

Anchored in Unchanging Hope

Series: Anchored in the Unchanging

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Hope, Kingdom of God

1 Peter 3-8

If there is a truth that we have constantly been reminded of this year is that change is constant. People change, situations change, relationships change, the world around us changes. And change makes us anxious. It makes us aware of how much not in control we are and that makes us very anxious and sometimes out of control ourselves.

And as much as we know that change is inevitable, something inside us yearns for something unchanging. Somewhere we can anchor ourselves in that is dependable, reliable and unchanging to give us enough strength to face every other unchanging thing in our lives.

We have often made the mistake of hoping that will be our spouses or partners. We have hoped that we will find our stability in our economies, and national identities or the financial stability in our jobs. Yet time and time again we are made to stare at the reality that all these things change. And even more drastically this year.

So I have invited us to continually anchor ourselves in the unchanging God whose attributes are just like him unchanging. Because God is unchanging we can face the ever-changing world and not be consumed or destroyed. The unchanging God, whose Kingdom is unchanging and his love is unchanging.

But what do we do when even then it feels like change has been overwhelming? The other week I saw a headline that the secretary for Education opened schools for teachers while leaving learners at home.

The situation in Kenya keeps changing. There was high power meeting and the Deputy President was conspicuously absent. Remember the days when people said that the unity between him and the president would not end?

National identities are changing. Once a beacon of the EU, Britain may have legal actions taken against it by Europe over Brexit. Once thought to be a more stable nation, the US is going through a dramatic change right now.

Some of you have endured drastic change closer to home. In your own families. In your own bodies, in your own souls. Even in what you believe. So what do we do when despite

trusting in God, waking up each day and stepping into his love and watching out for Kingdom breaking through the rate of change still feels overwhelming?

We can anchor our souls in the unchanging hope. Here is the thing, the worst thing is never the last thing. Better things are coming up ahead. Better things are up ahead for this: country, your family, your life and the ultimate is when the Kingdom of God comes in its fullness.

Lets Pray

There is a church leader called Peter. He was one of the former followers of Jesus and was a pivotal leader of the Jesus movement. He wrote a letter to encourage believers during very trying times. Things were not only changing but there was a lot of persecution of believers by those in both political and spiritual authority. And he goes ahead to be arrested and even crucified upside down. So in terms of people who were overwhelmed and still had hope, we can take him as an authority.

1 Peter 3 - 8

Celebrate with praises the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has shown us his extravagant mercy. For his fountain of mercy has given us a new life—we are reborn to experience a living, energetic hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

We are reborn into a perfect inheritance that can never perish, never be defiled, and never diminish. It is promised and preserved forever in the heavenly realm for you!

Through our faith, the mighty power of God constantly guards us until our full salvation is ready to be revealed in the last time. May the thought of this cause you to jump for joy, even though lately you've had to put up with the grief of many trials.

But these only reveal the sterling core of your faith, which is far more valuable than gold that perishes, for even gold is refined by fire. Your authentic faith will result in even more praise, glory, and honour when Jesus the Anointed One is revealed.

You love him passionately although you did not see him, through believing in him you are saturated with an ecstatic joy, indescribably sublime and immersed in glory. For you are reaping the harvest of your faith—the full salvation promised you—your souls' victory!

Here is the thing Peter is saying, that because of the resurrection of Jesus we are born again to energetic hope. And remember the background I gave you about this guy. He is not writing at a time when things are going great for him or the church. He is going hey, we saw

Jesus die, read the worst thing happened. But we also saw him resurrected, read the last thing was not the last thing. And because of this reality, we can have a robust and energetic hope even through our current situation.

And he is not necessarily saying, tomorrow you will wake up and it will be okay. And that is not a very popular message in the church sometimes. I remember early this year sitting for a meal with some friends I said that this whole COVID thing was going to really shake things up. And a friend said, "Stop saying that pastor. Are you not the one who says to speak life?"

Sometimes the way we have practised Christianity is one of denial. One that bad things can't and shouldn't happen to those who believe. When they do we get really stuck. Sadly some people then find ways of playing a blame game. We say it is God's punishment or a curse or that we did not have enough faith.

But the Good News that Jesus brings is that the direction things are moving to is all the good things God has planned for all creation, you included. That even though it might hurt now, one day all of it will be well. This is the unchanging hope: A hope that can give us unspeakable joy during pain-causing changes.

Let me just dig into the Good News a bit. The Good News is that God is not far from us. The Kingdom of God is at hand. It is within reach. The narrative we are invited in is unlike others; where either there is no God or if there is a God or gods, they do not care at all about what is happening here, and if they do, it is usually for their own pleasure or at our detriment.

So these are the worldview that people have bought into. So when Jesus comes to the scene, he says, repent which is change your worldview, and believe that the Kingdom of God is at hand; which is it is within your reach, that God is close to you.

And what evidence does he offer? Healing the sick, raising the dead, compassion on people riddled with sin like me and you, setting people free from demonic oppression. The evidence is that fundamentally God cares for you and in Jesus comes to be with you.

So what does that part of the Good news look like for us today? That God is moving close to you, yes you. And he wants to forgive you. The mistakes that you have buried behind closes that make you feel unaccepted? He wants to forgive those. He wants to heal you: Both physical and psycho-spiritual healing. He is offering you freedom from spiritual oppression and oppression even from the evils of human beings.

A significant part of the Good News is that as God entered our story and was changing things, evil still happened even to him. Even to dying on the cross. It challenges the story of Christianity we have often wrongfully told. That if you accept Jesus nothing wrong will happen to you. Because this is actually the story of the worst thing happening to God himself.

So it is not that times won't get hard, it is not that hearts won't break. It is not that we won't so oftentimes have to start all over again. It is that God will be by our side no matter what. Through thick and thin.

But the story does not end there. He conquered death bringing life to us all. Essentially this says, hey there is hope now as we see the Kingdom of God break out from time to time, but even better there is hope that at the end of all this we have victory. We beat death, we beat sin, we beat suffering, we are comforted, we are at peace. The worst thing is not the last thing. We can be anchored in that unchanging hope.

Now do not get me wrong. I think it is sad also when people live life as if there is nothing good to be hoped for now. The good news is not just for the future when we die. The Good News is right now and also future.

It is captured in the story of Jesus and his disciples in a storm. He gets them onto a boat and he falls asleep. And then there is the most threatening storm of their lives. Just because Jesus is with you does not mean there won't be a storm. In fact, some storms will come precisely because Jesus is with you.

Interestingly, Jesus did sleep in the storm. God is not worried about how things will turn out. What we need in our life when the world is tossing and turning is a non-anxious presence of the unchanging God. Isn't it cool that God in a boat looks exactly like the scripture describes him? Unshaken, unchanging.

So the disciples wake him up because they are shaken. And he calms the sea. There and then. This was the Kingdom breaking out in their NOW. Jesus did not calm the storms after disciples had drowned, he calmed the storm as they watched.

The storms that have been calmed are seeds of the Kingdom. That we can plant ourselves in an unchanging hope that better things are coming. There is good news now. We can see it breaking out all over the place. The joy of a good health record of East Africa at a time when the world thought it would be rocked by what is happening. The provision God has given during times of decrease, the comfort during grief and loneliness, the outpouring of the Kingdom as we gathered online and in person. The stories of healing.

So God has already come. Jesus is already in the boat with us. So we do not have fear because the unchanging one is already with us. This is the unchangeable hope. Not a far off hope but hope for right now. What does that look like? There is hope for today.

And at the same time, because Jesus calmed that storm did not mean an end to all storms. These folks were fishermen I can imagine they were in another not too long after. Paul, a guy who followed Jesus and spread the Jesus movement beyond Jews was caught up in a storm that wrecked their ship. They could have died.

We talked about the story of Lazarus who Jesus raised from the dead. The poor guy died again. Hey, we are going to beat this virus but guess what it won't be the end of global and local health, political and social storms we will face.

There is good news now but we still know the shoe is pinching. Some business are still restricted. Some people have fallen sick, lost lives, we know the world may battle this a lil longer into 2021. The reality of life is we are in one crisis or just about to get into the next. So what do we have going on for us? The promise of the fullness of the Kingdom of God. That good things are coming.

You see the hope is not that we stay in less stormy seas, the hope is that we get to the other side. Hope is coming. Hope is what keeps us alive. There is something beyond tomorrow and next year. There is something beyond your new job or your next season as God turns things around. Our true hope and joy is not about getting into a good marriage or getting a good job or tomorrow being a better day but our hope is in the Kingdom come.

Here is what the promise looks like

Revelation 21:4

***He will wipe away[a] every tear from their eyes
and eliminate death entirely.
No one will mourn or weep any longer.
The pain of wounds will no longer exist,
for the old order has ceased.”***

In the meantime it does not make sense to us why there would even be a storm while Jesus is in the boat with us. In this moment it might not make any sense especially if he invited you to get on the boat. In this moment suffering may not make sense. All the change can just cause a whip lash.

Yet, even the glimpses of answered prayers and breakthrough and joys now are nothing compared to what is coming. This is unchanging hope. That not only will there be healing but death itself will be no more. I think that should give me more joy.

This is unchaining hope, that not only will there be no more grief but every single tear will be wiped away. That is way better.

Any storm calmed now is just one storm before the next. So I invite you to anchor your soul in the unchanging Hope that our God is coming

This is our hope, that there is a greater joy that awaits us. We can anchor our souls in this unchanging hope. And how do we anchor ourselves in unchanging Hope?

1 Peter 3:7

But these only reveal the sterling core of your faith, which is far more valuable than gold that perishes, for even gold is refined by fire. Your authentic faith will result in even more praise, glory, and honour when Jesus the Anointed One is revealed.

We become people of praise. And living a life of praise is not denial. In fact, the maturing of our faith teaches us to praise not only when we see things looking good but even when they look grim while accepting they look grim. That is matured faith. That is what is birthed when we anchor our souls in the unchanging God: in His unchanging Love, in His unchanging Kingdom and in His unchanging Hope. When we learn to praise in a storm, we teach ourselves to anchor our souls in unchanging Hope.

Let's pray

Isaiah 35:3-4

***So, with confidence and hope in this message,
strengthen those with feeble hands, shore up the weak-kneed and weary.
Tell those who worry, the anxious and fearful,
“Take strength; have courage! There’s nothing to fear.
Look, here—your God! Right here is your God!
The balance is shifting; God will right all wrongs.
None other than God will give you success.
He is coming to make you safe.”***