

Hope for the Disappointed

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[0 : 00] Well, this morning is a little bit different like the last couple of weeks. It's a bit more of a topical talk as opposed to working through a particular passage of the Bible. So I'm going to put the verses on the screen for us as we think about hope for the disappointment.

And we do all face disappointments in life, don't we? A bit like the guy who said, I bought a DVD on dealing with disappointment. When I opened the box, it was empty. It's a bit mean, really, isn't it? But more seriously, we face disappointments with work, don't we? Whether that's uni work or paid work or housework. And the disappointment often comes because of the futility of our work. You know, you put all this effort in and you don't get the results you want or the appreciation you had hoped for. Or it's replaced by AI, as it seems to be doing these days. Or you clean your room or your house and it gets dirty again. Or we face disappointment with our plans that never seem to go smoothly. Or is that just me? Your plans go smoothly? I was trying to replace my son's door handle yesterday and you don't want to ask how many trips to Bunnings it took me. Nothing goes smoothly. There's disappointment with relationships, whether it's people who've let you down or not having the partner you wanted or, at worst, losing someone you love.

And there's disappointment with wealth or lack thereof or health, which sometimes fails or sometimes never quite gets better. And there's disappointment with our worth and purpose as well. For younger people, if they fail to get the marks they want at uni or school and then fail to get the job they desire, they can feel like they've lost their worth. They feel like a failure.

Or for those who can't get any job, they feel like they have no purpose. And for some older people who are no longer able to do what they once did, they can feel like they have neither purpose nor worth.

It's all a bit depressing, isn't it? Aren't you glad you came this morning? But the point is, we all face disappointments in life. And as many of you know, the big reason the Bible gives for this is that we live in a beautiful but broken world, don't we?

[2 : 22] And you only have to turn on the news to see that. And we are caught up in that, aren't we? You know, so there are beautiful things we enjoy like laughter and food and friends and family. But there are broken things that cause disappointment like our sadness and sickness, other people's selfishness, which impacts us. Or just life's repetitiveness.

You know, having to go back to work week in, week out, or whatever it is. We all face disappointments in this world because we live in a beautiful but broken one. And so is there any hope in the face of these disappointments?

Are there any solutions to them? Which is point two on the outline. Well, I'm going to highlight two solutions that people try in our world. And I've called them sort of solutions because they only sort of work.

And the first one is the one we saw from our first reading, where they chase after the things of this world for fulfillment or contentment.

And so you might remember from our first reading, the guy says, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good. In other words, I'm going to use pleasure and see if that brings fulfillment, contentment in life.

[3 : 37] But immediately, verse one, he says that proved to be meaningless. And by pleasure, he kind of has the idea of parties. So there's laughter, verse two, cheering himself with wine, verse three.

It's kind of like a party scene. And then he goes to projects. After trying pleasure, he looks at projects. So he built houses and vineyards and gardens and parks and made reservoirs to water them.

And then after projects, he tried possessions, which sounds like our world, doesn't it? You know, accumulating more and more stuff, silver and gold. His own choir, male and female singers, as well as a harem.

He even became great in his city, gained status as well. In fact, in verse 10, he says, he denied himself nothing his eyes desired, refused his heart no pleasure.

And it seemed to work for a moment. See the rest of verse 10 on the screen there? My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil.

[4 : 43] There was some reward of contentment for his work. The thing is, it just didn't last. Because in the very next verse, verse 11, he says, I surveyed all that his hands had done, and what he had toiled to achieve and accumulate, and everything was meaningless.

Chasing after the wind. Nothing. In fact, it's futile. Just like chasing after the wind is futile. Have you ever tried to do that? Chase after the wind and try and catch?

It's futile, right? You can't do it. So also, he's trying to find lasting fulfillment in the things of this world. It's futile. Why? Well, two reasons.

First, because the things themselves don't last, do they? Our wealth goes. People often say money is easy come, easy go. But in my experience, it's only easy go, isn't it?

Our possessions break. You know, your kids drop things, or your dog eats things. Or you park your car down at Tunstall Square, and someone scrapes the side of it with a trolley.

[5 : 52] Not that I'm bitter about any of these. And our work needs to be done again and again and again. Imagine you only had to clean your room or your house once.

And it just stayed clean forever. Our possessions, our work, our wealth, and of course, our health does not last, does it?

And so, first, the things of the world themselves don't last, and so, you know, they can't bring a lasting fulfillment. And second, even the fulfillment they do bring doesn't last.

I mean, have you ever got something new which brought you some satisfaction, some contentment, only to find over time it's now lost a bit of its shine? You know, you just, oh yeah, it's all right now, I suppose.

It's kind of like that with, you know, kids in their iPhones, they get a brand new one. In fact, even adults in their iPhones, they get a new one, and then six months later, the next model comes out, and you're thinking, oh, that's not bad, not good.

[6 : 54] Even the contentment they bring doesn't last. I remember hearing a guy at 5pm church sharing their story about how they became a Christian, and it started by noticing his auntie in Singapore, who was quite wealthy, owned some property and some luxury cars.

But he said this, he said, she has everything she wants, but is one of the most unhappy people I know. Because the contentment that these things bring does not last either.

In fact, speaking of Singapore, this is Philip, and together with his brother Robert, own most of the property in Singapore, worth \$15 billion.

I think this is the actual family that the movie Crazy Rich Asians was based on. And Philip said before he became a Christian, he said, despite having all this wealth, he was always in search for a better life, a better purpose, a better me, a better everything, until he found Jesus.

And so even for this guy who had seemingly everything, even the contentment abroad didn't last. The point is, chasing after the things of this world is only a sort of solution in the face of disappointment.

[8 : 12] It may bring us some satisfaction for a while, but it doesn't last, either because the things themselves don't last, or the contentment they bring does not last.

That's why people have to keep chasing them, keep looking for something better, looking for something more. I mean, have you heard anyone ever say, I have enough money I don't want anymore?

I haven't. And so another solution people try then, in the face of disappointment, is to then simply accept it. And so they use that phrase made popular during our lockdowns, during COVID.

Do you know this phrase? It is what it is. I remember hearing that during lockdowns, and that's when it first started, down here at least. I don't know if you've used that.

I've used that phrase before myself. And when you think about it, it too is only a sort of solution. Because yes, we have to accept the things we cannot change.

[9 : 13] That is true. Otherwise, we just become bitter and angry about them. But on its own, that phrase offers no hope, does it? It simply says it is what it is.

Tough luck, lump it. Tough luck, that's it. Which means the statement on its own is more of a depressing resignation than an uplifting contentment.

But these are the common sort of solutions people will try and use in the face of disappointment. But I want to suggest this morning that Jesus gives us a better one.

He offers us life that comes with an uplifting contentment that does last. And a certain hope that it will get better.

Point three. And in our second reading, Jesus uses picture language to talk about him as a shepherd and people as sheep. And he says in verse 10, The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy, but he has come that they may have life and have it to the full.

[10 : 22] But to give us this life in verse 10, he had to, verse 11, lay down his own life for us. You see, we may have been disappointed by others, but at times we too have been a disappointment to others and to God.

At times we've not treated God as God. Even though he enables us to live and gave us this world, we sometimes ignore him and mess up this world.

The Bible calls this sin. But Jesus lovingly laid down his life for us at the cross to pay for our sin. To pay for all the times we've disappointed him.

So that we can have that, verse 10, life to the full. That's why he's called the good shepherd in verse 11. That he would do that for us. Did you hear about the guy in Liverpool who rammed his car into that parade a few weeks ago?

Did you hear about that? It was on the news. And the last time I checked, the number of the injured people was up to 79. The man is in custody. I think he's already appeared once before the magistrate.

[11 : 37] I'm not sure where his case is up to at the moment. But imagine, you know, he's found guilty and then he turns up to court for sentencing. And the judge issues the death penalty.

I don't think the UK has the death penalty, but imagine for a moment. And yet in an extraordinary act of love, one of the 79 injured gets up and says, I'll take his place. And then lays down his life and dies so that Liverpool man can have life.

I mean, just think about it for a moment. These, one of those injured people, the ones we've been, you know, worried about and praying for, those that are horrified for, one of those gets up and says that.

I mean, what kind of crazy love would you have to have to do that for that Liverpool man? Is that not exactly what Jesus has done for us?

You see, when it comes to how we've treated God, we are like that Liverpool man. And Jesus is like the injured one, the one we've mistreated.

[12 : 38] And yet in an act of crazy love, he takes our place, lays down his life for our sin so that we can have life.

We believe in him. And the life he brings, as we saw before in verse 10, is life to the full. That is life eternal. You can't get any fuller life than eternal life, can you?

And this eternal life is life with God that starts the moment we believe in Jesus. And it comes with all these great things which bring a lasting and uplifting contentment in the face of various disappointments.

And so what are these things? Well, first, life with God comes with great worth. Worth that is no longer found in our success or our relationships or our wealth.

It's found in Jesus. For if Jesus loved you with that crazy kind of love, then doesn't that tell you you are worth a crazy kind of amount?

[13 : 50] It does, doesn't it? And that worth does not change. It stays the same no matter what. No matter how successful we are, no matter what kind of relationships we have, no matter how much wealth we've got or not, our worth stays the same crazy amount.

And so if you are disappointed with how your life has turned out, if you are feeling worthless because you don't feel like you're as successful as you wanted to be, then you can look in the mirror and legitimately say you are worth a crazy kind of amount.

Because you are. And that helps us to have some lasting contentment in the face of that particular disappointment. It's the same with purpose.

Life with God now comes with great purpose. It's no longer attached to our work. It's attached to Jesus and living for him. Like we heard from Ying, who now seeks to learn and work for God's glory, not her own glory.

And this is actually freeing because you no longer have to jump from job to job looking for your great purpose in life. Don't mishear me. There's nothing wrong with changing jobs.

[15 : 05] I mean, it's much more common these days than it used to be. That's fine. But a lot of younger people are searching for their great purpose in life. And they put all this pressure on them to find that perfect job where they can fulfill their purpose.

But you've already got one. It's serving Jesus. And that frees you from that pressure. Or if you have to stop doing what you once did because you retire or because of your health and you no longer feel like you've got purpose in life, well, you do.

Because our purpose to serve Jesus always remains. It may look different at different stages of life, but we always have great purpose, which helps bring that uplifting and lasting contentment, doesn't it?

Or life with God now comes with great peace that helps us when our plans fail. For we know that God sees the bigger picture and knows more and is in control and still works to grow us for our good.

Unlike Ying, when she couldn't find the answers, she said she could trust God who knows more and found peace. Or like another member of our congregation who's been waiting for surgery for three years.

[16 : 19] Finally got a date for the surgery. But then the other week, they phoned the hospital only to find out that their name had fallen off the list. Three years of waiting.

Massive disappointment. But when I messaged them, they were okay and able to say their words. God obviously needed the surgeon for a much greater reason.

I can be able to say that in the face of such disappointment. Because they know God sees the bigger picture. Know that God's in control. Knew that peace that God gives.

Well, this life with God now comes with great presence. God with us to help us through our struggles. Whether they're health struggles, financial struggles, or accommodation struggles.

God, well, in Hebrews chapter 13, God says, Never will I leave you. Never will I forsake you. He is ever present with us to help us.

[17 : 22] And this help can be in terms of providing for us. And so one of my Bible study groups, we've been praying for a member who was struggling to find affordable accommodation. And just a couple of weeks ago, they messaged to say they'd found some after, you know, coming down to the wire.

And someone else from church just so happened at the same time to offer some money which will help cover the bond. Just like that. God was with her to help her, in this case, by providing for her.

Well, God is with us to help us by strengthening us. Another guy, some of us know actually, who used to come here, but has moved the church to be closer to home, said that he faced a lot of struggles through life.

And he said, If it wasn't for God's strength, he's not sure he would be here. In fact, his favorite verse in the Bible was this one from Philippians chapter 4, I can do all things through him who gives me strength.

And it's his favorite because he has experienced it time and time again. In fact, he ended up getting it tattooed on his arm. Not that I'm suggesting you do that.

[18 : 31] You can if you want, I suppose. And the context here in Philippians is actually contentment. The very verse before that talks about Paul, how he's learned to be content.

He's learned the secret of being content. And the secret is verse 13, relying on God's strength. Though it is a process, he says, learn.

It's a process of turning from our disappointment to God for help and strength. The point is God's great presence is always with us to help us through struggles, which brings an uplifting and lasting contentment in the face of life's disappointments.

Life with God even comes with a great belonging that helps us with our relationships because we are now part of God's family with hundreds of brothers and sisters. Yes, sometimes our brothers and sisters can let us down, that's true.

But often, more often, they build us up, help us out. Careful each other. Like the example I mentioned a moment ago of giving money to those in need.

[19 : 35] I still remember, I've said this story before, but it's just kind of burnt into my brain. I remember, I think we were here two years, we're living in a house next door where the childcare centre is now.

The house is knocked down, obviously. But the bathroom in it was falling apart. The tiles were literally falling off the wall. I tried to put them up several times, but they kept falling off. Always says more about my lack of handyman skills, actually.

But anyway, Michelle and I went away with the kids on a holiday. And when we came back, another family from church had renovated our bathroom. And the two weeks were away.

We were speechless. Not that I'm suggesting if you join God's family, you get a new bathroom automatically. But more often, we help each other out. And what's more, our heavenly Father, along with our big brother, Jesus, will always keep their word to us.

Never break it. This great belonging, this great place in God's family is always ours and so can always bring that uplifting and lasting contentment. And lastly, this life with God now comes with great hope that the future will be better.

[20 : 49] Hope that helps us when we suffer. Hope that we heard about two weeks ago, didn't we? Hope that when our bodies die, our souls will live on through death into heaven.

And that when Jesus returns, he will raise our bodies, whether they've been buried or cremated, it doesn't matter. If God can create the world, he can raise our bodies from a burial site or ashes scattered and make them perfect bodies to enjoy a perfect world to come where we'll enjoy life with God and each other even more than we do now.

And as we heard, it's a hope that is proved certain by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, for which we have historical evidence. As I've said before, our faith is not blind faith.

Our faith in Jesus' resurrection is reasonable, rational faith. It's based on evidence. And this hope, this certain hope, helps us not to lose heart.

As it says there on the screen, therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day, for our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

[22 : 04] I don't know about you, but not all my troubles feel light and momentary. Are yours? And yet, the fact that Paul can say that when he had huge troubles just highlights how great that eternal glory will be.

That in the face of it, the troubles do seem light and momentary. I was talking with another member from our nine o'clock service recently who has faced several disappointments in life.

Some years ago, they found out that he has a degenerative disease, which means his mobility will gradually get less and less and there's nothing they can do about that. And it has.

He's gone from walking to using a walking stick to using a pusher and now a wheelchair. Then he found out he has multiple myeloma, which is a type of blood cancer, which can only be managed, not cured.

And recently, he's been in and out of hospital with hardly any energy to do the things that he loves to do. In fact, last weekend was his first granddaughter's wedding, which he could not go to.

[23 : 14] It was disappointment after disappointment after disappointment. And yet, when I speak with him, even this morning, he was here before, he can still smile with contentment.

I'm sure he has his bad days, but he can still smile with contentment because he has this certain hope. I hope that far outweighs our suffering.

I hope that it will get better. In fact, the reason I chose those verses is because they're the very ones he's quoted to me before. See, we all face disappointment in this world because while it's beautiful, it is broken.

And so we can try and find fulfillment and contentment by chasing the things of this world, but it doesn't last. Or we can try and find it by just saying it is what it is with no hope, but that's a rather depressing resignation.

or we can trust in Jesus who offers us life to the full, life eternal with God the moment we believe in him.

[24 : 19] A life that comes with those great things that bring contentment in the face of life's disappointments. We can still say it is what it is, but now we can say it with great certain hope that brings an uplifting contentment as well.

And so the question for us this morning is do you want this? If you do, then believe in Jesus. Accept his crazy kind of love which saw him die for your sin.

And you can start your life with God now with all those great things. If you want to find out more, then please speak with me or Fiona or someone else you've seen up the front after the service.

We'd love to talk to you more about that. And for us who already believe, then the question is do we actively remember this? Sometimes we miss out on the contentment that is ours because we forget what our life with God comes with or we take it for granted.

And we fall back into the world's ways of chasing those things or just resigning ourselves to those things without hope, without remembering the hope. But we're to remember our life with God comes with great worth and purpose, great peace and presence, a great belonging and hope that it will get better.

[25 : 38] Do we actively remember that? And I say actively because it does take some effort. You know, when we face disappointment, our natural reaction, and it is natural, is to then kind of turn and wallow in it or dwell on it.

but we've got to stop ourselves from continuing to do that and turn to God and remember the life we have through Jesus. We've got to turn to God in prayer, express our disappointment in lament, cry out to him for help and strength, keep reading his word, listening to songs that speak of his crazy love for us through Christ.

Keep bringing to mind all that comes with this life. worth, purpose, peace, presence, belonging, hope. And as we actively do this, as we learn to do this, we will learn contentment, as Paul said.

We're to actively remember this life Jesus has given us so that in the face of disappointments, we can enjoy that uplifting and lasting contentment with hope it will get better.

Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for Jesus who died in our place so that we might have life to the full.

[27 : 05] We thank you that this life begins the moment we believe in Jesus, is life with you now, which comes with great worth and purpose, great peace and presence, great belonging and hope.

May help us, we pray, when we face disappointments in life to actively remember the life you have given us all because of Jesus. We ask it in his name.

Amen.