

Series: Humble King	Reference: Various Passages	Title: Hope	Date: 12.2.18
Website Writeup:			
How are humility & hope connected? How does the humility of walking in Christ birth a hope giving a solid foundation enabling us to show concern while still living in freedom & joy? This is what we explore in this sermon.			

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This Christmas series is centered around Philippians 2:1-11. In your own quiet time over the coming weeks it may be good to focus here, incorporating the other passages we touch on in these sermons.

In a world of such vitriol & perceived hopelessness, the message of hope in Jesus is of utmost importance. Take a moment & close your eyes. Meditate on the world we live in. I'll voice some words all too familiar right now as we do so...Mass Shooting. Rape. Bombing. Sex trafficking. Pedophilia. Immigration. #MeToo. Sexual dysphoria. Racism. Elections. Politics. Open your eyes. How do you feel? Recently, has anything you've heard on the news, or social media, fed you hope? If I measured your heart rate before & after that little exercise I'd wonder if it increased.

As I speak with people, there's a perceived hopelessness. They're overwhelmed. Sad. Depressive. Anxious. Is that where Jesus wants us to live? I'm not trying to make you feel guilty for feeling these things, rather I'd pray the Holy Spirit injects hope today.

There's a balance in the Christian life of concern for issues, while also living in the freedom & joy of God's grace. I put to you today, this is a focus issue. A spiritual issue. To live in anxieties grip is a spiritual dilemma, remedied only by hope in Jesus. Many feed themselves on the spiritual potato chips & soda our culture offers - we consume everything spiritually bad for us. While Jesus extends healthy spiritual veggies & living water. As a result our spiritual lives are overweight, sluggish & sickly.

Last week we introduced this series speaking of Jesus' humility. Today, we see, in God's Kingdom, His humility paves the way to real, lasting Hope. Weakness leads to strength. These words come to life in the description of Jesus in Phil. 2, recalling v6 which references Jesus, *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage...* He presents himself in humility. Embracing the frailty & weakness of his human nature, Jesus revealed the strength which comes from humility. Whereas the default position of all others in the world is pride, Jesus comes to us humbly, birthing hope for a world in desperate need of it.

He didn't enter as General of an army, but as a vulnerable child. Not as arrogant tyrant, or boastful 'leader', or militant activist, rather a baby reliant on his teenage mother & adoptive father. But that infant was like no other - He was unique. The angel Gabriel, in Luke 1:31-33, prophecies to the uniqueness of this infant, *You will conceive & give birth*

to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great & will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

Hope's a virtue. Like courage, trust, restraint, perseverance, faith & justice, hope's a muscle we work & develop. Hope must be cognitively engaged & practiced. We must place our sights on that which is hopeful, not the hopeless. Right now, many of us need to be reminded of the hope we have in Christ, not just for ourselves, but for the world at large. Our witness is at stake, we must ask ourselves, are we a people of hope? Or, living in false hope, trusting in human abilities (although we've seen the failure of that again & again)? Or worse, simply hopeless like so many others out there now.

Many publications report suicide rates skyrocketing since 2006. The NY Times says it's hit a 30 year high. But that's only recorded deaths - there are an average of 90 attempts to one completed suicide. People are hopeless. The ability to have & experience the virtue of hope in our own lives, depends on humility. But how are the two connected?

Pointing To Our Source Of Hope - You've probably heard the commercials on the radio for services which help businesses find the right employees for a particular position. One woman said to find the right employee is like looking for the elusive unicorn. She further states, after using the service provided, "Wow, I found a whole short list of unicorns!" They'd honed down her search to a short list of right people, with right credentials & experience for the position she had available.

If anyone could have been impressed with their credentials, it would've been Jesus. The terms attributed to him in Gabriel's prophecy are like the highest resume put forth for the position of Divine Savior & Lord; the elusive unicorn of humility & hope for humanity - found in Jesus. The Old Testament applies the words, "Mighty God" & "Prince of Peace" to His resume. The New Testament adds "King of Kings" & "Lord of Lords." Looking at His titles, overwhelmingly divine in nature, they reveal His equality with God. Fully human, fully God as well, something he didn't flaunt, or consider to be used to his own advantage. As a matter of fact, remember when they came to arrest him; Peter had drawn his sword cutting off the ear of the servant of the High Priest. He immediately instructed Peter to put his sword back in its place, swords aren't the way of **humility & hope**. Then said (Matthew 26:53), "*Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?*"

He could've rolled in with power like a divine wrecking ball, leveling anything which didn't reflect his character, or desire for the world. But the problem with that is twofold. Firstly, it wouldn't be loving, therefore, outside his character. And secondly, nothing would be left. Since, Paul in Romans, quoting the book of Isaiah, says, "*There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who*

does good, not even one.” (Romans 3:10-12) Instead, God came to us in a different way than we’d expect of a ruling king, in loving humility, birthing hope in the world.

The Scriptures seem to communicate, Jesus’ hopeful vision of who He was, who you & I are, and who the people around Him were, wasn’t predicated on *His view of Himself*. Rather, at every turn, we see Jesus point us toward putting our hope in the *Father* – the Father who made us, loves us & cares for us, like He does with all creation, including the birds of the air & the flowers of the field as seen in Matt. 6:26-28.

But how far does the Father’s love go? The Proudful trust in their own abilities & thoughts, disregarding God’s loving lead & guiding words for life. The Humble rely on a good God who’s restoring the world, redeeming those who will receive him & punishing the sin & evil so prevalent. Even when it looks bleak, we know Gods will prevails in the end. But punishment/judgment, is an unpopular concept these days, and in many churches, the idea of hell & sin are avoided in preaching, to their detriment.

Think about it this way, ‘If an area is rid of its predatory or undesirable animals, the balance of that environment may be so upset that the desirable plants & animals are lost - through overbreeding with a limited food supply. The nasty predator that was eliminated actually kept in balance the number of other animals & plants necessary to that particular ecosystem.

In the same way, if we play down bad or harsh doctrines within the historic Christian faith, we will find, to our chagrin, we’ve gutted all our pleasant & comfortable beliefs as well. The loss of the doctrine of hell, judgment & the holiness of God does irreparable damage to our deepest comforts - our understanding of God’s grace, love & our human dignity & value to him. To preach the good news, we must preach the bad.¹

To be saved, is to know what you’re saved from & to what lengths our Humble King will go in love for His Creation. Jesus isn’t just a fuzzy soft Barney-like creature accepting of everyone no matter what they think, say, or do. He must bleed for the injustices & evils of the world (including my own pride), he must call me back from the precipice of eternal death, taking my punishment upon himself, since I’m fully unable to do so. Only in that, do I see the hope he brings & the extent of his love.

‘Unless we come to grips with the terrible doctrine of hell, we’ll never begin to understand the depths of what Jesus did for us on the cross. His body was being destroyed in the worst possible way, but nothing compared to what was happening to his soul. When he cried out, his God had forsaken him, he was experiencing hell itself.

If a mild acquaintance denounces & rejects you - it hurts. If a good friend does the same - the hurt’s far worse. If your spouse walks out on you, saying, “I never want to see you

¹Tim Keller, [Preaching Hell In A Tolerant Age](#)

again,” - far more devastating still. And parental rejection is literal Hell on earth. The longer, deeper & more intimate the relationship, the more torturous is any separation.

The Son's relationship with the Father was infinitely greater & longer than the most intimate & passionate human relationship. When Jesus was cut off from God the Father, he went into the deepest pit & most powerful furnace, beyond all imagining. And he did it voluntarily, for us.²

Sin is slavery, making something other than God to be our ultimate value & worth, a role nothing but God has the capacity to fulfill - and that's our pride at work. Since it's not necessarily the outside thing we trust in, but the Self which we put in place of God - the pride we spoke of last week.

Sin separates us from the presence of God (Isa. 59:2), the source of all joy (Ps. 16:11), love, wisdom or good thing of any sort (James 1:17). To understand hell we must understand sin as slavery. Romans 1:21-25 tells us, we were built to live for God, but instead we live for love, work, achievement, or morality, to give us meaning & worth. Thus every person, religious or not, is worshiping something - idols, pseudo-saviors - to get their worth. But these things enslave us with guilt (if we fail to attain them) or anger (if someone blocks them from us), or fear (if we are threatened), or drivenness (since we feel we *must* have them to survive & thrive). Guilt, anger & fear are like fire which consumes us. Sin's worshiping anything but Jesus - the wages of sin is slavery. This is what Jesus came for & saves us from, our own propensity to self destruction - our own propensity to eat & drink the spiritual potato chips & soda of life.

CS Lewis, in *The Great Divorce*, uses an illustration of Hell as a bus loaded with people at the border of Heaven where they're urged to leave behind all that they can't bring into heaven - just throw it out the window & be rid of it. When confronted with Jesus we have a choice to turn away from & leave behind all that which keeps us bound for eternal separation from God, or we can choose to hold onto it - which is why Lewis referred to Hell as “the greatest monument to human freedom.” You & I choose it or not in relation to Jesus, God doesn't choose it for us.

Hell is simply the end result of all the lost chances to turn away from sins slavery & back to God's hope, joy & freedom. It's the necessary place reserved for that which is unholy, given God's holiness can't mix with it; heaven simply cannot accommodate sin & evil. There must be a cleansing & redemption of the person in order to enter His Presence. This washing & cleansing comes by Jesus' bloody sacrifice & resurrection from the grave, making the unholy, holy. His righteousness covers us making us presentable to the Father - the unflinching demands of the Law are met in Christ for us.

² Tim Keller, [Preaching Hell In A Tolerant Age](#)

God doesn't invent Hell to revel in punishing humankind, it's not something he wishes on anyone - it's simply a necessary thing in dealing with evil. It's that which he wishes to save us from, and in humility, Jesus walks through it's judgment, experiencing it's punishment for us! All wrong is righted in Jesus work on the cross, all injustice & evil meet their end in the Final Judgment. These are hopeful statements viewed through Biblical lens of hope in Jesus.

Those outside the faith may view all this from the wrong angle though, saying, they can't believe in a God who would send people to Hell. But we're saying it's our choice to respond to Him, or not; we view it from the angle of his desire & provision to save us from it.

'The universal religion of humankind is: We develop a good record & give it to God, then he owes us. The Gospel is: God develops a good record & gives it to us, then we owe him (Rom. 1:17). In short, to say a good person, not just Christians, can find God is to say good works are enough to find God.'³ In other words, the humanistic view is, good people can find God, bad people can't. But if anyone's honest, everyone falls short - Christians are simply honest & self-aware. And the Christian view is much more hopeful than is the humanistic, since the humanistic view neither has retribution for all evil in the world, nor a hopeful path to peace & holiness. Both are exclusive views if everyone is gut-wrenchingly honest - but the Christian view is much less exclusive given the open invitation & hope we have in a very personal down-to-earth relational connection we can have with God the Father, through Christ the Son!

Embrace Hope - Jesus knew who He was & each title which was His to claim from the Hebrew Scriptures. But that doesn't seem to be the lens through which Jesus saw the unfolding future hope to which He called us. No. Rather, like we discussed last week, we see Jesus, in humility, being 'of the ground' – of the *humus* – as He taught & demonstrated the Kingdom of God. And all along the way, *He gave glory to the Father above Himself*. This seemed to enable Jesus to not only see God's future hope held in trust by His loving Father, but this humble love seemed to empower Him to have hope for every person who ever crossed His dusty, earthy, well-worn human path.

Consider all the people who experienced this Humble King in the Scriptures finding a hope they never had before. Zacchaeus, the tax collector, despised by all, in joy offers to give half his belongings to the poor & repay everyone he's cheated fourfold (Lk 19). The woman at the well, a despised Samaritan, to whom Jesus offered himself as the Living Water of life, runs back home in joy to tell everyone, "Come meet the guy who told me everything about me" (Jhn 4). The sinful woman, who in her joy, poured perfume on Jesus feet in a beautiful act of worship (Lk 7). I could go on about people who met & found hope in Jesus both in the Scriptures & history. Jesus had that unique ability to uphold the standards of holiness while still being attractive to & friends with sinners.

³³ Tim Keller, [Preaching Hell In A Tolerant Age](#)

Hope produces the freedom & joy we talked about a few weeks back - it enables us to view & face the troubles of this world since it's not up to us to solve all ills, but we know the end story, we've read the final chapter of the book. God spoils the ending for us in Jesus! And it's a good ending. And in the meantime the kingdom breaks in as God uses his people to spread the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ - to bring kingdom healing, hope & peace to others by emulating the humility of our King.

Raising Our Level Of Hope - Let's take a few moments, right now & close our eyes. Let's begin by thinking about the ways we've depended on ourselves as of late – our own decision-making abilities, feelings, reason, impulses, desires, experience, practice, or skills, or even on something you know to be unhealthy, be it fantasy, thought, or action (silence). Now, offer up every one of those self-dependencies & pseudo-saviors to God, asking Him to root out pride in our own selves & abilities (silence).

Now turn your attention to reflect on what God has done & is doing in your life right now. Let this awareness of God's activity in your current circumstances, be it in your heart, mind, character, or some situation, overwhelm you & move you (silence).

Now, open your eyes. How high is the hope level in your heart? When you first focused on your own capabilities, did it make you feel hopeful, as if only good could come from your work? Or did it make you feel heavy & overwhelmed?

We need to let an awareness of what God is doing overwhelm us, not all the anxieties of life we can't control.

Ponder that feeling of hope as you reflected on the Father's love for you, what He's doing in your life right now, and how detailed His care is in the fine strokes of your days & nights. If you felt *hope* rise in you – the expectation of good & a sense of connection to a future you can't fully see – you're experiencing the same hope Jesus had as He moved through the crowds preaching the life-upending message of the hope of the Kingdom of God.

Act on this in the coming days...using the Daily Examen I've printed for you, take a few moments a day to write down in a journal what you believe God has been doing, and is doing, in your life right now. Because gaining humility takes attentive patience, and hope springs from our Humble King in spite of what is happening around us - the Christian is solid in their foundation, not knocked off center by the chaotic circumstances which surround us - we live in the hope of Jesus! We've read the last chapter of history.