Jewish festivals, which they've kept. They would have brought in some more of the harvest. And they've also begun to rebuild the temple, clear away some of the rubble, and maybe try to figure out what stones they might be able to use and looking for bits and pieces of wood they can use and maybe even begin to think about how they could go out to get the beams that they're going to have to get lumbered and brought in close.

But they're just finishing the Feast of Tabernacles. That's one of the things that this date tells us.

And this is actually not a sad thing for them, but it's a reminder that God delivered their forebears, their ancestors, out of slavery in Egypt and to bring them into the Promised Land.

But when he brought them to the edge of the Promised Land, they refused to go in. They rebelled against him. And so they spent 40 years in the wilderness before eventually going into the Promised Land. And in those 40 years in the wilderness, they lived in tents and God provided for them.

[ 7 : 58 ] And the Feast of the Tabernacles or the Feast of Booths is that when they remember that. But here's the thing. Those of them that would have known their Tanakh, they would have known their Torah, they would have known that it was on this exact day in the year 960 B.C.

that Solomon's temple was completed. Now, one of the things to my shame is my wife has lost both her mother and her father, and I don't remember the dates of their death or the dates of their birth. But we all know that remembering the date of a lost one, even many, many years later, can cause some sadness, some sorrow. I'm sure to my shame, not to my credit, there's been some time my wife might be sad and I might not remember that the reason she's sad is that it was on that day, whatever number of years ago, that her mom died or her father died or their birthday or something. But anniversaries matter. And so here we have a group of people amidst the rubble trying to rebuild the temple. And the day, some of them would remember, this is the day 500 and some odd years earlier, that the great temple of Solomon was completed and dedicated.

And they just think of that and they think of all that's been lost. And they would definitely be looking at what is in front of them and thinking, this doesn't look too good.

[ 9 : 27 ] In fact, actually, God is going to walk towards that. Look what happens in verse 2 and verse 3. Speak now to Zerubbabel, the son of Sheolaiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehoshadak, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, and say, who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory?

How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes? Now this is one of the remarkable things about the Bible, one of the powerful things about the Bible, and one of the powerful things that the Bible has to say about hope.

For the Bible, hope isn't the same as optimism. Optimism is, things are going to get better. I can make things better. We can make things better. I'm strong, and you do that, and we can do it. We can all jump up and down and do some chanting and get psyched and get pumped, and we can deal with it, and we can do things far better. But the Bible never sugarcoats things, and it's very interesting.

You see, the beginning of hope is the acknowledgement of how bad the situation actually is. Don't think about how bad things are. The Bible doesn't say, okay, don't think about how bad things are.

[ 10 : 41 ] Don't think about the past. Repress those memories of how the temple looked. Because the temple had been destroyed 66 years ago, there would have been some people there in the crowd who were 71 or 72 or older.

They would have remembered what Solomon's temple looked like, and even those who weren't there, they would have heard stories about how beautiful. They would have heard the Tanakh read, and they would have heard the stories about how this temple was so beautiful and the proportions and the skilled workmanship and the gold plating everywhere, and it would have just looked so majestic and glorious.

And they're thinking about all that past. They have all that memory, and they're looking at how the present, the past was great, the present sucks. And as they're looking at these things, what's going through their mind is this is like nothing.

Like, this is like crap. And God speaks right into it. He doesn't say, don't think in those terms.

He says, don't you think that this is like nothing? You see, and this is another important thing for us to remember as Christians. It's one of the things that the gospel makes a very big difference for you and me.

[ 11 : 50 ] It's not only in the gospel, what really matters is that Jesus, when I put my hand in Jesus to ask him to be my Savior and my Lord, my hand will get weak often, but his hand will never get weak.

He will never let me go. He will never, ever, ever, ever, ever let me go. And one of the other things which is so remarkable is it's not that he's going to never let me go because everything within me is just hunky-dory wonderful.

But he knows the confusion, the problems, the doubts, the sin that I have in my own life, the sins of commission and the sins of omission.

And still he loves me. He knew all of that when he died for me. Still he loves me. You see, the fact of the matter is is that part of the reason that many of us have problems praying is that we sort of think there's a certain type of way we're supposed to be and a certain type of wording that we're supposed to say before we can talk.

But the fact of the matter is is that we say, okay, I guess I better pray. And the inside of our head, if people could look at the inside of our head, the inside of our head would look as if there were 50 bees in there all buzzing around like this constantly.

[12:59] And the fact of the matter is each one of those bees is a thought. And that's what's going on inside of our head. Or that we're just feeling completely and utterly low or completely depressed or completely angry. And what we do is we try to repress that or pretend it's not there so that we can say the prayers that we're supposed to pray.

But the fact of the matter is that Jesus isn't going to let go of my hand if I let slip that my head is like 50 bees buzzing like crazy. He's not going to say, oh gosh, I'm going to let go of George's hand. No. He already knows it. In fact, prayer is the meeting place of the reality of who I am with the reality of who God is and the reality of his word that I can say, Lord, I can hardly put one thought together because that's what's going on in my mind.

And in a sense, I don't know what these people are trying to pray, but the fact of the matter is that God knows that they think this sucks. And when they look around the rubble, they think the future sucks.

Yes. Gosh, the past was great. And that just makes you feeling more despondent, more depressed, more despairing. And God just names it. Listen to verse 3 again.

[14:09] What does he say? Not, oh, don't think about those things or oh, don't think about, oh, he says, who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes? So what does God say into this situation after he's been realistic with them about what they're actually thinking, what they're actually feeling?

Well, he walks towards the problem and then he says, we'll look at verse 4 and 5 and then verse 6 and 9. He says some very remarkable things to them, which, and then actually in verses 6 to 9, we show up in the text, believe it or not.

Yeah, actually, we show up in the text in between verse 6 and 9. But first, listen to what it says in verse 4 and 5. Okay, so it says, nothing in your eyes?

Verse 4, yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the Lord. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the Lord.

Work, not just work or else, but work, for I am with you, declares the Lord of hosts. According to the covenant, he's with them, how? He's with them according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt.

[15:15] My spirit, my Holy Spirit, remains in your midst. Fear not. That's the first word that he says when they think the past is great, the present sucks, the future looks like more suck.

And he, first of all, for some of them, there's this great resonance, an echo, of the book of Joshua. If you go back and read Joshua 1, in fact, I was sharing at the earlier service, when my kids were younger, we used to have these cassettes that we'd play all the time when we were driving.

And they were GT and the Halo Express. I don't know if they're still available, but we loved them. My kids liked them at the time, and they were able to learn Bible memorizing verses. As soon as I see this, I'm thinking, have I not commanded you be strong and courageous?

Have I not commanded you be strong and courageous? Do not. Anyway, I won't sing anymore for you. I'll drive you all away. But the fact of the matter is if you read Joshua 1, there's this constant refrain as they're about to enter into the promised land.

They've ended the time in the tent. They're about to enter in the promised land, and God says to Joshua, be strong, be strong, be strong. And so here they are. They're embarked in the midst of the rubble.

[16:28] They're still under the Persian Empire, and they're about to, they've just begun the work of rebuilding the temple. And why does the temple matter? The temple, well, we'll get to that more in a moment. And God's word to them is be strong, be strong, be strong.

And for some of them, they'd go, that just is like what God said to Joshua and the people of Israel as they're about to build. But there's something else which is here. It's not just that they're to work, but they're to work knowing that God is with them.

And God isn't with them just sort of as some type of a presence or some type of judgmental presence or just some mere, like, power. No, he's present as the God who is in covenant with them. He has never, they have forgotten his promises. They have not wanted him to be with them, but he wants to be with them and that's what matters. And he's with them as the Lord.

Now, this, we can't really get, I came up, hopefully this analogy will help you a little bit. All the gender neutral stuff and I don't know how many different pronouns there are. In some ways, it made me realize that in the Jewish people, there were a generic word for God.

[ 17 : 39 ] God. And then there was, you know, other names for specific gods. And then there was the Lord. And the significance is they don't use the word Elohim, which is generic God. They use the word Lord.

And the difference between Elohim or generic God and Lord is the difference between my children referring to me as the sperm donor or dad.

It's the difference between my wife referring to me as the sperm donor. Or husband. The difference is huge. I'm not just yet another sperm donor.

I am the kid's dad. And they get to call me dad. They don't get to call me sperm donor. They get to call me dad. And these are relationship words.

These are not only relationship words, but they're covenant words. And so all the way through this text, if you were, like an interesting activity for you would be to write out or type out all of Haggai or print it out and then go and take a marker and highlight every time the word Lord or Lord of hosts appears in the text.

[ 18 : 49 ] And it's just saturated with this. All of this speaking is he's using the words to remind them that he is not just the generic God. He is their God. That he has created a covenant for them.

He has never given up on the covenant. They have given up on it, but he has never given up on the covenant with them and he will continue to fulfill it. And that is the God who has led them out of slavery and bondage that he did it by his own power and he led them out.

He kept them in the wilderness. He brought them into the promised land and it's the same Lord who is in covenant with them, who's speaking with them and he says, what he's saying to them is that I don't care about the building so much is that the building is just a sign that you want me to be with you.

It would be as if, you know, it's the same type of thing. If Louise and I were going to go out to go to a patio and as we're going out I'd said, I think I'm going to take my wedding ring off and leave it home. She'd go, what? I could take your, well actually she might not say anything. The whole evening we're in the patio she might not say anything and then I would get it.

[ 20 : 01 ] And you know what? All of you folks would say, you go girl. You lay into him. He deserves it. Why? Well because this little piece of metal isn't just a piece of metal.

It's a sign that I'm married to Louise. And if she knew that I was going out taking the ring off she'd know that that was something wrong.

She'd say, George, the ring is a sign that we're married. The ring is a sign that I matter to you. The ring is a sign that you have forsaken all others.

And so that's what's going on with the temple. God says, the temple is a sign that you want me to be with you. I don't need a temple but it's a sign that you want me to be with you.

That's why last week you have to put me first. And putting me first is, you know, like you could just well imagine, George, I'm not going to have, Louise could say to me, I'm not going to have the conversation with you until you put the ring back on your finger.

[ 21 : 00 ] And we're going to have a conversation. Put the ring on, let's talk. And God is saying, you've got to put me first. Build the temple. And be strong.

Why? Because I am with you. Now some of us might say, well, George, that's all interesting. It's all this Jewish stuff that's all the way back. And some of you might be wondering, you know, why did they actually believe that this came from God?

Like, why did the Jewish people put it in the Bible? Well, it's actually the next verses that both are why they would have put it in the Bible, understood that this was something that really did come from God, and it's also the next verses that give this whole other area of hope.

Like, their hope in the midst of the fact that the past seemed to be great, the present sucks, and the future sucks. Part of the thing is, God just says to them, listen, I'm with you. I am your Lord.

I am the God of covenant. You've got to just go ahead and work on those things. But then, the promise continues in a very different way that helps to shape our understanding of hope. We show up. Listen to what it says. Verses 6, 7, 8, and 9.

[ 22 : 06 ] For thus says the Lord of hosts, yet once more in a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land, and I will shake all nations so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts.

The silver is mine and the gold is mine, declares the Lord of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place, I will give peace, declares

the Lord of hosts.

Now, just sort of not going that in order, one of the things which is really interesting there is when he says, the gold is mine and the silver is mine, because you see, one of the reasons they're so depressed about the present is, I mean, the original temple had all the gold, everything, everything was covered in gold.

It would have looked just so spectacular. And they're looking at this, and they're going to be taking things of rubble. The Babylonians stripped the temple of everything, all the, anything of value in the entire land was taken to Babylon.

The Ark of the Covenant was lost, taken to Babylon. Everything's been taken away. They're just dealing with rubble and some stones. But God says, listen, I don't care about gold.

[ 23 : 23 ] I own all the gold. You think I'm worried about gold in the temple? I own all the gold. You think I'm worried about silver? I own all the silver. I don't need any silver or gold. Like, it's not about silver or gold.

Right? He said, build my house. But then there's all this language of shaking and I didn't know this before I started to work on the sermon, but it's a Hebrew idiom.

It's a way of expressing what happens when God shows up. That God shakes. It's a theophany.

That's the geeky theological word. It's theophany language.

It's the language of God showing up. And if you go back and you read Exodus, when God shows up to make the covenant in Exodus, there's a lightning and there's earthquakes and all of that type of stuff.

And even in the New Testament, when God shows up in different ways, like when Jesus appears to Saul of Tarsus on his way to kill Christians or throw them in jail, Jesus just shows up and the first thing that happens is everybody gets knocked off their horses.

[ 24 : 27 ] Everybody just gets knocked on the ground. In one of the, I think it's in John's gospel, when they come, Judas comes to capture Jesus and they say, are you Jesus?

And he says, I am. And it just, the Holy Spirit, God shows up, the Holy Spirit just, they all fall down. They get shaken. They can't stand up. And it's this powerful image of that when the true God comes and things get shaken up.

And so he says, I'm going to come and I'm going to be amongst, I'm going to shake up the earth and the heavens and everything. I'm going to shake up the nations so that the nations will come in and they're going to fill this house with glory.

And there's going to be, in a sense, the treasures are going to be brought in and all of these types of things. And this is one of the reasons then why it is that they would have known that this was a prophecy that was actually from God that they had to keep and remember.

Why is it? Well, because they knew that within a year or two of this prophecy, why were they able to finish the temple? Because the emperor of Persia paid for it.

[ 25 : 33 ] I mean, just think of it in today's terms, the Ayatollah of Iran says to the Jewish people, I want you to build my temple. And I'm giving you a blank check.

And they would have gone, what? We don't have the resources to build the temple and the emperor of Persia just sent a directive to all of his bureaucrats in the region that I want the tax money from this region to build the temple for Yahweh?

That's what happened. And fast forward, Herod's great temple that Jesus appeared at. Herod wasn't Jewish.

An Edomite built one of the marvels of the ancient world. The temple to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was built for by Edomites.

And his friends were all pagans. Pagans paid for the temple to make it glorious. And here's where we show up in the story.

[ 26 : 46 ] You see, the Jewish people, in a sense, the Jewish people, they look at this and they just see that part about the shaking of the earth and they think that they didn't, it wasn't until Jesus came and authenticated himself and vindicated himself as the Messiah that we realize that God is fulfilling these prophecies in a series of stages that the full shaking of the heaven, I mean, there was a shaking that did happen with Jesus when the temple, the curtain in the temple is torn in two from the top to the bottom so that the access to God is now shown to be open because of Jesus having died upon the cross.

But we see there, you know, at the Easter sermon, I talked about how in the Big Bang you have all of the universe, all it emerges out of this Big Bang in a moment and everything can be traced back to this propulsion.

Things are moving apart from each other and in the same way that's what God does on a Friday afternoon and an early Sunday morning in Jerusalem where there is a man that is rejected by the people and he dies a shameful death upon the cross and on the third day the tomb is empty, he appears alive and from this one little tiny insignificant moment there becomes an explosion that nobody believed on an Easter Sunday all of a sudden Mary knows.

And then some people going to Emmaus and then Peter knows and then John knows and then the eleven disciples, ten of the disciples know and then Jesus' mother and brothers know and then five hundred know and then with Pentecost it continues to grow and from that one little moment on Good Friday and on Easter Sunday from that one insignificant event that was so insignificant that no historian at the time would have thought that it mattered there has been this propulsive growth of the Christian faith so that it is the only universal faith of every culture and it continues to grow all from that one moment of propulsion.

See the fact of the matter is what does it say here in verse nine? And in this place I will give peace declares the Lord. In this place the one greater than the temple shows up at the temple.

[ 29 : 06 ] Jesus, the true meeting place between the human being and God. The true temple arrives at the temple and the true sacrifice that the temple is all about is about to take place.

That all of the sacrifices specified in the laws are just a foreshadowing of the one true Lamb of God who would die for the sin of the world not only in the earth but in the heavenlies and that would be the one sacrifice that makes all the sacrifices that had happened before have any value or worth and that from now on that we no longer need because the one complete perfect Lamb of God sacrificed himself so that human beings could have peace with God.

And so this text continues. The even greater temple, the glory of God himself showing up is all fulfilled in this text which prophesies that it's all fulfilled.

And even the nations coming to Israel is all fulfilled. If you have not yet had a chance to go to Israel, someday go to Jerusalem. And it is so wonderful. You go to Jerusalem and you see the pilgrims from Uganda, from Nigeria, from South Africa, from Korea, from China, from Argentina, from Canada, from the whole world coming there from all people groups.

And we know that at some point in time Jesus will return and all things will be shaken and there will be a new heaven and a new earth and God will dwell with us.

[ 30 : 36 ] And it's all there in this particular text. Just sort of bringing this whole thing to some type of closing. See, here's the way it works psychologically for us and one of the reasons we need to come to church and gather around the word is to be reminded of it.

What's my fallback position? I can't do it, so I won't. What does the Bible say? George, I want you to know that you can't.

But he will and can so that I can say I will. You see, this is, and you know, some of you know I've just been so enraptured with the story the last year or more of Jesus turning the water into wine and it's more and more just made me realize that a big part of the whole Christian life is in that very first miracle that Jesus ever did.

That, you know, Jesus asks for my obedience and he does the great work of grace. If I just trust him that he loves me and he's asked me to be obedient with him with my money or with my sexuality or with my time, that he does the great work if I'm obedient.

Because in that miracle, it's such a wonderful miracle, Jesus asks the men to put water into a stone jar and take it to the feast. And that's all they do.

[ 32 : 00 ] He turns the water into wine. And that's so much of what the Christian life is like. George, just trust my word. Obey me in this.

I'm going to turn the water into wine. You don't have, that's not even your job. You can't even do it, George. Like, stop thinking you can do it. Don't be stupid. Just obey. It's my job to turn the water into wine.

And that's the thing here that he gives the people hope. He says, listen, just start building the temple. And they start to build the temple.

And a year or two later, they get the news. They're probably just doing it. Who knows? They don't tell you about it. They're just doing it. Read Ezra and all a little bit about it. And then they get the news that the emperor of Persia is going to give them all the money they need.

And little did they know that they're just fulfilling what God has said and that by them fulfilling what God has said, the people would continue. And one day there would be a person, in a sense, from their loins in the line of Jeroboam, who would come and be the temple who is greater than the temple, the true temple and that true peace would be made.

[ 33 : 08 ] And all of these great and glorious things will culminate with Jesus coming a second time. And all they do is their tiny little bit of obedience. And God makes this most remarkable wine down the road that they could never possibly imagine.

And God invites us to do the same thing. Many of us are old enough to remember when churches were way more full and there were way more churches and youth groups were way more big and it's really easy to say what's the point of trying to build things?

The past was great, the present sucks and I don't know all of the trends and say the future is just going to suck. And Jesus says, build my church, preach the gospel, sing my praises, invest in youth groups, invest in ministry, invest in missionaries, proclaim Jesus.

You be obedient, I'll make the wine. Just one final thing to close it. I was talking to somebody this week who's gone through a long season of great sickness.

And this is one of the things which is so wonderful about biblical hope and the reason we need to be reminded about it. See, the Christian hope doesn't say, hope in me and all your lesser hopes I'm going to annihilate.

[ 34 : 30 ] No, the Bible doesn't say you shouldn't plant tomatoes and plants and hope that you'll get tomatoes. It doesn't say I shouldn't go to school and hope I get a good job. It doesn't say I should maybe hope I can get married and all that.

No, it doesn't. But what the Bible does is it both grounds your hope and reorders your hope when he is first. But the fact of the matter is there will come a point in time when humanly speaking there is no hope.

There will come a point in time when the cancer diagnosis is final. There will come a point in time when you will be in a very, very long season of sickness and when it's over there still might be some disability that might be the rest of your days.

Some of you might be already facing that diagnosis at the beginning of dementia the cancer of which is now inoperable. But not only does the Bible ground the small hopes but the important hopes that make up our daily life but the Bible portrays for the people of Jesus who put their faith and trust in Jesus that there is an ultimate final hope that death is not final.

And I was able to pray with this person and say, Father, thank you so much. Father, we ask for healing. We ask for wisdom for the doctors. We ask for comfort and healing of memories and the ability to handle the situation which is for you.

[ 35 : 57 ] But Father, most of all we ask that you fill us both with hope. Father, it is so good to know that the day will come when you, I was referring to the other person, when we will have resurrected bodies.

And we will be in the new heaven and the new earth. And that is our final hope. You see, because at the end of the day the final hope for all of us as Christians is that even when we do come to the valley of the shadow of death and we have to walk and enter into the valley of the shadow of death and we will not emerge on this side of death but that we will actually walk into the valley of the shadow of death, that we do it in the hands of Jesus, that he is our victor, he is our great sacrifice. And when we emerge from the valley of the shadow of death on the far side in the presence of our heavenly Father, he will look at us with the world's biggest smile and say, I am so glad you are with me.

Welcome. I love you so much. I have a kingdom prepared for you. I have a new body prepared for you. And every day that you have been mine, I have seen you face to face, but now today you see me face to face for the first time.

And your seeing me face to face will be the end of your story for the end of your days. And that is the final word for even the most least and most broken Christian.

[ 37 : 28 ] that is our ultimate hope. It can never be taken away. I invite you to stand in closing. Just stand.

Let's pray. Father, we give you thanks and praise that you have made us as human beings to be able to hope in the future and that hope is in fact important for us as being fruitful and being fruitful in the earth.

We thank you, Father. We thank you that even when we sinned and rebelled and things got all broken and twisted within us, that that didn't get taken away from us and we thank you, Father, that you are the God of hope, that our faith in Christ is to shape our hope and ground our hope, our main big hope that goes into all eternity and those lesser hopes that we are important in day-to-day affairs and week-to-week and month-to-month.

And Father, we ask that you make us deeply aware of Jesus and what he did for us on the cross. We thank you that he will never let us go when we put our hand in his, that he will never let us go. And we give you thanks and praise that in him, you have prepared for us an eternity beyond our worth, beyond what we deserve, purely as a gift, that we are your child and we will know you face-to-face.

[ 38 : 57 ] And so, Father, we ask that you help us to be more hopeful as we face each day, as we rebuild this church and help the rebuilding of other churches, as we spread the gospel and share the gospel and lift Jesus high.

Father, fill us with hope. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.