

Sunday 19th April Theme Hope

Welcome to the Gospel Church at Marchwood, meeting virtually this first week after Easter 2020.

Julie: Morning Church Family lovely to be with you. How are you all coping? I must admit cabin fever has started to set in, but then I was reminded of Noah and his lockdown of forty days and nights with an ark full of smelly animals and I'm grateful again for my faith, my garden, the birds singing, food on my table, social media to keep in contact, family around me, and daily walks around our lovely village. In the windows and on pavements rainbows have appeared a sign of hope after the storm. As it says in Genesis 9: verses 14-17 "Thank you Lord that you are with us during lockdown, you provide our needs and know what is in our hearts."

Our Queen who is a Christian wished everyone of all faiths and denominations a blessed Easter, she said: "May the living flame of the Easter hope be a steady guide as we face the future." She said the discovery of the risen Christ on the first Easter Day gave his followers new hope and fresh purpose, adding that we could all take heart from this."

As a gospel church which aims to spread the good news about Jesus we want to spend a few minutes to talk about Hope this year.. There has been a call for Prayer in 2020 to pray on the 20th Day of each month for 20 minutes at 2020 that is twenty past 8 in the evening. The prayer is for churches to reach out to their communities and all who are known to those who attend or feel part of the Church. Can you join me now in the Prayer for the 20th April at 2020 "Risen Jesus, we rejoice in your resurrection. Help us to live today embracing the gift of life and hope that you have made available to everyone. We pray for those who do not yet know you, that we would be powerful witnesses to the great hope of the resurrection for all. (John chapter 11 verse 25)" At this time we need to pray for our Country, Europe and indeed the whole world as we all face a common pandemic that threatens to cut short the lives of so many. We pray for peace in the world as we all face a common need to care for the vulnerable, the elderly and the lonely. We pray for the health workers and social carers of those who are ill, for the politicians and rulers who have to make difficult decisions and for all peoples wherever they may be as they struggle to live while under restrictions.

Hope takes many forms and is reflected in Music, Worship music such as "In Christ Alone" and "My hope is built on nothing less" we will sing them together as part of this service. Those who prefer a Rock style music could listen to The American Christian Rock Band Skillet, the songs "Hero" and "Awake and Alive" both reflect the Hope theme, the drummer and one of the lead singers is Jen from Coventry who attended the same church Julie and I used to worship at. There is of course a lot of songs which sing of Hope "Here comes the Sun" by the Beatles, "Bridge over Troubled Water" by Simon and Garfunkel, "Beautiful" by Eminem not to mention "Things can only get better" by Howard Jones or the rousing national song of England "Land of Hope and Glory".

Hope "Elpis" in new testament Greek or batah in Hebrew had a neutral meaning in Roman times meaning an expectation of good or evil. In Jeremiah 14 verse 8 we read " You(that is God) who are the hope of Israel, its saviour in times of distress". In Psalm 42 verse 5 we read " Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in

God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God.” And in Psalm 62 verse 5 “Yes, my soul, finds rest in God; my hope comes from him.”

The Christian hope is described in the first letter to Timothy chapter 1 verse 1 “.....Christ Jesus our hope” This hope relates with faith and love as an essential grace for our salvation see one Corinthians chapter 13 verse 13. Although Love is the most important, and faith refers to the present and the past only hope include the future as is made clear in Romans chapter 8 verses 24 and 25 “ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”

In Galatians 5 verse 5 Hope anticipates righteousness and in Hebrews 3 verse 6 and Hebrews 6 verses 18 and 19 which you can read later hope stabilises our soul like an anchor linking it to Gods steadfastness.

In Colossians chapter 1 verse 5 we read “ the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel. “ In the first letter to the Thessalonians chapter 4 verses 13- 18 is the hope for reunion with the deceased and in the gospel of John chapter 17 verse 24 Jesus Christ also prays to be with the deceased believers in glory. A concept repeated in Romans 8 verse 16 and 17 where those who share his belief will be with him in glory.

As a Christian the object of all Hope is Jesus Christ, to hope means to look forward expectantly for God’s future activity. The believer looks forward to the resurrection of God’s people and the arrival of God’s kingdom. To live in hope is to walk by faith and be liberated from fear. Hope is not just a personal individual thing but hope for the kingdom of God is universal. The future kingdom of God has the characters of justice, peace, community and love which motivates us to Christian social action since the values of Gods kingdom are also the values we should seek for today’s society. The Christian is liberated from fear about their own future to care about the fear and struggles of others. How is this different from the Humanist who wants a perfect society? Without turning to God striving themselves for perfection while not being perfect themselves. The impossibility is obvious, people are not perfect, they are self seeking, not govern by the principle of selfless sacrifice or the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives to assist them.

The book of Romans chapter 15 verse 13 says. “May the God of Hope fill you with all Joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Worship songs

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ENTL_li4GbE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZq9xTfHvgo>

Julie: Lockdown: Not everything is cancelled, we have Spring, Love, Relationships, Naps, devotion, music, dancing, imagination, kindness, conversations and most of all HOPE is not cancelled.