

Hope Again

Part 1: What is Real Hope?

Luke 1:46-49

Summary:

Hope. It's turned into an elusive feeling we cynically relegate it to an ethereal, magical feeling for kids at Christmas. But hope is real. And real hope is powerful. Real hope is tangible. Real hope is available to each of us personally. It's a hope that was realized over 2000 yrs ago by a teenage peasant named Mary and it's a hope each of us can personally experience this xmas and the rest of the year.

Main Points:

[00:51] We've had our hopes dashed enough to know it can be safer to not hope.

[02:12] Hope is just wishful thinking unless it's based on something reliable and real.

[06:13] Real hope is choosing to believe God will do what he says he will do.

[07:34] Real hope creates real joy.

[09:10] The goodness and love of God is the foundation of real, solid hope.

[09:57] When we experience who God really is we experience what hope really is.

[10:22] We can personally know real hope because we are personally known by the real God.

[12:58] Jesus is hope realized and personified

[16:12] When Jesus is our real hope it permeates our thoughts, feelings, and decisions.

[17:29] Finding real hope leads to finding real life.

Discussion Questions:

1. On a scale of the Grinch to Cindy Lou Who, how hopeful would you say you tend to be?
2. What would you say is the difference between "wishful thinking" and the idea of hope talked about here?
3. Read Mary's song in Luke 1:46-55. What stands out to you? Is there an aspect of her song that inspires hope in you?
4. Jon said, "When Jesus is our real hope it permeates our thoughts, feelings, and decisions." What does that mean to you? What do you think that would look like in your daily life right now?
5. How can your group pray for you this week?

Transcript:

IN: Hope. Seems elusive... like a wispy ethereal feeling...

It's a word we see so often around Xmas that it's almost lost all meaning for us...

But real hope is powerful. Real hope is tangible. Real hope is available to each of us personally.

It's a hope that was realized over 2000 yrs ago by a teenage peasant named Mary and it's a hope each of us can experience this xmas and the rest of the year... so let's talk about it... together.

WE: When I say HOPE... a lot of us have the initial reaction of cynicism. What's that about? Well we're adults!

We've had our hopes dashed enough to know it can be safer to not hope.

- Hopes you had as a kid... xmas gifts, making the team, getting that job.
- Hopes you had for what your life would be by now
- Hopes for what your family would look
- Hopes for your kids lives

It seems like the more we hope the more we are disappointed.

So we relegate that word to only one time of year and it is this fun magical idea for kids that doesn't really have a solid definition or place in our lives.

As we age we put silly things like hope away and focus on real life and dealing with whatever our realities are...

- Getting through the days and weeks and years the best we can.

What good does wishful thinking do for real adults in the real world? Right? Good point. BUT...

What if we could have a hope that is secure... sure... tested... real and able to experience here and now?

That is the real hope of Xmas... a solid hope based on actual events and an actual person.

Hope is just wishful thinking unless it's based on something reliable and real.

We can discover this hope through the eyes of the 1st person to fully realize it... Mary. The mother of Jesus.

GOD: Background: Mary grew up in a world that had almost lost all hope.

All her life she had heard that God promised her ancestor Abraham the whole world be blessed through his offspring.

- But his descendents. Jews, didn't feel very blessed... let alone able to bless whole world...

She was taught her other ancestor King David had been promised that his throne would last forever...

- But her people were living under the boot of the most powerful empire in the world... Rome.

But still God had promised something was coming... someone was coming **Isaiah 9:6-7**

But God has been silent for 100's of years...

- Still under Roman occupation.
- The king they do have is just puppet regime of Rome.
- Religious leaders more concerned about keeping laws/traditions than actually helping the people.

In this hopeless situation... God invades the darkness with a spark of hope that will turn into a blaze that will entirely change the world forever...

A nobody peasant girl with the most common name of the time from a dinky nothing village named Nazareth has the weirdest day anyone has ever had...

Angel: You're gonna have a baby... and he's going to be the one you all have been waiting and hoping for.

Mary: Not possible. I'm a good girl.

Angel: God's gonna do it. And he gave your old relative Elizabeth a baby too...

Mary: Ok I'm in... I'm God's servant.

Seems crazy... might not buy this part of the story... totally fine. Mary found it hard to believe too.

Here is Why I believe, even though it seems crazy...

The writer Luke... one of the best ancient historians we have... he says he talked to eyewitnesses... to have the information he has he either made it up (doesn't seem likely) or he interviewed someone who was there... Possibly Mary herself, she knew the disciples. Or someone who knew her... a younger son, James leader of 1st church. John who took her in... eyewitnesses.

Either way...

Mary goes to see Elizabeth... **V. 39-45**

Elizabeth says Mary is blessed b/c she chose to believe that God will actually do what he promised.

Real hope is choosing to believe God will do what he says he will do.

After this greeting from her cousin Elizabeth, Mary bursts out into the very first Xmas song... lays out the entire point of her pregnancy... proving yes.. Mary did know.

[Read all of... **V. 46-56**

So rich and important, worthwhile to break it down into three parts... This episode... focus on the beginning of song...

V. 46-47 Look how personal... her soul and spirit praise and rejoice. Her entire being (thoughts/feelings) filled with praise to God and rejoicing in who God is.

Real hope creates real joy.

Why is she so joyful?

V. 48 Mary is so humble. Not self-deprecating... oh I'm so horrible and terrible kind of way... she is just acknowledging her reality.

She's no princess or queen.

She is one of the lowest/weakest people of that society... but God has chosen to bless her (do good to her) anyway.

To make her one of the most famous people in the history of the human race.

Mary understands that through no special quality or ability of her own she was chosen to bring about God's long awaited promise.

God owes Mary nothing. She owes him everything and yet he still chooses to bless her.

- EX. Parents and children.

He chose her out of every other woman in history to give birth to, and raise his promised savior for all of humanity.

Why did he choose her? B/c he wanted to. B/c he chose to.

It is the same grace and love he offers all of us.

- As one of her other sons wrote... **James 1:17.**

The goodness and love of God is the foundation of real, solid hope.

How does she really know he is good... b/c she KNOWS him.

49a The Mighty One

- The one with all the power... in charge
- The one who can do anything... cannot be stopped
- The one who is not changed by outside circumstances or influences
- The one who formed the universe and keeps it going

Is holy

- Set apart
- Unlike anyone/anything else
- FULL of love, mercy, truth, justice
- Slow to anger... abounding/overflowing with love

When we experience who God really is we experience what hope really is.

And what makes her choose to hope and rejoice?

49b This Mighty Holy One knows her and has worked on her behalf... Has done great things for her.

We can personally know real hope because we are personally known by the real God.

Now if you're paying attention, "Hope.. got it.. Blah blah blah... but what is she hoping for?"

The promised messiah? Yes. That this baby really is the One? Yes? But that all points to deeper hope.

It's at the very beginning... **V. 47** "God MY SAVIOR."

This is a phrase God used for himself many times in the Jewish scriptures Mary was raised with...

Isaiah 43:11

Hosea 13:4

God had promised to save his people... from the beginning

The angel had told Mary to name her son Jesus, Joshua- which means God saves/God is my salvation.

And now this baby was the solid proof that he was trustworthy and going to fulfill his promise... He was going to destroy the power of sin...

- That thing that makes you do what you don't actually want to do
- That keeps separating us and God, each other, selves
- That thing that makes us say that what we want right now is more important than those who are right in front of us

It's power had now started to unravel b/c of the baby growing in her womb.

And b/c God has kept his promise... the result of sin, DEATH, was being overpowered by light, love, life.

Mary's hope was based on reality... the reality that God was coming to save his people... the reality she would feel kick, and hiccup, and stretch inside of her...

Somehow this baby was God fulfilling his promise to come and rescue his people...

See in reality... She was singing to her own son... whom she would watch grow... whom she would watch teach w/ authority and power... whom she would watch heal the sick, blind, deaf... whom she would watch die on a Roman cross... and whom she would see risen and alive again three days later.

She was singing to her God and her Savior.... Her son whom she would name Jesus... God saves

Jesus is hope realized and personified... Experienced/lived/touched

YOU: This isn't just wishful thinking... or some fleeting, wispy hope.

This is the most real thing in the universe... b/c it is hope in God himself.

It's not reserved for the select few who discover the secret knowledge or have been religious enough, or worked hard enough...

It is available to everyone... right now.

Mary's song can be all of our songs.

He has taken notice of you...

You too can be called blessed...

He has also done great things for you...

As Paul put it... **Romans 5:6-11**

So what do we do with this...?

- Nod, agree, say that's really great. ?
- Get hung up on the miracle aspect of it?
- Say, yeah, yeah I know this stuff. Every year same thing.

Or... do we let real hope start reawakening our hearts?

Do we choose to have the courage to dare to hope again?

Hope w/ Jesus isn't just wishing for something... it's absolute certainty that God keeps his promises.

Hope that our lives here and now matter b/c we are known and we are loved and we are blessed by the Mighty One?

Hope that we aren't alone when all other hopes are dashed.

Hope that in the end good will win, justice will be done. All pain and death will forever be defeated.

That is what Jesus promised. That is what we can hope for b/c he based it on himself... the one who promised he would die and rise again and then did.

Is he your hope?

This xmas might be the time you finally try it.

You don't have to make any decisions right now... but maybe...

- Choose to hope that this is actually real... allow yourself to entertain that hope a few minutes/days
- Don't let your cynicism/experience push it away right away.
- Ask yourself: Do you want this to be true? Why is that? What if it is? What difference would that make for you?

If we say Jesus is our hope...

Do we live like it?

Or do we live like our hope is job/wealth/political party/family/reputation...

When Jesus is our real hope it permeates our thoughts, feelings, and decisions.

Read and Pray Mary's Song- Luke 1:46-55

WE: Hope is real. Hope is powerful. Not b/c we want it to be. Not b/c it makes us feel something really magical... but b/c Jesus is true hope. And he is real and he is powerful.

God. The Mighty and Holy One coming to earth as a baby to rescue, renew and restore us to himself.

We can hope in him b/c we can trust him and rely on him.

This is the hope we are all looking for... this is the hope that has sustained and inspired and saved millions over thousands of years.

It's a hope we can find by a single choice to trust Jesus is who he said he is and will do what he said he will do.

Finding real hope leads to finding real life.