

Last week we began by looking at what hope is, why it's essential, and hope's impact on and around us. One observant member asked, "but how does it change me?" That's an excellent question, and it's the focus of this week's message; what hope does to us and within us. Especially important for the secularized culture we live in.

Earnest Becker – *Denial of Death* – Never been a society more secular (no ultimate future), never been a society that puts more emphasis on sex, money, power. We use these to try and deal with our sense of cosmic insignificance. There's little difference between Christians and non-Christian behavior in these areas.

If we believe what Scripture says about our future, why hasn't it changed our present lives? Hope hasn't gone from an idea to a reality.

**Hope for the long haul is not just about a belief in hope; it's about experiencing hope. Experienced hope is transformational hope.**

**1. We need to get it that we've got it. Get it?** - *For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may **strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.***

- **Is Paul contradicting himself?**
  - Colossians 1 - Christ in you, the hope of glory, but here he's praying that Christ may dwell in them.
  - In Ephesians 1:17-23 - To know Christ is to know God's fullness, but here, he prays for Christ's fullness to dwell in them.
- **Why would we need what the Bible says elsewhere we already have? We don't apply what's already ours.**
  - We have resources from God upon which we don't draw.
  - You're dying of thirst but refuse to drink from a spring out of fear you'll deplete it.
  - We hear that all that these resources are available in principle, but it's never broken through to our **inner being**.
- **Our inner being** is our center, the seat of our identity, the place that determines our controlling reality.
  - Many things are said to us (we're encouraged, we're discouraged), but we allow certain voices to define us. It's your controlling reality. Paul is saying, be open to the Spirit's voice. Let the Spirit's word break through to your inner being.
  - Paul assumes this posture is the typical posture ... we don't get it that we've got it.
- It takes the work of the Holy Spirit to get us to "get" what we've got!
  - Blaise Pascal – "In the year 1654, Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> of November from half-past ten in the evening to half past midnight; FIRE. God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob, not the god of the philosophers, or of the learned. Certainty, joy, certainty, emotion, sight, joy, joy, joy, tears of joy, my God, will

you leave me? Let me not be separated from you." An abstract idea of God is nothing compared to this; the nearness of indwelling Christ.

- We need what Paul is praying for. When the voice of Jesus nurtures our inner being, we are "rooted and established in love."

**2. What we seek has already been found.** - *See what great love the Father **has lavished** on us, that **we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!** The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Dear friends, **now we are children of God**, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 3 All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. - 1 John 3:1-3*

- **Affirmation!** All of us seek **affirmation**.

Ben Franklin

- Affirmation of Self
- Affirmation from Friends/Family
- Affirmation from others
- Affirmation overheard by you from someone to another
- Affirmation by a master, authority, or expert.
  - What have you poured your life into? You have the affirmation of yourself and the affirmation of friends. Imagine you're doing what you live for and the greatest to have ever done it sees you and comes to you and says, "you're one of the greatest I've seen."

John says it's already been given, but one day it will be fully realized. The Creator says, "that's my child."

- **Self-disclosing Love** - Who do you let see the real you – only those you love the most. "We shall see him as he is," We are in Christ, the Son, whom the Father loves most.

In that moment you'll know that in everything you've ever wanted, you were wanting this. Into every set of arms you've thrown yourself into, be it a parent, a child, a sibling, a friend, a lover, a spouse, every experience of art that inspired you, every sunset that moved you, every story that transported you out of this world, every glimpse of something skilled and good and true and beautiful that seemed to transcend the natural ... in everything you ever longed for, you were really longing for this. In that moment, you'll be fully and finally satisfied.

That satisfaction, that fullness, that complete affirmation and experience of unconditional love and acceptance is only available in Jesus Christ, and he has this hope available to you.

- When this hope is experienced, we no longer settle for the counterfeits and cheap imitations.

**3. Grasp what's already been given.** - *And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, **to grasp** how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen. – Ephesians 3:17-21*

**How is this experienced hope grasped?**

- **Deliberate**

- I kneel. Surrender, yield, give up, let go.
- **Prayerful**
  - Paul prays for it. Prayer positions you for the moment when the Spirit shows up.
  - Pray in adoration and confession. Go after God, not just things from God.
  - Perhaps this time of isolation is an opportunity to seek God.
- **Patient**
  - This is a gift God gives when he sees fit.
  - The Dark Night of the soul. St. John of the Cross, the night of sense. When we begin, there is dryness, and we give up. Holy Saturday is a day of silence between death and resurrection.
  - Wilderness is part of the journey.
- **Mindful**
  - “Power to grasp” to besiege and sack a city. Acts 4:13- religious leaders Acts 10 – Peter grasps the spirit poured out on Gentiles.
  - Not just understanding, it’s the eureka moment.
  - How does this lead me to adore him, confess to him, thank him?
- **Centered in Christ**
  - Long: depths of time, he determined to love us.
  - Deep: Loves you to your worst.
  - High: Loves you to the very presence of the Father.
  - Wide: A love for everyone from everywhere.

A love that ultimately provides a hope that weakens the power of all we fear, all we've settled for, all that says to us we're worthless, all that says we're abandoned, all that has let us down, all we've done to hurt ourselves and others, all that fear and rage and apathy and death try to steal from us. This hope is meant to redeem and restore, yes, but it's also meant to radically transform you forever, starting right now.

### **Questions for Reflection**

- How do you process Paul praying for us to really “get” what we already have received in Christ?
- Discuss some examples of Christians not drawing on resources God has given.
- What voices within your inner being try to drown out the voice of Jesus? How is the voice of Jesus giving you hope and healing from the inside out?
- Discuss how God’s affirmation of us as his children, and the promise of his self-disclosing love provide hope?
- Which of the five “handles” to grasp the experience of hope resonate with you most? Which ones are a challenge? Which ones are areas of growth?
- On your own or with your group, reflect of the length, height, wideness, and depths of Christ’s love for you.