

1st Peter "A Life of Meaning With a Living Hope"

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Date: 21 April 2024

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[0 : 0 0] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah. It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me, actually, to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Let's just bow our heads in prayer. Father, you know how starved human beings are for meaning and how starved human beings are for hope. And you know, Father, the sorrows of our hearts as well as the joys. And you know our fears of death and you know, Father, just our struggles to navigate things like hope and meaning in our world and in our lives. We thank you so much, Father, for your Word that you have spoken to us and the Holy Spirit that brings your Word home to us. We ask that your Holy Spirit would help us to know Jesus better in who he is and what he's accomplished and what he's doing in our lives, that we might have a living hope, that we might know there is a meaning to our lives. And we ask these things in Jesus' name, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

I think, hopefully, Claire, I think, has been able to find this. You can put up that picture now of the book. Yeah, there we go. I was listening to an hour-long interview, a 67-minute-long interview just the other day. And it was an interview with this fellow here by the name of Ming Wang. And the interview was about partly because there's a movie based on his life, which is coming out sometime in May.

But it was a very fascinating story. I was quite mesmerized by listening to the interviewer. He grew up in China, and when he was just about to enter into school, the cultural revolution happened in China. And that's something which has been largely forgotten by most people in North America.

[2 : 5 5] But basically, from 66 to 76, an absolutely terrible experiment was played upon the population of China, where the children of the educated people were taken from them and basically condemned to 10 years of no education, thrown out into the rural areas. And many people died of a very terrible thing. And he was just coming into school when this was happening. I think it happened when he was maybe just... Anyway, it's a story of his life, how he made it through all of that, the poverty, even though his parents were doctors, the great poverty that he grew up in.

Very interesting thing about just the love of his parents for him. And through a series of circumstances, he comes to the United States with \$50 in his pocket, but he's received a scholarship.

He's a very, very bright student. And he ends up doing a PhD in physics at MIT, at the same time as doing his becoming a surgeon through Harvard. So he's a double doctorate, a PhD in physics, and a surgeon. And he graduates magna cum laude in both places. Very hardworking, studious person. And the reason I'm telling you all of this is that he, of course, grows up in a completely atheistic educational system. He has atheist parents and family. He doesn't know anybody who's Christian. And the only thing that he heard other than atheism was he would hear a little bit, of course, of Confucian type of wisdom and a little bit of awareness of the outside world, but a completely atheist system of thought. And as we all know, Harvard and MIT are hotbeds of Christian fundamentalism. And so he goes to Harvard and MIT to study. And he becomes fascinated with the eye.

And one of the things he says, I didn't know this, half of the neurons in your brain are connected to you being able to see. And the more he studies the eye, everything about it, the intricacy of it, all of the different biological systems and the feedback loops and how it's connected to the brain, the more and more he looked at it, he just couldn't believe that anything so complicated could actually work all the time and how it could actually develop and come to be. And at first he had these just like massive questions. The more he studied the eye, the more just not unbelievable it is, because obviously it exists, but just like mind-blowing it was in terms of its complexity and all of the systems. And he starts to ask his professors, how on earth could this be? It's just so unbelievably complex. It's just mind-blowing. And finally, one of the professors overheard that he'd been asking these other professors all about that. And he said to him one day, you and I should go for lunch. So they go for lunch. They sit down at a restaurant by the window. And after they've had their pleasantries, the doctor who invites Ming out for lunch says to him, you see that car over there?

And Ming says, yeah. He said, the doctor says to Ming, what's the difference between the eye and that car? And Ming mentions a couple of things, but at the end he says, actually the most important difference between the eye and the car is the eye is vastly, incomparably more complex than a car. [6:18] Car's very, very simple. The eye isn't simple. And then the doctor says to him, what would you say if I told you that that car developed just by chance, just by explosions and the blowing of the wind and earthquakes? And as soon as he said that, there was a break in the dam in his mind.

He realized that atheism was wrong. And that what he'd been taught in terms of the overall view just couldn't possibly be true.

It just could not possibly be true that something like the eye, if he couldn't believe that something like the car could happen by chance, it was completely implausible and impossible that the eye happened by chance. And that led him on a search that culminated. And actually it's very interesting.

One of the things that led him to Christianity was its openness to evidence because he was a scientist, scientist, science-driven, experimental and evidence-driven. And Christianity is open to evidence, especially around things like the resurrection, to which he ended up coming to the conclusion had to actually happen. He becomes a Christian. And the rest of it is about his work helping people be able to see.

Now, I mention all of this because the Bible text today talks about two things which nobody in Canada are interested in are basically hope and meaning, being facetious. We don't live in a time that hope is characterized as I think most Canadians. And we don't live in a time when meaning is something which really, I mean, people obviously are always seeking hope and meaning. But we live in a bit of a time where there's a meaning crisis, and in many ways, a hope crisis as well. In fact, surveys regularly show that Canadians have less hope for the future than previous generations. And that gets even worse as you become younger. The text we're going to look at today speaks directly to these two questions.

[8:24] So let's look at it. It's 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 3 to 12. 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 3 to 12. Okay, a little time out. All you grammar geeks, there's a really interesting grammar geek thing right here. Verses 3 to 12 in the original language is one sentence. That's pretty cool.

No editor will allow something like that now. I know some of you have to do writing. I think some of you have to do legal opinions. I don't think even lawyers would allow you to write a sentence which is so long with so many clauses. And here's the other grammar geek moment. Sorry. Then we'll go back to the thing for the rest of you non-grammar geeks that you're going to find interesting.

The other really interesting grammar geek thing is the very first phrase which we're going to read is the governing phrase of the whole sentence. So all of the other clauses are actually just adorning this fundamental first phrase. There you go. We'll get out of grammar geek moment into the text.

And here's how it begins. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's a wonderful way to begin a sentence. And everything else in the entire sentence is going to just try to unpack that, help us to understand its implied verb. It's calling us to bless God, the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ. And blessing is like a type of, an even type of higher praise.

It implies that we're willing to humble ourselves, to get on our knees, to bow to him, to acknowledge his greatness, his glory, his beauty, his love, his justice, the things he has done, all of the excellencies in and of himself. And it's a call for us to do that. And it's a very, very powerful thing.

[10:09] Now, the next thing that it goes into is something that I talk about a fair lot. And I know that when I talk sometimes to non-Christians about it, their eyes sort of glaze over. It sounds a little

bit like trying to get into a bit of an argument about, you know, something in history or something like that. It seems a little bit abstract. But for Paul, when he's writing this, this is not abstract.

This is life and death. This letter that we're reading, you know, it looks all fancy in a book like this. And at one time, this, you know, this, who has, other than Bibles, who has pages like this, right? And there was some gold type stuff on the edge. It looks very fancy. But this was just originally written probably around the year 62. It was, it would have been on some type of parchment or scroll. And Paul, Peter would have wrote it or had somebody else read it. I mean, if I was going to write something that had to go circulate to a lot of people, I'd want somebody with neater handwriting than mine, actually doing the writing so that people could actually read it. And it was a circular letter sent to a variety of churches. And it's written in 62. And so listen how he begins. So verse three begins, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And here's the thing where that which a lot of us, a lot of Canadians just think is like sort of nitpicking and abstract, doesn't matter. Peter tries it directly to meaning and hope. Look what he does. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We're going to pause there. Look at that. According to his great mercy, he has caused us, God has caused us who are Christians to be born again. God caused that. And when he causes us to be born again, he's also giving us a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Now, you know, as I said, a lot of Canadians think that's a bit like nitpicky or like it's just history or this is for Peter within a couple of years of writing this, Peter will die a torturous death in Rome under the emperor Nero. And he's going to die this torturous death within a couple of years of writing this. And he could have spared that entire death if he had just said to Nero and to others, actually, we made it up.

He didn't rise from the dead. And if Peter had just said that, we just made it up. He didn't rise from the dead. He would have been spared a torturous death in public.

[12 : 56] But he didn't recant. You know, when we watch the unfolding, ongoing tragedy in, and I'm just partly using this, the thing of Hamas and Gaza, because it's so much in the news. And one of the things I feel when I say things like this, I know there's lots of other very, very terrible conflicts going on in the world that don't get the same coverage. Part of the reason that the coverage in Hamas gets so much coverage is that one, first of all, there's a lot of anti-Semitism in our country. And the other thing is, I've been to Tel Aviv. And I've been to lots of parts of the only parts of the third world that I've been to are Africa. If you want to cover a news thing, you'd way rather be in Tel Aviv than a lot of other places. Reporters don't mind going to Tel Aviv. Tel Aviv is a spectacular, wonderful, vibrant city right on the Mediterranean with wonderful beaches, great food, and culture. It's one of the reasons it gets covered so much compared to the ongoing problems in Iraq and Syria and Sudan and Ethiopia and a whole lot of other places. But here's the point.

I mean, obviously, one of the problems with Hamas is they'd much rather have innocent civilians die rather than themselves. But they are willing to die for their cause. But what Peter does is not at all the same of what Hamas is doing. Peter dies for a fact. I mean, on one level, of course, he's dying for a cause, but he dies for a fact. If he merely was to say, no, the resurrection didn't happen, he would have been spared. But he doesn't deny it. He'll go to his death affirming that the grave was empty. And they saw Jesus alive. And he really did rise from the dead. And Peter will go to the grave maintaining that. This would have been one of the many pieces of evidence that a doctor like Ming

Wang would have taken as being so remarkable about the Christian faith that it would hang on something which is open to evidence like this. It's really quite remarkable and absolutely unique amongst the religions of the world and the spiritualities of the world, this openness to evidence and this concern for the truth. And if we were to say, well, you know, surely if Jesus rose from the dead, there'd be some type of evidence like maybe letters. Duh. And on and on and on and on. All written by people who said, we saw him. The grave is empty. We saw him. Now, if you could put up the first point, Claire, that would be very helpful because it's, I mean, the resurrection is going to be important in everything that follows. But here's my first point. Only in Jesus can you have true living hope. Only in Jesus can you have true living hope.

You have, another way to put it would be, you have true living hope in the person of Jesus. Now, hope and meaning are very, very puzzling things. Canadians don't think about it enough, the average Canadian, because on one hand, we desperately need hope. We desperately need hope. And when people lose hope, they want to die. It's connected to depression. It's connected to

suicide. It's connected to alcoholism. It's connected to affairs, to gambling, to going into debt, to risky behavior, to cutting yourself. On and on and on. When people lose hope, all sorts of bad things happen. But, you know, from a secular Canadian point of view, hope makes no sense. It is not something that helps you in terms of evolution. And anybody who studies it knows that's the case. Human beings have only been around for a very short period of time. What's the most successful creature on the planet that's been around the longest? The jellyfish, according to evolutionists, have been around 700 million years.

Does a jellyfish concern itself with hope? No. They are vastly more able to survive. And you just go on and on and on and on. How long have crocodiles been around? 95 million years. Do crocodiles struggle with issues of hope? No. Do they need hope to survive? No. Hope would add nothing.

[17 : 46] Well, jellyfish and crocs aren't particularly very social. Ants, little tiny ants. Well, they first appeared, according to evolutionists, 90 million years ago. Around 50 million years ago, they really multiplied and spread. So they've been around 50 million years. And ants are social or communal types of insects. And no ant thinks about hope. Why does hope even exist as a category? See, that's part of the whole thing about why this, you see, part of what's so beautiful about the Christian faith is that there's a deep coherence and beauty to it. A deep coherence and beauty to it.

That, and part of what's connected to hope is not just a deep coherence and beauty, but an overarching story that makes sense of human life and human history and human desires and human yearnings.

And we can understand that we're not just a result of blind chance in evolution, but there is a God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Three persons, one God. And that God created all things that exist. And he created human beings in his own image. And part of how he created human beings, God himself is outside of time, but he created us to be in time. And one of the aspects of us as human beings is that he built us to hope.

To think of the future and to think of the end and to hope. I mean, you know, in a sense, because when he created all things, there was no sin and was no death.

You plant seeds in the garden, you hope. You know, you're raising chickens, you hope. It's built into us, it's hardwired into us.

[19 : 42] Like, to my secular Canadian friends, it's explained to me hope. Why it is so desperately needed, and how it makes absolutely no sense whatsoever from the governing myth of Canadian society and culture.

We need hope. And the other thing about it is that not only do we need hope, but we, if we only have hope in this world, it's not enough.

Now, I have a counseling degree. I know, and every time I say this, people wonder, why am I not nicer? But that's a whole other separate topic of conversation. But I actually have a master's degree in counseling.

And I don't know what they, you know, it was just after fire was invented and the wheel was invented that I took my training to be a counselor. So I don't know what they do nowadays where people are more hip and, you know, all that.

You know, they're way smarter because TikTok's been invented and Instagram and Facebook. So I don't know what they teach now. But one of the things that was drummed into us all the time when you're in a counseling situation is there's three, there are four words you never say in a counseling situation.

[20 : 52] Things will get better. Never say it. Because things will get better. They get diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease a week later.

Their wife leaves them later. They get fired. They discover they have cancer. You don't know what's going to happen to them in three. You don't know what's going to happen to them. You can't say things will get better.

You're going to feel that because people go into counseling. Well, a lot of people go into counseling because they're massively screwed up. You can figure out whether how much of that was why I got a degree in it.

Once again, that's something for you guys to discuss when I'm not around over coffee. But I know some of the things you'll say, I probably have to say I resemble that comment.

Not resent, but I resemble it. But mostly people go into it because, of course, they're compassionate people. They want to help. They want to make a difference. And so it's very human desire to give that type of comfort because people need hope.

[21 : 55] But we can't say it. Now, I won't go into what you do try to say in counseling, and I've forgotten a lot of it. But, you see, the point is that that comment shows that what we desperately need is a hope that's both relevant to our day-to-day life, but is greater than life, that in a sense is outside of this order.

And only the gospel provides that. Listen again to the scripture sentence. Verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Why is the resurrection so important? Christianity hangs on it. If the resurrection is true, Christianity is true. And why is the resurrection so important? It means that it's something connected to our day-to-day life.

Jesus lived a normal human life. He had to work. He had to eat. He had to clip his toenails. He had to cut his hair. He had to learn how to deal with business customers before he went into his three years of ministry.

He had to suffer with trials and temptations. And he lives a life that you and I should have lived but aren't able to live. He lives a sinless life. He dies the death you and I deserve. He conquers that which causes death, which is sin.

[23 : 15] He conquers death. I mean, he pays for the sin. He conquers death. He's resurrected. He cannot die again. He's on the far side of it. And when we put our faith and trust in him, we are entering into Christ who is on the far side of death.

And so we are embracing and receiving a hope that is both understanding of life, relevant to life, but is beyond death. I didn't do very much racing.

But when I was younger, I did a few races. And one of the things you learn in a race is you don't shoot for the finish line. You shoot for 10 yards past the finish line.

Because if you shoot for the finish line, unconsciously you'll start to slow down at the end and then somebody will pass you. You shoot for whatever. There's 10 yards, 15 yards, whatever. You shoot from beyond it as if that's the real finish line.

And you keep going so you finish well. And that's exactly what Christ offers us in the Christian faith. Now, there's another thing which goes on here, which is just as a bit of an aside.

[24 : 23] You know, and this is, we every week we set this up to be able to help people who aren't able to come to church to be able to worship with us.

And we're going to continue doing this into the future. And there are shut-ins and all, and there are people who are distant. And you're not able to come to church. And we understand. We also understand that there are people who watch this because they're trying to figure out the Christian faith a little bit.

And they're trying to figure out what's going on. I just want to say to some of you who maybe don't fit into those two categories, you really need to do worship face-to-face.

Like, it's not just about Jesus giving you hope in the future. It is that. But one of the means that he gives you for grace, because, you see, one of the things we need to do is we need to be reminded about this because we forget about it.

We need to pledge our allegiance to Christ together. And it's not just that when we're dealing with these things of suffering and all, which I'm going to talk about again in a moment, that one of the things which is so precious about the Christian faith is that his presence is with you when you're dealing with trials and suffering, and his power is with you.

[25 : 40] But it's not just his presence and his power. It's also his people. He's given you his people. And you need to be face-to-face.

I just want to encourage you. Yes, it's inconvenient. It's way easier to watch a service in your pajamas and at your convenience. And I'm not, we're not going to stop doing this.

I just really want to encourage you. Face-to-face worship is so important to hope and meaning and living the Christian life. I just want to encourage you. I just want to encourage you.

That's all. Anyway, let's get back to the text. I have to watch my time. There's a few more things.

We'll be a bit quicker going through the rest of the text. One of the things which is so neat about the Christian faith, well, here, let's see where this next bit goes.

Just as I said, you need to be part of a face-to-faceness, and not just face-to-face on Sunday morning, but the women's ministry led by Lisa and others, and we're hoping that as early as July, but if not, it looks like we have a person to lead a men's ministry as of September, and there's a

youth group which is going on, and there's small groups, and there's friendships, and there's all of those types of community things which are all very, very desperately needed, but the Lord knows that we get discouraged.

[27 : 06] And so listen to what he says next to help us in our discouragement. Verse 4 and 5, right? So he's talking, he's giving a resurrection from the dead, verse 4, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for his salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

If you could put up the next point, that would be great, Claire. Only in Jesus does God pledge to keep you and your inheritance until the end and beyond. That's the powerful thing here.

You see, this is one of the things that's wonderful about the Christian faith. It's not just, in a sense, putting my faith in Christ, and then I'm born again, and I'm going to live forever in heaven. What you're really entering into, the Bible constantly says that what you're entering into is a covenant, a new covenant.

You're entering into God's kingdom, and that kingdom begins in tiny little seed form, and with all sorts of imperfections on this side of the grave, and will be consummated in the new heaven and the new earth.

And so, in a sense, if you were to go into a covenant, it's a little bit like marriage. The whole Christian understanding of marriage is that marriage is a type of covenant. And so, if you go to a marriage ceremony, a Christian marriage ceremony, the husband and the wife, they make pledges to each other.

[28 : 28] They make promises to each other. And then they seal that with the joining of hands, with a ring, etc., etc. And it's the same type of model in terms of when you come to put your faith and trust in Christ.

You come to Jesus and say, Jesus, I need hope in my life. I need meaning in my life. There's an emptiness in my life. I've done wrong, and I can't fix myself. And I've come to believe that you really did.

You really are the Savior. You really have risen from the dead. And you hear me when I speak to you. And I'm coming to you. I give myself to you.

That's the pledge. I give myself to you. And I'm so thankful that you will take me. And when it's not just that Jesus takes you, it's also God the Father and the Holy Spirit.

And when God takes you, he makes a pledge to you. He pledges to you. I have an inheritance for you.

[29 : 32] And I pledge that I will keep that inheritance for you. And I pledge to you, weak Christian, I pledge to you that I will keep you until you receive that inheritance.

That's what's being said here in the text. I pledge to you, God the Father says. Your grip is weak. Your grip will let go. Your eyes will be distracted.

You will have limp knees. You will have times of great selfishness. And you will have times of great pain where it's hard for you to believe that I even exist.

But my eyes will never leave you. My hand will never let go of you. I will always hold you in the hollow of my hand. I, the one who have brought you to faith in Christ, I will keep you.

And I will keep you for a future or an end that will not ever perish, not ever fade, not ever, what's the other word that he uses here, that will not ever be defiled.

[30 : 50] That's his pledge to us when we put our faith and trust in him. Now, you can't have, if there's no hope in life, there is no meaning.

And if there is no meaning in life, there can be no hope. And in Canada, and for many people, it's very hard to believe there can be meaning or hope when death is the final word about us.

Or where there is suffering or there is pain. And the Bible directly tackles that. In fact, one of the things, this is just opening it up, I'm not going to say very much about it right now, because a good part of chapter 3 and chapter 4 are all going to be about the topic of suffering.

It's going to be one of the main things that we're going to talk about in the book of 1 Peter over the coming weeks. But look at how the Bible anticipates this human concern with discouragement, which he's already starting to address about his pledge to you, that he will keep you and he will keep your inheritance.

But look at this, verse 6. So in this you rejoice, right, the fact that you have an inheritance and all, that God is keeping you. But listen, though, in this you rejoice, though, though now for a little while,

if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials.

[32 : 10] Trials means hard times. Hard times. Hard times. Maybe it's a hard time of depression that leads you to cutting yourself.

Maybe it's a hard time that leads you to drinking. Maybe it's a hard time that just leads you to despair. Hard time that means you just want to spend all your time in bed. But hard times. Just read that again. If necessary, you have been grieved by various trials. But listen to that word, so. So that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. That's the second coming or when you see him face to face at your moment of death. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your soul.

Now there's that word rejoice and all that. It's one of those double meaning words in the original language which English can't happen so you have to choose one or the other.

[33 : 23] But it's in a sense speaking to two groups in the room right now. Back when I was in Eganville, there were two elderly ladies that I had to go and visit.

One elderly lady had been brought up very well off. I mean, I don't know, if she was still alive now, she'd be in her early hundreds, maybe 110. She went to university when that was very rare for women, grew up with money, was very, very well trained, had two daughters who loved her and paid lots of attention to her, had grandkids, lived in a really beautiful house, had house help and housekeeper and all of her needs were being met and every time I visited her, all she did was complain.

It was the most depressing visit. She'd complain because she couldn't play the piano the way she used to. She'd complain about the fact that the person who her daughters were paying to look after her didn't clean the counter the right way.

She would just complain and complain and complain. At the same time, I was visiting another woman who was at the end of her life who grew up and continued to be dirt poor. She had a physical handicap.

She had never been married. She had no children or grandchildren. She was on welfare. And her smile lit up the room. Her smile lit up the room.

[34 : 52] Now, this thing of rejoice is speaking to two groups of people who can be in this room. And I can think of many people that I've known over the years who've suffered very, very trying things but somehow have a joy in the midst of it.

And this sense of rejoice in the Greek, it's one of the things, one of the reasons I think God chose to reveal the New Testament in Greek is that it often has this double meaning so he can speak to two audiences at the same time.

And for those of us who are living that right now, you're going through a very hard time but somehow there's a sense of joy. The Bible's speaking to you. And for those of us who are going through a very hard time but we don't, it's speaking to you to turn to him.

Choose joy. Choose to be like that poor woman, not like the complaining woman because often joy is a choice. At least a part, it begins with a choice.

But here's the thing about the whole sentence. If you could put up the point, Claire, that would be helpful. Only in Jesus does your suffering have meaning and purpose. That's the whole thing.

[35 : 56] You go back and you look at the verse again. There's a sense that, there's an acknowledgement that on this side of the grave, and I'm going to talk a little bit in the next coming weeks, I wasn't going to do it now, I saw that I'm going to have about two or three sermons later on about it so I'm just planning an idea here.

One of these fundamental ideas is that contrary to what Canadians expect, just as we understand at an intuitive level if there's no meaning, there can't be any hope. And if there's no hope, there can't be meaning.

But if there is hope, there must be meaning. And if there is meaning, there must be hope. And the Bible says there's both and it comes to you. It's created into you by God that you desire these things as human beings.

And as a result of your fall and rebellion against God, it's something now which is fractured within you, which is lost within your power, but you still have a sense that drives you that you need it.

And the gospel is the answer to the longings and the yearnings and the brokenness of your heart to say that God has come in the person of his son to restore to you hope and meaning, a hope and a meaning even in the presence and the face of very, very, very hard times.

[37 : 03] One of the things that's going to be so powerful about this, he's going to be talking later on to women who become Christians and women in that status have next to no society and those of them who have pagan husbands and how do they have meaning and have hope?

He's talking to a society, you know, in the time of Roman society, one third of the entire empire were slaves and many of the people that he's writing to are slaves. How do you have hope and see meaning when you're a slave?

And he's going to say there is meaning and there is hope. And you can go looking for it and pray and pour out your heart to God to know that you're looking for something which is there. And this comes up to the very final point as I close up.

You know, it's really interesting that he acknowledges the fact that many of the people he's writing the letter to have never seen Jesus yet they believe in him and trust in him. Why on earth is that? Why can that be? Well, that's because God's not just purely in the business of revealing facts to us. He wants to save us. And look at this very, very powerful thing. I'll then explain what it means. Verses 10 through 12. Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time, now listen to this, what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he, that is the Spirit of Christ, predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

[38 : 35] One of the things which is going to be so important and precious in dealing with suffering is to understand that Christ suffered. Just as one of the things which is so important to understanding the meaning of suffering is to understand that Jesus defeated death and sin on the cross and in his resurrection.

But notice it's the Spirit. When we read the Old Testament, it was the Spirit who caused the Old Testament to be written. And then look at verse 12. It was revealed to them, that's the Old Testament writers, that they were serving not themselves, but you.

And this you is speaking to you guys too, to me, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which, beautiful phrase, things into which angels long to look.

If you could put up the final point, Claire, that would be wonderful. The same Holy Spirit that inspired the Old Testament is the same Holy Spirit that inspired the New Testament is the same Holy Spirit that brought you to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ when you heard the one and only biblical gospel.

One Holy Spirit, seamless. One of my favorite hymns is Great is Thy Faithfulness. And I, earlier on in the service, I urged people to consider how important it is to have face-to-face worship.

[40 : 09] One of the lines I love in that hymn is, Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide. I was talking to a sports psychologist a couple of months ago, and one of the things which are interesting about sports psychologists is unlike all other psychology that basically deals with problems, sports psychologists deal with how to get better, how to succeed.

And anyway, one of the things I was talking to her about is I said, you know, I said, you know, what you're doing is really, really important, and there's lots of things that, you know, I can learn and others can learn from it.

I said, but you know, one of the things is that having a really, really good attitude and believing all of these positive things doesn't stop bad things from happening to you. So we can understand that there's meaning and there's hope, and it doesn't mean that those bad things aren't going to happen to you, but here's the thing.

Think about those two women that I was describing that I was visiting with back when I was in my previous parish. It's way easier to deal with hard things if you have a sense that there's meaning and hope than dealing with hard things if all you are is grumpy and selfish and you think there's no hope.

And it's not only that it's easier to deal with hard things, the Bible says you're not dealing with these hard things by yourself. The Holy Spirit is present with you.

[41 : 39] You do not walk that walk alone. The presence of Jesus, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the power of the Holy Spirit, is with you as you deal with those very, very, very hard things.

And hopefully, by God's grace, and obviously, this cannot always happen, also His people, the three Ps, His presence, His power, and His people as you deal with those hard things.

And not only that, as you celebrate the good things. So many people now, they're so alone, they need to hear way to go. And actually, you can get through a small group in a church, way to go.

Great that you got that promotion. You can come and be thankful for others, and you can get the back slapping, the hugs, the singing of the praises, it's all one.

It's the beauty of the gospel. Let's stand. bow our heads in prayer.

[42 : 49] Father, we give you thanks and praise that when we put our faith and trust in Jesus, that we are entering into a covenant with you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that not only do we, in a sense, pledge ourselves to you and give ourselves to you, but that you make a pledge to us.

You pledge to us that we will be born again. You pledge to us that you will receive us and that we are yours. You pledge to us that our sins are forgiven, that that slate has been wiped clean.

You pledge to us that the righteousness of Christ will be ours. You pledge to us that we have an inheritance in heaven. You pledge to us that you will keep us, that we might persevere, and you pledge to us that there is, in fact, the possibility to understand a purpose and a meaning in even the hardest times in our lives.

And, Father, we are so grateful for your mercy and kindness to us in doing this. We thank you that you do not weigh our merits or our social capital or our social worth when you make this offer to us.

You make this offer to rich and poor alike. You make this offer to people in every ethnic group and racial group and language group and cultural group that you do not weigh any of these accomplishments that you know that we all stand equal before you in terms of our need.

[44 : 08] And you make this offer and this pledge to us and we thank and praise you for those of us who are in Christ that your Holy Spirit moved us to make such a pledge that we would be yours.

And we thank you, Father, that when we gather on a Sunday morning like today that as Steve leads us in the Lord's Supper that we can remember once again how we've fallen, how you forgive us, and the new covenant that Jesus inaugurated and remind us of what he accomplished for us on the cross and that we can do that until he comes to gain or until we see you face to face.

And Father, we thank you for this. We ask, Father, that you help us to grow in our gripping of the gospel and grow in our ability to celebrate with others, commiserate with others, and lift each other up in prayer.

And we ask all these things in Jesus' name, saying, Amen.