



Sermon Advent Series – “Hope” *Genesis 12:1–9*

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I. Introduction

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In regard to hope, I found this next statement in a Gallup Poll article entitled, ‘Leading Your Workplace With Hope Through COVID-19,’ written by Ken Royal on April 20th of 2019.

A Gallup study of over 10,000 employees found that followers have four primary needs of their leaders: trust, compassion, stability and hope. They’re all critical, all the time. But since the outbreak of COVID-19, hope is more valuable than it’s ever been. Because hope is what will get us through this.

That’s not sentimentality—hope has been well-researched and is correlated with a variety of positive outcomes, from higher levels of income and greater personal savings to better health and longer life expectancy.

Gallup finds that employees who strongly agree that **their leader makes them feel enthusiastic about the future** (Gallup’s measure of hope in the workplace) are 69 times more likely to be engaged in their work compared with employees who disagree with that statement.

The article went on to say that there are three things people need from their leaders that instill hope: goals, ideas and energy. In sum, hope needs an object. It needs strategy and creativity, and it needs engagement and motivation. We will see today how all three of these features that instill hope are found in God’s leadership over us.

Who is leading us? Our spouses? Our friends? Our community? Is God really leading me and you? I know at times we want to do what is right, but what about when we have doubts about the future? Who leads us then? Through today’s passage we hope to give ourselves more completely to the leadership of Jesus and the Spirit he has given us so that we might have hope. And with his hope a renewed energy to rule with him.

II. Context

Let’s first turn to the context of today’s passage.

1.) Hope through the Seed

In last week’s message we saw how Adam and Eve stopped following God as their leader and started making their own choices. By making their own choices they realized they were no longer under

God's care and were therefore naked both physically and morally. We also saw how God returned to them in the Garden to provide coverings for them.

But God does more than just provide a covering. He gives them hope as well. God states that Eve's offspring will crush the head of the serpent that is wicked and has tempted them. Adam and Eve must know that in their state as sinners before God they will no longer rule over creation as they were meant to. But their hope is in their children, their offspring. From them will come one who will bring victory over the serpent, over sin and over death.

2.) Hope through Seth

Adam and Eve do have two children, Cain and Abel. God's plan is to lead this new generation toward a hope of victory over sin. The two brothers bring offerings before God, but God only approves of one, Abel's. Cain is furious so God intervenes and helps lead Cain past sin's temptations. He does this to give him hope. He says to Cain, "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?" But rather than following God and His goodness, Cain chooses for himself what to do and murders his brother. Where is Adam and Eve's hope? Abel, who brought an acceptable offering to God has been murdered.

Eve gives birth again to a boy named Seth. God provides hope for restoration through another son. Eve declares, "God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him." It is through Seth that God leads humanity to his hope of victory over sin and death. It is from Seth's family line onward that "people began to call on the name of the Lord."

3.) Hope through Noah

And in the line of Seth, Noah is born. In Noah's time, God sees only rebelliousness and wickedness. God sees that the "inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time," but he provides hope through Noah, the offspring of Seth. God protects Noah through a global judgement of humanity and at the end of this judgement God repeats His promise for those that remain. The Scriptures say, "Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.'" From Noah's offspring come the nations spread out through the land.

In these passages we see God leading and providing hope for humanity through Adam and Eve, Abel, Seth, Noah and now, in our passage, through Abram.

III. Unpack

1.) God's Goal Gives Hope

Let's look more closely at God's leadership that provides hope. As according to the article from Gallup, leaders instill hope in others because they provide a compelling goal. Here is their definition of Goals...

Goals: When you explain what you specifically want to achieve, you give people direction.
Hope needs an object.

In Genesis 12:1-3, God finds Abram, from the family of Shem the son of Noah. God brought hope to humanity through Noah after God saw the great wickedness of humanity. He saw that humanity were

like sheep without a shepherd, all lost and without hope. Now in Abram's time, God see humanity building a tower in order to make a name for themselves. They say to each other, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:4). But because they were all unified around an unrighteous goal, their fears became a reality. God "scattered them over the face of the whole earth."

God then comes to Abram and tells him to leave his own country. He tells him to leave his people and even his family's inheritance. He tells Abram to go to a place that He will show him. God who is leading Abram is giving him a new goal and a new hope. God promises to Abram...

² *"I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
³ I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
**and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you."***

God promises to make Abram's name great. Those who previously tried to build a city and tower that reached the heavens thought that God would never want to make their name great. They had to do that for themselves. Under God's rule, they paid for their lawlessness. In Abram we see God's intent to share His unsurpassed glory with those that follow Him. God's goal for Abram is to give him hope even though Abram is being asked to leave everything behind and walk out into the unknown.

How will God make Abram's name great? God says that "all peoples on earth will be blessed" through Abram. Abram is following God's lead and God is giving Abram a global hope that mirrors the hope of humanity at creation. Sure Abram will leave all that he knows and has, but God will give him a greater hope than he could have imagined. All the peoples of the earth will be blessed through him. God leads towards goals that provide glorious hope.

2.) God's Ideas Give Hope

As according to the article from Gallup, leaders instill hope in others because they provide creative ideas as well. Here is their definition of Ideas...

Ideas: Leaders who can think of many different ways to reach a goal will find more ways around the inevitable obstacles. Hope needs strategy and creativity.

In Genesis 12:4–7, God revealed His very creative plan! Abram, at 75 years old, takes all that he has and moves to a land filled with Canaanites! Remember that the Canaanites are the descendants of Ham, the son of Noah that acted shamefully. God's plan is to bring Abram, the descendent of Shem into this land in order to make his name great. But at 75 years-old, God's creative plan isn't to fulfil his promised goal in the current generation. God reveals that His plan is to fulfil His promise to

Abram through his offspring. The Scriptures say that, “The Lord appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your offspring I will give this land.’”

Have you ever wondered why God found it important to put genealogies in His Word, in the Bible? Adam’s family line to Noah in Genesis 5? The genealogy from Shem to Abram in Genesis 11? The genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1? God’s creative plan to secure hope for humanity is through our children! The book of Hebrews in the New Testament says that Abram never assumed that God would fulfil His plan, His promise in Abram’s lifetime. Abram knew that God’s plan would eventually be carried out to completion through the generations that had yet come. God’s creative plan for the world is through Abram’s offspring.

What is Abram’s role? He holds onto the promised hope of God and builds an altar as a place where he can come to meet with God. At the altar, Abram will receive grace and power to follow God’s plan in the allotment God has given him.

3.) God’s Energy Gives Hope

And lastly, As according to the article from Gallup, leaders instill hope in others because they provide energy as well. Here is their definition of Energy...

Energy: People need to see your engagement to generate their own. Hope needs engagement and motivation.

In Genesis 12:8–9, Abram builds an altar to the Lord. He does this because this is where he will come to encounter God’s Spirit and gain the support he needs to be faithful. It is at the altar where Abram will come with a sacrifice for sin and to engage with God’s Spirit, asking for repentance and restoration. It is here where he will come to gain strength when he is low or when he is oppressed by others or adverse circumstances. The altar is not merely a religious location but it is a place where Abram can encounter God. It is a holy place. God has given Abram hope, that he will be restored to glory. God has shown Abram that His plan is to fulfil that promise through Abram’s offspring. God sustains Abram’s hope by meeting him in a holy place where Abram will get a foretaste of the glory that is to come. God provides hope to Abram by setting a glorious goal, creative plan and providing His strength and energy along the way. God is much more than the leader as described by Gallup, but here we see how God leads his people successfully with hope.

IV. Application

What is our application for today?

1.) God’s Hope For Us: Christ’s Return

Our hope is the return of Jesus Christ. When Jesus returns in glory and when his kingdom is fully established, we will reign with him forever. Today marks a new season of Advent, preparing our hearts for the return of our Lord. But maybe we feel that this season is just another religious event with little significance. Maybe we’re so used to celebrating Advent that it has lost its special function in our lives; a time to place our hope in Jesus’ return.

Let's encourage one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, to place all of our hope in Jesus' return. Even if that hope seems so faint in our hearts. Let's make good use of this Advent season by opening our heart to God's Spirit and let him create in us hope that will last forever. Hope for a time when Jesus returns in complete glory, a glory we will share in as well.

2.) God's Idea For Us: Our Offspring

This Advent season, as the Spirit directs our hearts to place our hope in Jesus' return, let's also realize that his return may not happen in our lifetime. God's will is to fulfil his plan through our offspring. Now by offspring I don't mean our biological children. We are brothers and sisters, we are family because we have the faith of Abraham in God and His salvation. Our hope of eternal life and reign with Jesus will be through our spiritual offspring; those that we tell about Jesus in our lives and who come to follow him as well.

This means our hope will be fulfilled by God through...everyone outside of the church building. There are people in Milford, on the Shore and in our neighbourhoods that can continue to proclaim our hope in Jesus' return. God is not only using us to fulfil His plan of glorifying His Son. He is fulfilling His plan through His children and His children's children. This Advent season let's follow God's Spirit and see God unfold His hope for humanity through us to others around us.

3.) God's Energy For Us: Meeting Us Along the Way

God gives us a hope of restoration. That we may share in His glory through His Son. He fulfils this hope through us and those who come to follow Jesus after us. And God gives us His power and energy along with way. When we meet to worship Jesus. When we pray with each other. When we encourage one another to follow Jesus by God's Spirit. All of these are opportunities to become filled and guided by God's Spirit as he leads us to the fulfilment of His promises, His hope for us. Let's make this Advent season an opportunity for the Spirit to help us to feel close to God. Help us to sense the power of Jesus and his resurrected body to do his will. Let the Advent season be our time of receiving a foretaste of the promise that will be fulfilled so that we might have hope. So that others would see God's hope for them and the world as well.

V. Conclusion

1.) God's Hope For Us: Christ's Return

2.) God's Idea For Us: Our Offspring

3.) God's Energy For Us: Meeting Us Along the Way