

Why Hope?

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[0 : 0 0] If you're joining us for the first time tonight, my name is Aaron. I'm a minister here at St. John's. Our Advent series, as you've heard, is we're going to continue looking at the theme of hope, which is a great thing to look at because we simply can't live without hope.

Viktor Frankl was a Holocaust survivor. He was a psychiatrist. And when he was put on a concentration camp in World War II, even though he was a prisoner, he still had the mind of a scientist. So whilst he was there, he studied and thought about what was happening to people's psyches around him. After the war, he wrote his famous book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, where he tried to sort of unpack people's response to the terrible situation they all faced together. He said in his book that people tended to respond in four different ways. Some prisoners became just brutal. Others simply gave up. They just lost all hope. And let me read to you from his book. The prisoner who had lost his faith in the future was doomed.

With his loss of belief in the future, he also lost his spiritual hold. He let himself decline and became subject to mental and physical decay. Usually this happened quite suddenly in the form of a crisis, the symptoms of which were familiar to the experienced camp inmate. Usually it would begin with a prisoner refusing one morning to get dressed and wash or go out to the parade grounds. No entreaties, no blows, no threats had any effect. He just lay there, hardly moving. He simply gave up. So some prisoners just gave up. Other prisoners, though, they sort of held on for a period. They got through the camps and they got through the camps thinking, you know, when we get back to our town, I'll go back to my old hopes, my old dreams for my life. But as Frankl followed up with people, many of these people fell apart post-war because there was basically nothing on earth. Nothing could compensate for the pain they experienced. There was another group, though, a very small group. They stayed kind. They certainly weren't happy to be there, but there was some kind of buoyancy in their personality, some inner strength that sustained them. Frankl said there was a hope or a sense of meaning that the pain they were going through couldn't destroy. And I think it's here that Frankl helps us get to the importance of hope in the Christian's life. Because as I said, there is no way to get through life without hope. There is no way to get through our suffering without hope. And not just any hope. Because what your hope is in is key.

Now, let's get to 1 Peter 1 and look about what it adds to the idea of Christian hope. And each week, remember, we're trying to add an element, a dimension, another layer to the idea, to the definition of Christian hope. So what does 1 Peter 1 say about it? How does 1 Peter distinguish Christian hope from just kind of regular old hope? And he does it in three ways, I think. Peter talks about the source of Christian hope. He talks about the qualities of Christian hope. And he talks about what our experience of that hope should be. So he talks about the source of hope, the qualities of hope, and our experience of that hope. And that's the sermon right there. So we're going to look at those three things. We'll start with the source of Christian hope. You remember from last week, when we talk about Christian hope, we're not talking about optimism. The source of Christian hope, we're not talking about your temperament. The source of

Christian hope is found in 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 our living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. So do you see what he's saying here? Hope comes. So the hope that we get, it comes as a result of receiving something else from God. And that other thing that we receive is being born again. And that is grounded in the resurrection of Christ. And it's interesting, isn't it, that 1 Peter talks about the resurrection and not the crucifixion. God raised Jesus from the dead. It's a fact of history. And in doing that, God is saying, there is a future beyond death for everyone, everyone who follows him. The resurrection was God's guarantee that he will raise you from the dead. See, regular old hope is grounded in just, you know, the odds falling in your

favor. Christian hope is grounded in the fact of the resurrection. So the source of hope is Christ raised from the dead. That's how secure our hope is in. That's how secure our hope is.

[5 : 17] Okay, so how else does Peter help us understand hope? He says, now, next, let me tell you about the qualities of this hope, the substance of this hope. In 1 Peter verse 4, he says, our hope is in a future that is, and look at these words here, imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for you. That's a great lineup, isn't it? Let's look at these words here. So the life after death life that God has for us that we hope in, it's imperishable. Everything, everything in this world is perishable, right? Everything, but not the treasures of heaven. So my wife and I love a TV show called The Crown. We've just finished season four. There are two things we say often during The Crown.

The second most common thing we say is, goodness, Charles, they make him out to be such a jerk, don't they? And my wife and I discuss this. Was he really a jerk? We don't know. It was a TV show. But the thing we say the most is this. Would you look at the rooms? Would you look at that room? Would you look at the paintings? Look how high the ceiling is. Here's the thing. I mean, we love that.

We love looking at the furniture in the rooms and all that. But as incredible as those places are, they're perishable. They'll crumble one day. But not what God has for us. What God has for us is imperishable. And, Peter says, it's undefiled, which means the things that God has for us, the life he has for us, it's beyond the reach of being contaminated.

Even the best things in this world are imperfect. Even, not even me, but me, in my best moments in life, in my absolute best moments in my life, if I look deep enough, if I peel the layers back enough, I know there's selfishness there. What God has for us, our eternity with him, it's undefiled. We will be free from selfishness. We'll be free from sickness and brokenness and anxiety and doubt and death and loss. We'll be free from uncertainty. We'll be free from hurting people. We'll be free from people hurting us. The future God has for us, it's imperishable. It's undefiled. And it's unfading. One way to look at this is just to say, we're not going to be bored with our inheritance. Our enjoyment of Christ, our enjoyment of each other, our enjoyment of that life to come will just grow with eternity. And then do you see what

[8 : 22] Peter says straight afterwards? This incredible inheritance of eternal life with God, verse 4, is kept in heaven for you. This word kept, it's a military term. It means God is guarding it.

So this inheritance, it can't be stolen from us. Our hope can't be stolen from us. So where are we? God has promised us, God has promised us this astonishing future. It's astonishing in beauty. It's astonishing in security. And the resurrection is proof that God is serious about this. He will do this. And that should give us a tremendous amount of hope. Okay.

So I've talked about, what have we talked about? We've talked about the source of the hope. We've talked about the qualities of the hope. Next, Peter talks about what should our experience be? As we become more hopeful people, what should our experience of that be now?

So big picture here. God sets out this amazing future for us. And he says, live in the light of it now. So what's our experience of it right now? Look at the end of verse 4 again and what follows.

Do you see what it's saying there? So it's kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith. Do you see what it's saying? Our inheritance is being guarded for us, and we are being guarded for our inheritance. So what does that mean? Well, here's the question it answers. What's God doing right now? What's God up to? What's he doing right now for you?

[10 : 13] What's he going to be doing tomorrow for you? What's he going to be doing next year for you? And the year after that, the year after that, what's God going to be doing for you for the rest of your life? He will be shielding you by his power. He'll be protecting you. That doesn't mean you won't suffer. No, God is guarding you so you make it to enjoy this inheritance. He's holding on to you.

It's like he's put his arm around you and he's walking you into that eternity. He's holding on to you. You will get to that eternity that God has promised. He's guarding you for that. You can have no doubts about whether you get to enjoy eternity with God or not. He has you. Now, what else does this experience of hope look like for us now? Look at verses 6 and 7. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you've been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire. So Peter is not, you know, living in this world, just sort of happy, clappy, oblivious world. He's quite real here. He says your life is going to have trials, but he says you know what's going to happen during your suffering if

you go to hope and not despair. If you go to hope, when you do that, your faith will find its roots. It will deepen. It will widen and your faith will be shown to be a beautiful thing to him, a beautiful thing to other people. Now, what else does this hope look like? What else will you experience as you lean into hope and you pull it back into your life now? What will you experience?

8 and 9 says you'll experience love. Let me read this to you. 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 souls. These are interesting verses, aren't they? Because Peter's kind of telling them what they're going to be experiencing. And he says you will be loving Christ. You will be believing in him. You will be rejoicing in him. And it's true. Hope causes us to feel the feels. Hope is not some arm's length theological proposition. It happens to us. It happens to us in here. Hope does something in here for us. Let me finish with this idea. One of my favorite Christmas carols is O Holy Night. O Holy Night. Near the start there's this wonderful line, a thrill of hope the weary world rejoices. The thrill of hope. Isn't that a great phrase? Given what Peter has said about hope, hope should thrill us. What God has for his people in eternity is so astonishing. It is so astonishing. It should thrill us. Now coming into Christmas, if you're short on hope, if you're not thrilled by hope, it could be because you've placed your hope in fragile things. You've placed your hope in things that simply can't sustain you through to eternity.

They can't sustain you through your suffering. Folks, wake yourself up. Wake yourself up to what God has promised, to what God has demonstrated and guaranteed through the resurrection, to the only guaranteed you hope you have. Amen. Now, Jimmy now on the first time and thank you my Pilloclock and energy.

Please send us your love to the Spirit. Is everything you can advisor to the Son in hands that basically ws? Allison Green and vitamine by is aikes Secretary from the specs of o spokesperson