*Series, Good News for Troubling Times — Rediscover Christmas*

**Part 1: How to Rediscover Hope**

November 28, 2021

INTRODUCTION

You hope that… but you feel hopeless…

Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies. — Andy [Tim Robbins]

Hope is a dangerous thing. Hope can drive a man Insane. --"Red", The Shawshank Redemption.

You desire something good in the future, you expect it happen, but your hopes are shattered with each disappointment.

How can you hold tight to that feeling of hope when you are overwhelmed?

Are hope and faith for the future the basis for your personal happiness?

Feeling like there is no hope is one of the most challenging emotions to overcome.

After all, why would you even try when you feel there is no hope?

Finding hope when it seems like there’s none to be found can make you feel hopeless, but it is possible.

Luke 1:5-7

5 In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. 6 Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord’s commands and decrees blamelessly. 7 But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

Luke 1:8-20

8 Once when Zechariah’s division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, 9 he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. 10 And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. 12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. 13 But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. 16 He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

18 Zechariah asked the angel, “How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.”

19 The angel said to him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. 20 And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time.”

The silence God and the Hopelessness of Israel

In Biblical history, 400 years separate the time of the Prophet Malachi and from the birth of Christ. This is called the “silent” years. The last book of the Old Testament...the last Old Testament prophet was named Malachi. And Malachi promised in the last chapter of the last Old Testament book that the sun, s-u-n, of righteousness would arise with healing in its beams. And he was really saying exactly what was said in verse 78, "Sunrise is coming.” Sunrise is coming. The darkness is not permanent, but it's usually true that the darkness is the deepest just before the dawn. And for the 400 years since Malachi said that, since the last prophet said, “The sun of righteousness will rise,” for 400 years since that God never spoke. There was no prophet in Israel. There was no prophet in Judah. There was no revelation from God. Therefore it was the most troubling times.

The hopelessness of Israel is mirrored & felt in Elizabeth’s barrenness.

Luke 1:18 Zechariah asked the angel, “How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.”

Luke 1:25 “The Lord has done this for me,” she said. “In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people.”

Can you relate to them?

Theme and goal:

When you feel **H** , **C**  hope by trusting, expecting, & waiting.

Ordinarily, when we express hope, we are expressing uncertainty. But this is not the distinctive biblical meaning of hope.

Biblical hope is a **C**  expectation and desire for something good in the **F** . — John Piper

1. When you feel hopeless, cultivate hope by **T** .

Malachi 4:5-6

5 “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. 6 He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.”

Luke 1:13-17

13 But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. 16 He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Isaiah 55:11

so is my word that goes out from my mouth:

 It will not return to me empty,

but will accomplish what I desire

 and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Numbers 23:19

God is not human, that he should lie,

 not a human being, that he should change his mind.

Does he speak and then not act?

 Does he promise and not fulfill?

Psalm 89:34

I will not violate my covenant

 or alter what my lips have uttered.

2. When you feel hopeless, cultivate hope by **E** .

Luke 1:7 But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

Luke 1:18 Zechariah asked the angel, “How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.”

Luke 1: 23 When his time of service was completed, he returned home. 24 After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion.

Biblical hope is a **C**  expectation and desire for something good in the **F** . — John Piper

Hope is not **P**  waiting, but actively **P** .

3. When you feel hopeless, cultivate hope by **W** .

Luke 1:13 But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. 16 He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

18 Zechariah asked the angel, “How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.”

19 The angel said to him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. 20 And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time.”

Furthermore, and this is critical, the story of John the Baptist establishes that he is the prophesied forerunner of Messiah. I'll say that again. The story of John the Baptist, as you will see, establishes beyond argument that he is the forerunner of Messiah. If we know that to be true, then we can therefore know who the Messiah is; it is whoever John identifies, right? Very important to know that. And there was a day, as we shall see, when Jesus came down to the Jordan River where John was baptizing and John turned toward Him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." John pointed to Jesus Christ as the Messiah of which he was the forerunner, very important. If you establish who the forerunner is and it's John the Baptist, then you know who the Messiah is; it's whoever he points to.

Jesus has become your HOPE!

Applications

* For Spiritual Seekers -- Submit to the Lord Jesus Christ as your living hope. Contact the Pastor for further assistance.
* For Believers -- As you wait for better things in the future, how is Jesus, the ultimate hope, keeping you hopeful?
* For everyone -- Find a houseChurch and share your struggles with one another. Work out and apply together the gift of hope. Biblical hope is a **C**  expectation and desire for something good in the **F** . — John Piper