

**Brackenhurst pm: 8 February 2009**  
**A New Hope**

**Welcome & Notices**

**Scripture:**

Job 7:1-7 Man without hope

1 Cor 9:16-23 Preach the good news!

Mark 1:29-39 Jesus gives people a new hope

**INTRODUCTION**

- The thing that I've noticed that makes scripture real and exciting for me is the way in which the people's experience intersects with mine
  - For example, if we look at the example of Job lying in bed complaining about how terrible his life is
- Haven't we all, at some point or another, thought something bad has happened to us, and we think that our life is worthless and meaningless.
  - Here is a very human experience which is described in scripture
    - \* And which we all can relate to
- But then scripture always goes on past the experience that we all have
  - It goes on into the realm of the Godly as we see how God speaks into the life of the individual
    - \* And you can read the rest of the story of Job to see that happens in his case
  - But we see how God makes a difference, and then we can relate to that difference in our lives
- So when I'm looking for meaning in scripture I always look, first of all, at the place where my experience is like that of the person I'm reading about, and then at how God transforms that situation from one of hopelessness to hope
  - Or how God operate on any other level in that story.
- When we look at some of the characters in our reading this evening what I see is people without hope
  - Job who feels that his life is hopeless and passing by in a flash
  - Peter's mother-in-law ill with a fever
  - the sick with various diseases
  - And the demon possessed
    - \* And I want to mention that while there were no doubt people who were demon possessed, I think that we would do well to remember that

demons are very often simply the destructive forces which enslave us,  
the models and stories that we struggle to break free from

- All of us can relate to these situations: situations where we feel hopeless
- One of the things that I'm recognising more and more
  - And I mentioned this earlier in the year
    - \* Is that people need hope
- We need affirmation and encouragement that things can be different, that they can be better
  - This is the ministry of the church and this is the ministry of Jesus that we see in our gospel reading this evening
- People needed hope, and when they found somebody who had the authority to give it to them
  - They gathered, the whole town gathered at the door of the home of Simon and Andrew, where Jesus was staying.
- And when the people came to him ill and demon possessed and without hope, he gave them their hope back.
  - As I explore the idea of hope this evening, I'll use the letters of hope for my points:

### **(1) H - Having a Vision — sharing a vision**

- When people are hopeless it's usually because they cannot see any future for themselves
  - All they can see for the future is sadness, loneliness, darkness, as Job experienced in our reading
    - \* Just a wait to get to the end of life so that this awful experience can be over
- There are many reasons as to why people would feel like that
  - We don't have time to go into them all
    - \* But you would probably know some of them in your own life
- On the other hand, people who have hope are usually people with a vision
  - People who are able to hold before them a picture of the way things could be, the way things ought to be and to strive for that vision regardless of how they may be feeling in the present
- And so firstly, hope means Having a vision
  - Being able to see that things can be different
- If we go to our gospel story for this evening, and look at the story that comes just before it
  - You will see that Jesus is teaching in the synagogue

- People recognise that he had an authority that the teachers of the law didn't have
- And one man possessed by an evil spirit is delivered
  - \* One man!
- But what the healing of that one man does is to reveal to a whole lot of people who up to this point have had no hope
  - Who have had no vision for the future
    - \* That things can be different
  - As the others look at this one man with a transformed life they see that their lives also can change
- Hope comes from having a vision
  - For people — like us — who read the Bible and hear stories about how Jesus works in scripture, and church in testimonies
    - \* That's an opportunity to discover hope for ourselves
  - We discover hope through the lives in scripture that have been transformed, and the lives of those we see and meet in church
- But secondly, it is also an opportunity for us to share our hope with others
  - If you have had an opportunity where your life has been transformed you should never be afraid to share your testimony
    - \* because maybe your story is what somebody else has to hear to give them hope that their life can be different
- So firstly, if we are to be people of hope we need to have a vision — and share a vision
  - of how things can be different
- We don't have time tonight to get into all the aspects of that, but before moving on I want to recognise that it's not always easy to have a vision, especially in the pits of depression or poverty
  - And sometimes that is the most difficult thing

## **(2) O - Opening one's mind to possibilities**

- Secondly, it is not just enough to have a vision, but part of having a vision means opening one's mind to possibility
  - It's easy to have a vision and say, this is the ways things should be
    - \* It is much more difficult to say this is the way things could be
    - \* To begin to see one's vision as a possibility
- And so the temptation is probably that it's easier just to leave things the way they are.
  - If we want things to change we have to be open to the possibility of change

- At the time of Jesus there were many people who were claiming to do the miraculous
  - many who claimed to heal
- And I guess that for many of the people who gathered at the home of Simon and Andrew they'd heard the stories before
  - You've probably heard the stories before
    - “Things can be different”, God will change your life, you can be healed
      - \* Yeah right, been there, done, that, got the T-shirt
  - And just ended up even more hurt
- So the vision for these people, and maybe even for you
  - Has probably been and gone
    - \* I had hope once, but it is no more
- But now in the story we read we see somebody who comes along, not just anybody, but Jesus,
  - And he comes along with authority and the vision is renewed
    - \* the dream is rekindled!
- The people know what the vision should be — they know what it would be like to be well, to be healed, to have demons cast from them
  - but now they begin to have hope that it could be so!
    - \* They begin to open their minds to the vision that is before them
- Rick Warren of Saddleback church in California, Wrote the book the Purpose Driven Life,
  - As a church we did 40 Days of Purpose, We're going to be doing a follow up
    - \* 40 Days of Community next term
- He speaks about Exponential thinking
  - He says that exponential thinking is allowing yourself to dream so big that it cannot be achieved by human means
    - \* That the only way of achieving your goals is by trusting in God
- And he speaks about numbers and increasing numbers of groups and people in church
  - But the same principle can applied to any aspect of life
    - \* And tonight it can be applied to having hope
- Let's believe God to do the impossible and open our minds to what God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit want to do in our lives
  - Our country, our world
- Friends, now is the time to invest in Zimbabwe!

### (3) P - Powerful Prayer

- Thirdly, if we are going to be people of hope we need to recognise that Prayer is such an important component of who we are
  - Jesus himself, both before and after these stories of healing, spends time in prayer
- But I think that sometimes we have a mistaken idea of what prayer is about
  - What is prayer?
- Sometimes we think that prayer is about asking God for what we want
  - We have this picture, almost of God being like a fairy god mother
    - \* We just have to say the “Name it, Claim it and Frame it”
  - And God will wave his magic wand and grant our wish and we’ll live happily ever after
- We think that prayer is bending God to do our will
  - When really prayer is allowing God to shape us to do his will
    - \* Oh my!
- Living with hope, living in hope is about growing our prayer life, not to the place where God gives us whatever we want
  - but growing to the place where we do what God wants!
- So powerful prayer, therefore, is about learning to listen to God so that we choose to live in a way that is different
  - That we chose to live in a way that testifies to our vision
  - And a way that reveals to others the openness that we have to believe the ability of God to accomplish what he desires
- Jesus tells his disciples that whatever they ask for in his name will be given to them.
  - “In his name” tells me that whatever we ask for according to his will and purpose
- And when our desires correspond to God’s desires, and we start living that our believing that God can accomplish it
  - When we start living this thing out as though we have already received it
    - \* When we start living in God’s Kingdom
  - Because, after all, that is what prayer is about — that’s when the vision starts to become reality.
- Let me illustrate.
  - It’s all very well to pray for God to feed the poor, and of course God wants that, but when we start living as though that prayer were already answered, and we go out feeding the poor, trusting God to provide, that’s when the prayer is answered

\* And in a small way God's kingdom is revealed on earth

#### **(4) E - An Enthusiastic Expectation**

- Then, finally, the 'E' in HOPE.
  - Hope finds its conclusion in Enthusiastic Expectation
- What does that mean?
  - Expectation means "a strong belief that something will happen or will be the case in the future"
- The expectation that if we are faithful
  - If we have Have a Vision; if we Open our Minds to the Possibilities; if we Prayer ourselves into God's will
- Then things will be different, then things are going to change
  - And I think that this is very often where we fail
- We simply do not believe that things can be different
  - We feed the poor, but with no expectation that it can really change things for them and so before we have even started we have already taken stock of the hopelessness of the situation
    - \* There's that song from a few years back, a line goes: "before I even meet her, I'm preparing to leave"
- We find reasons why things are not going to work, and then we're not surprised when they don't
  - Too often our expectation is not an enthusiastic one, but rather is very negative
    - \* We expect things to fail
- And then we are not surprised when we do
  - Friends, what we expect usually happens!
- When we have an enthusiastic expectation for good things, for things to change, for transformation to happen
  - in our lives, in our homes, in our countries
    - \* Then it probably will!
- The E can stand for a whole lot of other things:
  - \* Experiment, experience, exploring possibilities
- Whatever it stands for for you, make sure that it is positive in character, and then do it!

#### **CONCLUSION**

- Let me close off.
  - Hope is something that nobody can live without

- We all need hope in some area, especially in our country right now
  - And i can imagine that if Jesus were here today, I can just imagine how the crowds would be flocking to the place where he was staying.
- In the story they came to Jesus, I think, not so much because of what he could do, but because he could give them hope
  - He could give them something to live for again
    - \* Freedom from disease, freedom from possession
- And while we may not be able to heal everybody, each of us here tonight can give the gift of hope
  - Sometimes all it needs is a smile or a hug to transform someone's day.
- One of the readings we looked at earlier was the one from Paul's letter to the Corinthians
  - In it Paul says that he will do whatever it takes to share the gospel and its blessings.
- Really what Paul was saying is that he will do whatever is necessary to give people hope — that's what the gospel is about — hope that God can make even the foulest clean
  - Hope that God can set the most tightly bound prisoner free
  - Hope that God can do the miraculous in your life, and in mine
- Funny things, like so much in Christianity, the journey is two-sided
  - There is an inward journey
    - \* There are times when we ourselves need hope, need to see the example of the one who is healed that we may have faith
  - And then there is an outward journey
    - \* There are times when we need to share the hope that we have — as Paul was compelled to preach
- As he says “always be prepared to give an answer for the hope that is within you”
  - To share that hope with the world
- I pray that for always we would become people of hope
  - Gathered at the door of Christ receiving hope for ourselves
  - And standing facing the world with Paul sharing our hope with others
- May it be so for you, even as it is for me.
- Amen