

Hold on to Hope - Hebrews 6:13-20 – 11 October 2015

We're coming to Hebrews chapter 6. So if you've your Bibles, please turn with me to Hebrews and chapter 6. We're going to look at verses 13 to 20.

Last week, I believe it was a very, very difficult sermon, difficult passage of Scripture. I'm so glad you stayed on, you persevered and many of you, I am told, were blessed as a result of it. Today will be a simpler sermon, I think, but nonetheless, equally profitable for our soul. Hebrews chapter 6 and I will read to you verses 13 to 20 this morning.

13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation.

17 So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast [pastor: "to hold tight"] to the hope set before us.

19 We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.  
(Hebrews 6:13-20 ESV)

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Again, seems to be quite complicated but really, I think it's a very simple, straightforward message, as I hope to show.

Screening in cinemas and theatres right now is this movie "The Martian". I'm sure you have seen it. As I drive along, as I take buses, I see it at the bus-stops and advertisements everywhere. This is a story or this is a movie based on the science fiction novel by Andy Weir. And this author, he comes up with this story, quite a brilliant one actually, about an astronaut who was injured, abandoned and left for dead in the planet of Mars. And nobody gives him a chance to live on because in Mars, the air is unbreathable, there is little water available, there is no food. So they

abandoned him there because there was a storm and everybody assume that he would die.

But “The Martian” is a story of survival, of fighting for survival, of how he could overcome odds and hope against hope. I read some of the movie reviews and these are some of the titles they used to display this story. A certain reviewer says “The Martian Inspires Hope in Overcoming the Impossible”. Then, another person says “The Martian Makes Space For Hope”. And then finally, one more: “The Martian, An Outer Space Story of Inner Space Hope”.

Well, this movie is now a box office hit because I think it touches on a very relevant theme of hope. Somehow, instinctively in all our hearts, we long for hope because we know that this world is not what it should be. There is too much pain, too much sorrow, too much suffering and we all long for that better place. We all crave for that better life.

So, hope is something that resonates within the human heart and really, hope is a major theme in the Scriptures. The apostle Paul says there are three great themes of faith, of love and hope. And the book of Hebrews, therefore, is no different. It brings a tremendous message of hope. In these verses, we read of the words “hope that is set before us”:

... we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf... (Hebrews 6:18-20 ESV)

The context of Hebrews, as I've shared with you along these weeks and months already, is that these Hebrew Christians are under tremendous persecution and difficulties. They are under trials, tribulations and in that kind of a difficult environment, they are tempted to give up, they are tempted to be discouraged, they are tempted to throw in the towel. And so the author, knowing their situation, writes this letter to them and say to them, “Don't give up. Fight for survival. Go against all odds. Hope against hope. Keep on clinging on to the hope that is set before you.”

So this message, this portion of Scripture, I believe, is a very clear passage that teaches us to hold on to hope. And if you today are someone going through difficulties and trials, whether it's home or health or your personal life, this is a message for you because some of us, when we go through such difficulties, have the

tendency and the temptation to say, “I'm going to give it all up.” But I hope this morning, you will have open ears to learn from the author.

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The author is a masterful teacher; he doesn't bore us to tears. But in this passage, he gives us a wonderful illustration of hope. Sometimes, when you teach, just giving instructions is very boring. But he understands that and so he teaches us about hope from an example. Now this example is not from outer space, the Martian. This example is not fictional. This example is historical, it's biblical, and is one of the most well-known personalities across the world in various cultures. His name is Abraham.

Abraham is a story of hope. The story is like this, found in the book of Genesis. When he was 75, God came to Abraham and said to him, “Abraham, you are going to have a child.” At this point of time, he is childless. He and Sarah, his wife, have had no children. But God came to him with a promise that says, “You are going to have a child.” Exactly, God said:

... “To your offspring I will give this land.”  
(Genesis 12:7 ESV)

So, not just a child but also the land. I think Abraham must be excited, but this promise is not just said once. It's repeated again in Genesis 13:

for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever [pastor: “freehold land ah”]. I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted.  
(Genesis 13:15-16)

And in case he forgot with the passage of time, third time running, He says in Genesis 15:

And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”  
(Genesis 15:5 ESV)

God is promising that Abraham will have many, many offsprings; it's a tremendous promise. For the Chinese, we all say it is so good if you have 子孙满堂 (“zǐ sūn mǎn táng”), right? It means in your hall, in your house, you have plenty of

children and grandchildren. But for Abraham, it's 子孙满天 (“zǐ sūn mǎn tiān”). It's all over the sky; he has so many descendants.

And so, Abraham must be excited. So he looks at Sarah (and said), “God spoke to me that we will have many, many descendants. Sarah, so far, you one egg also never come out, your factory got to start working soon.” So, he excitedly waits on Sarah's good news every month.

“Sarah, any nausea? Any vomiting?” “No, my lord, I'm still doing very well.” “Is your tummy getting bigger?” “No, I'm still very slim. Nothing is happening.” Well, January passed by, February passed by, March passed by, June, December, Christmas and it's next year again. “So, Sarah, how? One year already.” “Still nothing, my Lord.” Another year went by, five years went by, ten years went by.

So after 11 years, there's not even an egg that came out from her. And Abraham said... And Abraham and Sarah discussed: “You know, God said that we will have a child but maybe, this child is not going to be from you, Sarah. We've got a handmaid, we've got Hagar. Maybe she's the one that God will bless with the descendants.” They both agreed and so, Abraham went in to Hagar.

After a year... Well, this one is very good ah. I don't know how, but super fertile one. So after a year, Hagar gave birth to Ishmael. And Abraham and Sarah thought, “Finally, God's promise is going to be fulfilled.” But God said to Abraham subsequently, “Abraham, that's not the child of promise. My promise to you will not be fulfilled via Hagar or via Ishmael; it's going to be via Sarah, a child of promise.” So, Abraham and Sarah went back to the drawing board.

At 86 years old, after Ishmael was born, they continued to have to wait upon God. Same ritual, probably buy a lot of urine pregnancy test kits from Guardian pharmacy, every month got to waste money doing that because nothing happening, so years went by. After 13 years, when Abraham now has waited a total of 24 years, at age of 99, God then came to Abraham and said to him:

No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.

(Genesis 17:5-6 ESV)

No longer shall your name be called Abram, which means high or exalted father. But your name will now be Abraham, which means the father of a multitude. Abraham

must have wiped off sweat from his brow and said, “What? I'm going to be called the father of multitude?” “Yes, Abraham.”

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Can you imagine when Abraham goes out of his room and talk to his servant and say, “Now, you don't call me Abram, I'm the father of multitude.” He goes out to the market and (people there) say, “Hey, Mr Abram.” “No, no, no, I'm called the father of multitude.” And all the hawkers “um chioh” (means snigger in the Hokkien dialect), “What father of multitude? Don't even have one, what multitude? This guy is a crazy nut.” I think he must be the butt of jokes, at least privately.

But who is to know, soon after, Sarah became pregnant. Nausea, vomiting maybe, the tummy got bigger and bigger. And at the ripe, old age of hundred, when Abraham was 100 years old (at Gleneagles Hospital – no, I don't know which hospital), but at 100 years old, Sarah bore Abraham a child, a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him.

And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him.

(Genesis 21:2 ESV)

Can you imagine the festivities? Can you imagine the celebration? The hawkers who had laughed at Abraham say, “Eh, maybe ah, can ah. First one come out already, maybe a lot more to come, I don't know.” But they were all celebrating, I'm sure, in Abraham's household. Abraham, absolutely excited, must have thought God's promise will finally come true.

Years went by and now, this young baby Isaac has become a young boy Isaac, a young lad. We are not sure how old, teenager maybe or somewhere thereabouts. Everything looks promising and now, God gives it another twist. God drops a bombshell out of nowhere, no expectation. God spoke to Abraham again and said to him:

...“Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering...”

(Genesis 22:2 ESV)

These words are designed especially to hurt Abraham, don't you think? It's very painful to hear these words: “Take your son, your only son, whom you love and kill him.” Basically, that's what it is – kill the child of promise.

Wow, what's up, God? Didn't you say that my offspring shall be like the stars in the heavens? Why kill Isaac? That must be the first thing that came to Abraham's mind, I believe. But Abraham was a man of such faith that even though he couldn't quite figure out why, he thought this would not be a problem for God to still fulfil his promise because in Hebrews 11, the author tells us:

... “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” He considered [pastor: “he regarded so highly God”] that God was able even to raise him from the dead... (Hebrews 11:18-19 ESV)

Yup, God may call me to kill Isaac but I believe God will and can raise Isaac up. So, he lifted his hand. By the way, Isaac was also remarkable – he was willingly bound by his father. He raised his hand with a dagger and was ready to plunge it right into the neck of Isaac when God said, “Abraham, stop. Now, I know your heart.” And then God said to Abraham:

“By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore.” (Genesis 22:15-17)

This is where God swore to Abraham and this is where we join in, in Hebrews 6. By God's name Himself, He swore by Himself, saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” (Heb 6:13-14) Abraham did not fear that he would 断子绝孙 (“duàn zǐ jué sūn”, to be without descendants). No, he trusted God, he believed God, he hoped in God.

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So, what happened at the end of Abraham's life? What's the story like? Well, the Bible continues to tell us that Abraham had Isaac, and Isaac and Rebecca then had Esau and Jacob – they were twins. Eventually, Abraham died at age 175. At that point of time, Jacob and Esau were only 15 years old, they're twins as mentioned. He did not see Jacob get married, but Jacob went on to have Rachel and Leah and through them, he has 12 sons who are actually the ancestors of the 12 Tribes of Israel.

There is a very special tribe in Israel called the Tribe of Judah because some 2000 years later, after Judah, Jesus Christ was born in this tribe and this is the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham that in your offspring, all nations will be blessed – from

Isaac and to Jacob, to Judah and years later, Jesus Christ. This is described to us in Galatians 3, where the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring:

Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.

(Galatians 3:16 ESV)

This is very interesting because Paul says, be very clear, it is to offspring not... It does not say "to offsprings" but it is to one, your offspring, one. You say, "Who is this one?" Christ.

So when you go back to Genesis, I did not change the words, you can check it in your own Bible. In Genesis (15:5), "so shall your offspring be" sounds like terrible English, sounds like terrible grammar, whether it is a Hebrew or not. It's just lousy. You say your offspring shall be like the stars, so many, (then) you say one. So most of us, we say Moses' "ang moh" very bad – Moses' language is poor, grammar control (is) terrible.

But no, it's not bad grammar. It's good theology, because God had determined that this offspring is the one through whom Abraham will have many descendants. It's to one and Abraham knew it. You say, "How do you know Abraham knew it?" Abraham knew it because Jesus said:

Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.  
(John 8:56 ESV)

Jesus is talking about Himself. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day. He saw it and he was glad. And through Jesus, therefore, the Bible says:

... the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed."  
(Galatians 3:8 ESV)

You see, this multitude, like the stars in the heaven, is possible because it's not just about the Jewish nation; it's all nations, all people. You say, "But I'm not a Jew." Doesn't matter. Those who believe in Jesus, you are children by faith and we follow the same footsteps of our father, Abraham. Father Abraham is a Jew, or rather he's before the Jew – different race, probably, from us Chinese or Indians or Filipinos

here. But we're all together in the same family of faith, united by faith in Jesus Christ – the Messiah, the Saviour.

So Abraham is a story of amazing hope. He died not having received this promise, by the way. He did not see Jesus physically walking before him, but he hoped and he knew that this would be true. My friends, this story of hope is a story not just about Abraham. Remember: the intent of the author is to use Abraham as an example for you and for me. The Bible tells us in Romans 15:

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

(Romans 15:4 ESV)

So, this is not just about Abraham, one person. No, it's for all of us today, that if you are in Christ, you have hope. Now, I want to define very clearly what hope is. Some people think hope is: "Oh, I hope I will have a Lamborghini and I will get a Lamborghini." No, that's not quite what the Bible is talking about.

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Hope in the Scripture is defined as the confident expectation of all the good promised in Jesus Christ. It refers to the blessings of forgiveness, adoption, justification of future glory of heirship in Christ. This is the future good. The time frame is in the life that is to come and it's not wishful thinking. Wishing or hoping for Lamborghini is wishful thinking for most of us. Maybe for one or two of you can, but the rest of us, wishful thinking – no basis, just blind optimism.

But the hope of the Scriptures, the hope in the Bible, the hope from God is not wishful thinking. It's not "maybe I'll get it", it's a confident expectation because it's based on God's Word. There's a rock solid foundation of God's promise. He said it and therefore you can trust it, and you can expect it.

You see, this is how Abraham had this hope. God made a promise to Abraham. Now, this desire and this looking forward to an offspring or descendant is not because Abraham just somehow believe Sarah could make it. Actually, Sarah said to herself, "I can't make it already, factory close. I'm beyond that age." Blind optimism will say somehow you can make it. But biblical hope is saying you can, because God promised so. His Word declares it to be so. And God not only gave a promise to Abraham, God made an oath, He swore by Himself:



For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. (Hebrews 6:13-16 ESV)

By the way, it's not wrong to swear, to make an oath. It's wrong to make an oath and not fulfil it. But making an oath is not a wrong thing; God did. Usually, when you make an oath, you invoke something greater than yourself, right? I swear by my father, I swear by my ancestor, I swear by this god. You swear by someone greater than you. But in this case, God swore by Himself. I think it is very obvious why, because there's simply no one, nothing greater than Him.

Nevertheless, God is so intent on convincing Abraham and giving him such assurance that He says: "Alright, I promise you and I will also swear by my own name, I'll swear by myself." Why?

17 So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath,  
18 so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. (Hebrews 6:17-18 ESV)

This is God's purpose to show more convincingly the unchangeable character of His purpose (Heb 6:17), so that two unchangeable things: the promise cannot be changed (as) God doesn't go back on His Word, and by the oath, it cannot be changed (as) again, God doesn't go back on His Word. It is these two unchangeable things and it's unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie, so that now we can have strong encouragement to hold on to Jesus as our hope and our refuge (Heb 6:18).

By the way, notice this: When God said these things to Abraham, it was not only to Abraham. When God said these things to Abraham, it was also for us – "to the heirs of the promise" (Heb 6:17), to you and I even listening in this morning. And God is giving them this tremendous assurance so that they can have this "sure and steadfast anchor of the soul" (Heb 6:19) – rock solid because it's based on God's Word.

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,  
(Hebrews 6:19 ESV)

My friends, you may not trust men today. Some people say a promise is made to be broken. In this world we live in, where there's a lot of deception, dishonesty, it's easy to be disillusioned. It's easy to walk beside a restaurant, you see the plastic display, look very nice, go in, order, cannot make it. We have been disappointed over and over by people.

But God is entirely different. He never lies, it is impossible for Him to lie. He promised this, He swears by it that you who are an heir of faith will have this great hope of eternal blessings – “surely I will bless you” (Heb 6:14). That's where you stand. And not only because God's Word said so, realise that the author goes on to say that:

19 We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,  
20 where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.  
(Hebrews 6:19-20 ESV)

This hope “enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone”. He says this hope is also very visibly seen, materialising before you because Jesus died and Jesus rose again. He has completed the work on the cross and now, He is set on the right hand of God – He enters the most holy place. The veil that separates the most holy place is now torn. Christ is right there. He has secured salvation for us. You can trust Him. He's now a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.

What's the point the author is making in Hebrews 6? Your foundation for hope, absolutely rock solid, cannot be changed. And as you go through the hardships of life, you can be confident that at the end of it all, God will come through for you. You're destined for glories and blessings forevermore.

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Now, some of you may say, “Alright, pastor, I get it. God is absolutely trustworthy. But I'm not. I may not keep the end of my deal. I may sin and does it mean I lose then my salvation, I lose then this hope because I know God is able but I'm not? I

don't want to be unfaithful but practically and realistically, I do sin and fall so many times. Do I blow the deal therefore?" This is what Keller said in his sermon on Hebrews 6. He says:

"I've had people come to me and say, "My biggest problem with trusting God is not that I don't think he is trustworthy. My biggest problem with trusting God is I'm not trustworthy."

– Tim Keller

What if I fail? Great question. What if Abraham fail? What if Abraham fails? Well, first of all, if Abraham is truly God's child, he wouldn't fail. The real faith that is in him will keep believing. But then, there is something very interesting when God made a promise to Abraham. Back in Genesis chapter 15, God said to Abraham:

... "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. (Genesis 15:9-10 ESV)

Bring some animals, kill them, cut them into half. This is tough but Abraham, do this. You say, "What is this for?" Well, this is ancient Eastern method of drawing a contract. Today, very civilised, just get a piece of paper, sign your name, that's a contract. But in those days, their contract is done via this very brutal and very bloody method. You get animals, you slay them and you separate them into two halves and the two parties involved in the contract will then walk in between the separated bodies, the carcasses.

The idea is that if you walk through this, you're saying we're bound in this contractual agreement and if we do get out or we back out of this contractual agreement or this covenant, that we will... our fate will be like the animals. So that's the idea. So God here is calling Abraham to a covenant and usually in a covenant, the two parties will walk. But look at what's happening here:

As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him.

(Genesis 15:12 ESV)

When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the

great river, the river Euphrates,  
(Genesis 15:17-18 ESV)

What is this all about? Commentators all agree that what God is doing, is that He's making a covenant to Abraham by Himself – Abraham is asleep, he didn't walk through. God symbolise, I think, in that pot and that furnace. He walks through it Himself and it's an unconditional promise: "I will bless you, Abraham. Your offspring will inherit the land." The point that I'm trying to make here is this: Our hope, like Abraham's, is based on God's unconditional promise to Abraham and the children of faith in Christ.

Now you say, "Pastor, does this mean then I can sin all I want?" No. Like I said, if you are truly born again, if you are regenerate, if you are a child of God, you wouldn't have this attitude to sin all you want. But should you slip into sin, you have not annulled God's promise to you in Jesus Christ. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you don't lose this hope, this promise from God because God is faithful. He cannot deny Himself. Even if we are unfaithful, He is faithful. Such is the strength of God's promise to the children of faith. And it is that understanding today that if we keep believing, if we are people who persevere unto the end, the hope is certain and sure.

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And so he says, we have this "anchor of the soul" (Heb 6:19). Now, this word "anchor" is just nautical imagery. Of course, you are familiar with that. Why do you need an anchor? Very simple. You need an anchor... You don't need an anchor if the sea is calm and there're no winds and waves, right? I mean, why do you need an anchor if everything is always going to be calm, peaceful, easy. But the fact remains that in life here, there are always going to be winds and waves and storms, and that's why we need an anchor in very difficult troubling times.

You need an anchor for your soul and that's why God is so passionate about saying, I want you to be absolutely certain and sure ("God desired to show more convincingly" in Heb 6:17). I want you to have "strong encouragement" (Heb 6:18) so that you may hold on to this anchor, so that you will not be swayed, so that you will not stumble and fall, so that you will not go to false, deceitful, suicidal hopes that this world falsely gives you, but you'll hang on to this hope in Jesus Christ. Christ in us, the hope of glory.

Someone (Steven Cole), a pastor, he says: “The certain hope of our future salvation is an anchor to steady our souls while we wait on God in present storms.” Your family is breaking up. Your health is breaking down. Things seem to be crumbling all around you. You’re going through great pressures and stress, so tempting to give it up, so tempting to give up your family, your personal life, your walk with God and say, “Let’s forget all about this. Let’s forget about God and the Bible and Jesus, and so on and so forth.”

Keep your eyes, like Abraham, fixed on what is to come. Keep your gaze fixed on Him that this hope, this hope that is worth your life will anchor your soul as you go through the present storms today. If you do not have an anchor of hope, you’re going to swing; your life is going to overturn, it’s going to capsize. And God is intentional for you this morning to have this hope.

The book of Hebrews... Now, this is a spoof, alright? (Pastor showed a picture with the title) “Heroes – Amazing Stories of Faith”. The book of Hebrews talks about a people of faith. Hebrews 11 talks actually also about a people of hope. These patriarchs, these heroes that have gone before us, they are people of faith because they believe God and His Word. They are people of hope because they did not live for what they could see around them, they live for what is not seen that is to come. They did not mind that they were despised and downtrodden and forsaken in this world. They did not mind that they were strangers and pilgrims. They did not mind that they had to suffer because they did not live for the here-and-now. They live for the future; they look for that heavenly city that is to come. And that is where the anchor is cast, and that is why they are stable and strong even though they go through the storms.

You see, Abraham was someone like that. He left his bungalow, his good class bungalow at Ur of the Chaldees, and stayed in pitched tents. He gave it all up. He was willing to do that because he was looking at the property in prime district in heaven. He knew what he was living for:

By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.  
(Hebrews 11:9-10 ESV)

The Bible tells us they died in faith. Now, don't ever think that God always fulfils his promises to us here within our short 70, 80, 90 years of living. No, it doesn't always have to be like this. In fact, the Bible says:

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth... But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one...

(Hebrews 11:13-16 ESV)

They all died in faith, not having received the things promised. They were looking for the heavenly city afar – that's hope. Hope is not believing that your family situation is always going to turn around. Hope is not believing that the cancer diagnosis is always going to be reversed. But hope is believing that even if my family breaks down, even if my health breaks down, I'm destined for glory. That's what it is, the time frame is entirely different.

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And again, Moses. You know that story very well. He gave it all up. He gave up power and prestige, and possessions to suffer reproach because he esteemed the reward that is to come:

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

(Hebrews 11:24-26 ESV)

And what about this:

Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats [pastor: “don't have famous, branded clothes, just very simple stuff"], destitute, afflicted, mistreated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised,

(Hebrews 11:36-39 ESV)

This kind of a life, radical life is only possible for those who hope in God. There are those martyrs who die for their faith and when they were sent to the cross to be burnt, they were asking them, “Where are you going?” And their reply? “I’m going to heaven.” That’s what steadies their gaze in the face of death.

If you have been to Rome in your life, or if you’re going there, I suggest not only to visit the shopping malls where you buy your Prada and so on, but go visit some place called the catacombs. In the catacombs, this is an extensive, elaborate, intrinsic, profound labyrinth of passages and tunnels and niches. I mean this is where Christians who are persecuted would hide. They didn’t want to die, not that they were cowardly but they wanted to preserve their lives. Nothing wrong with that. And so, they dug underground tunnels, they hid in caves and this is a very important way by which God preserves his people then.

And you know, if you are one of those who are a believer, you would be very hesitant to tell others where the entrance is, right? Because if you tell someone who happens to be a spy, the entire Roman Empire will come against you and kill you. So, in order to communicate, they have to talk in secret codes, passwords to know that you are of the same – we are all believers of Jesus. So one of the things they draw are emblems such as this. You say what is this emblem about? I mean catch fish? Shall we be fishers of men? Is that what it is? No.

This emblem consists of an anchor and consists of a fish. Let me explain to you the fish. You say what is the fish all about? The fish is spelled this way in the Greek language: ΙΧΘΥΣ. It’s actually pronounced “ichthus” – fish, but are in “Y” (upsilon), “X” (chi), and so on and so forth – these are the letters of the Greek alphabet. They all represent something to the Christians. So, ΙΧΘΥΣ really... for upsilon and so on and so forth, they stand for Jesus (= Ἰησοῦς), Christ (= Χριστός), God (= Θεός), Son (= Υἱός), Saviour (= Σωτήρ).

So, when I meet with you and I am a believer, I’ll draw the fish. And if you draw the fish, and you understand what it means, it means both of us acknowledge Jesus Christ is God’s Son, our Saviour. That’s their password as it were. So you know the fish, what it means. And by the way, our Gospel Light logo last time, the pomfret, you remember (and pastor mentioned the fish in the Teochew dialect)? If you remember our pomfret, why fish? Because it is partially inspired by the early church, the ichthus. Of course today, now is no more that.

But what about the anchor? Now, I think the anchor is so simple after today's sermon, isn't it? The anchor is a reminder that we have a sure and steady hope, an anchor for our soul. What was really significant for the early Christians were these two things: Jesus Christ – God's Son, my Saviour; and even if I've to die today, I have a sure and steadfast hope. The steely determination of the early church is not psychology; it is theology – knowing God's Word and what Jesus Christ has done. This morning, let this theology of hope sink within your soul. Let's bow for a word of prayer together.

There's a song that says:

There is a hope that burns within my heart,  
That gives me strength for every passing day;  
A glimpse of glory now revealed in meagre part,  
Yet drives all doubt away:  
I stand in Christ, with sins forgiven;  
And Christ in me, the hope of heaven!  
My highest calling and my deepest joy,  
To make His will my home.

Timestamp 0:41:19.6

My friends, this morning, are you going through pain and suffering, and difficulties? The world will tell you go to the drinks, go to drugs, go to sex, go to worldly friends; believe that somehow things will get better; have blind optimism. But let me say to you, these are all deceptive, suicidal, false hopes. They don't stand the test of time; they bring you nothing. But there is a hope that stands the test of time. There is a hope that is sure and steady, rock solid in a world where there is shifting sand – the hope in Jesus Christ. Look at Him, look at Him die on the cross, look at Him pay for your sins, look at Him shout: "It is finished!" And look at Him rise again. He is now risen, at the right hand of throne of God. You can trust Him.

Wherever you are, whatever you're going through, it is not the end, it is not the end. Keep pressing on. Now, God doesn't promise you an easy life and in fact, I think you have a harder life because they that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Jesus said, "If they have so persecuted me, they will also persecute you." But whilst it is a difficult life, it is a rewarding life. You have a hope that the world doesn't have. All the world has today is that this world is their hope – what a sad thing it is. But for you, for the believer, you have no idea, you have no idea the joy that is set before you.



Let this hope, let this promise, let this oath of God calm the waves and the winds. Anchor your soul as you're swept to and fro till one day, you're led safely home.

Maybe this morning, friends, you are here and you've not been able to live your life like a stranger and pilgrim should. You have sunk your roots far too deep in this world – too many property purchases, too much investments, too many hopes and dreams tied up in this world – and you know it in your heart today. You don't look like someone who is heading for heaven. You look like someone who wants to stay here. My friends, if you want to let these grips of this world loosen in your life, then I say look at the hope that is set before you. So, like Abraham, like Moses, you esteem the rewards and the riches of Christ far greater than the reproach in this world. Maybe today, you are living in sin. Oh, let that thought that you will meet with Jesus one day help you purify your life.

Some of you may be here and you do not know what this is all about, you're not a Christian and you say, "What hope is this that I hear of?" I say this hope is the hope of salvation, of eternal life, of joy and peace and blessings forevermore in God. And this hope is offered to those who will believe in God's promise, who will believe in Jesus Christ, God's Son, who will repent and trust that Jesus paid it all and when you cling onto that promise, you are a child of hope. And I pray this morning, you will find Jesus and find that hope right here, right now. Would you respond to God in prayer in your seats? Just you and your God. Let the clarity of God's light shine bright within your heart. May God bless you.

Father, thank You for this morning and for Your Word. Thank You for the hope that is set before us, the joy that is set before us. On Christ, the solid rock, I stand. May this be true for every single one gathered here. Bless Your Word to our hearts and bless each one today. We pray all this now in Jesus' Name. Amen.