Finding Hope in the midst of a Pandemic

“My hope is built on nothing less, Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness. I dare note trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus’ name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.” Edward Mote (1797-1874) falls into the rare category of Methodist hymn writers who grew up without religious training and whose parents were pub owners. He was apprenticed at a young age by his parents to a cabinetmaker but found faith when he heard the preaching of John Hyatt at the Tottenham Court Road Chapel in London at age 15. Yet this Methodist preacher’s hymn captures the essence of the Christian hope in Jesus Christ and answers the need of the human spirit. The blessed assurance of Salvation through Jesus Christ brings peace, acceptance, access, and lasting hope for the believer’s life; past, present, and future. Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans captures that idea when he writes, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1–2).

The theological concept of salvation, sanctification, justification, and glorification are summed in this single verse. Unearned gifts, undeserved favor, and total acceptance, all by grace through in our Lord Jesus Christ. The finished work of Jesus the Christ on the cross and His resurrection is the basis on which the believer is rendered or regarded as just, innocent, and blameless. The believer’s new position in Christ gives the assurance of freedom: justified, totally righteous and accepted in the beloved family of God. Also, the believer has a blessed hope and a favorable future, fully confident in the promises of God. Hope is what people need right now, and hope is so hard to find apart from a relationship with Jesus Christ. John 14:6 reads, “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

As Christian educators, and good news proclaimers, we bring hope to a hopeless world. I know since the pandemic, sometimes you look out on a Sunday and see 30% of the people who used to be in the room. Some cannot even get in a room with people, so you just look into the lens of a camera. The pandemic has changed the landscape and left a world desperately in need of the hope we bring. Yet every person sitting in the pew or watching your video production or even reading your post needs the message of hope. Every person you see in those distanced chairs hungers for hope. And every person you are trying to reach has no idea, many times, what they are really missing. They are missing hope that can only be found through in our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 15:13 reads, “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”

First, in Christ we have peace with God that takes care of our past. All of us recognize that we have sinned, “missed the mark” and have not measured up to God’s standard of righteousness. Only in Christ can we find the answer for our sin, guilt, and shame. Christ alone was able to measure up to God’s standard and take our punishment for the wages of our sin was death. The forgiveness we receive through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross allows to experience a new relationship with God. God will no longer hold our sins against us because Jesus paid the penalty for us. Knowing that we are forgiven and have the righteousness of Christ placed in our account gives us an overflowing peace! 2Co 5:21 For he (god the Father) hath made him (Jesus His only begotten Son) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Are we really made righteous? This verse is wonderfully weighty: do we understand it by personal experience? Are we new creatures, reconciled by Jesus' blood, accepted in the Beloved, and one with him? If you think so, are you sure? If not, you can be sure? In Christ, every sin has been forgiven, past, present, and future. With our sins removed we can experience a right relationship with God, his world and with each other.

More than that, the believer has open access to God through our Lord Jesus Christ which give us assurance of His watchful care in our present. Because of Jesus, our mediator and Lord, we can come to God anytime for the help that we need. The knowledge of open access to God gives us the assurance of answered prayer and our hope is renewed. Our blessed hope is found in the promises God has given us – promises of freedom from sin and promises of an abundant life. We can find so much hope in Scripture through the gift of eternal life made possible through His son, Jesus Christ. No matter what trials, temptations, or pain we may suffer, we can always hold onto the hope God extends to us. Our God has provided a door of access through His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus has become our faithful high priest, securing better access, based on better promises, leading to a better glorious future. Our past has been settled because our sins are forgiven; our present is manageable and victorious because of our access to God and the assurance of answered prayer; and our future is secure because Jesus has prepared a place for us. John 14:1-3 reminds us, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

The believer has hope of a glorious future. Our blessed hope of the glory of God takes care of our future. One day, we will share in His glory. Knowing that believers are justified, are at peace with God, can freely enter His presence, and have the hope of Heaven is more than one could ever hope for. But there is more! “For the believer there is hope beyond the grave, because Jesus Christ has opened the door to heaven for us by His death and resurrection.” (Billy Graham) Our blessed hope is out of this world. Revelations 21:4, 5 gives us glimpse of our future, “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.”

Resurrection Sunday reminds us of this blessed hope for every believer. For the Christian, the Cross tells us that God understands our suffering, for He took upon Himself at the Cross all our sins, all of our failures and all of our sufferings. Our Lord, on that cross, asked the question, “Why?” “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” And he received his answer, he knew. To redeem the world, to save you and me from our sins, to give us assurance that if we died, we are going to heaven. He was saying from the cross, I love you and I know the heartaches and the sorrows and the pain that you feel. Yet Resurrection Sunday points us beyond the tragedy of the Cross to the hope of the empty tomb. It tells us that there is hope for eternal life for Christ has conquered death. It also tells us that God has triumphed over evil and death and hell. This is our blessed hope, and it can be your hope as well.” Hope is found in the promises God has given us – promises of freedom from sin. We can find so much hope in Scripture through the gift of eternal life made possible through His son, Jesus Christ. No matter what trials, temptations, or pain we may suffer, we can always hold onto the hope God extends to us.