

OUR HOPE HAS COME IN CLOTHED IN HUMILITY

Series: Humble King
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Unconditional Love
Phil 2-1-11

Welcome to advent. The weeks leading up to Christmas for the church are filled with expectation. Focusing on the what the Birth of Jesus meant to all humanity. Jesus, we believe, is the son of God, the King of God's Kingdom. So as we anticipate celebrating his coming we focus on the Hope, peace, Love and joy it brings to all the world.

This was God become man. The creator being one with the created. The one who is perfect submitting to the limitations of Human life. This was the eternal father living a mortal life.

This is how Paul puts it

Phil 2:6-8

***Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!***

This was an incredibly humbling process. I have always found the Humility of God so amazing. You know, that we are sitting here and sharing stories of God, in itself is a great reflection of His humility. Our language is so limited to even try to capture the greatness of our God to tell the story of God who exists beyond time and space. That God is comfortable letting us do that is great humility.

But what does it take or even feel like to be God and watch humanity as they struggle with language to dare tell His story? Broken, incomplete yet he allows it. That he has allowed you to be part of His story is incredible humility.

We have Presidents who would not allow people to debate whether they are legitimate or not. God, he allows humanity to debate his very existence.

Sometimes people sit and argue about the deity of Jesus. If Jesus was God how then was He a man who is a created being? My answer? Exactly! The fact that we can even be in that conversation shows how humbling it must be for God. That he looked exactly like us that we couldn't tell the difference without the Holy Spirit.

If Jesus was God, how could he die? Isn't God supposed to be undying? My answer? Exactly! The fact that he could even die shows how much he stripped himself of.

That God would empty himself of deity and become man is the story of Christmas and the life of Jesus. And that is the invitation and the joy and the mystery of the birth of Jesus

Christ. The Humble king would come and be born in a manger. At the birth of Jesus Royalty and Humility met.

And today we talk about how Royalty and Humility could meet to bring hope.

Let's pray.

Hope gives us a reason to live. Hope is to our soul what oxygen is to our bodies. With the many wounds inflicted on us on this journey of life, Hope brings healing. The faith that the uncertain tomorrow will be better. You know we have all seen how you could give a person everything they thought they wanted in life but if they were to become hopeless then they would see no reason to wake up the next morning.

With the future uncertain, hope is the only weapon we have to fight through each day. Now, unfortunately, the world as is moving is doing nothing to give us hope. But only hope pulls us into the future. Faith that tomorrow will be a better day, hope that the day will bring good tidings is what gives us a reason to take the next breath. Trust me it's not because we know that everything will be okay but the hope that it will be better.

And the thing about hope is we cannot get it unless the source of hope resonates with us. When in the eyes of the people calling us to hope we can see us, finally our ears can hear them. When the people offering us hope speak our language. When we can feel like they understand our journey; where we come from. If we can see in them that they know what it is to be where we are.

I think that is why people who have gone through grief can only be comforted and given hope by people who have gone through that kind of grief and journeyed through it. Why? Because they speak the same language. They have seen the same darkness walked through the same valleys.

This is something politicians take advantage of a lot. All of them try to make their race about who identifies most with the populace. Never mind most of them never do. They live in the poshest of houses and claim to know what it means to be an ordinary Kenyan. Seen how in Kenya they are all battling about who is the real hustler? Yet they all have private jets.

The thing about hope. It's so essential yet It's so rare that only someone who resonates with you that has hope can call hope out of you.

And you see, God know how much the human soul is wired for hope. Hope is the oxygen for our Soul. God knows that without hope we do not get into the future, that without hope our souls atrophies and dies. Without hope, people don't get out of bed, without hope some decide it's better to die.

The problem with this is that without hope we do not get into the future where everything we see now is our past. Without hope we do not see tomorrow where what we persevered today makes us better for. Hope is so essential because without it we have no desire for the future yet the future is brighter or at least we are better equipped to face the world.

And God knows it takes speaking in the language of men, walking in the ground of men and living the life of men and even the lowliest of men to spark that hope. And so he held nothing back in order to give us hope. And that was going to be an incredibly humbling process. Yet only in Humility can hope be sparked.

So One day a young girl probably in her teenage years received an unusual visitor. An Angel.

Luke 1:30-33

“Do not be afraid Mary for you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end”

And we sometimes don’t quite get the picture of the impact of this announcement. This was not just a hopeless nation, it was a hope less nation. You know I mean it was even dangerous to have hope in this nation because all it would do is cause you a heartache if not cost you your life. So this was a nation that was politically oppressed, economically oppressed and even spiritually oppressed. And sometimes people who tried to stand up against this were murdered so it was dangerous to even have hope.

What hope does is it makes you long for tomorrow. Hope makes you see yourself outside the current oppression. Hope makes you wake up and face what oppresses you. And sometimes it becomes dangerous to have hope. For this nation, it was getting risky to have hope.

See, Israel was a Roman colony at this point and man it was not easy. So they had no freedom and they were overtaxed. They were slaves in their own country and trust me, Romans did not treat their slaves well. There was just so much violence and disregard.

So they needed a messiah. One who would free them from the political grip of Rome. And it was promised that He would come from the house of David. But it had become too dangerous to hope because every other person who rose up to fight for their political freedom was murdered alongside many other jews. And the Romans came down even harder on them.

So the announcing of a King who will come and be the fulfillment of all this is going to spark hope. Yet he was only a child. The child of a teenage girl whose story they struggled to believe. Whose adoptive father was just a carpenter? It would spark hope. Because God knew that to birth hope in an oppressed people he would have to experience it with us. To speak our language.

And you know this political hopelessness is not something new to us. I have not watched the news in a long time. The other day I turned on to our local news and was amazed that yet again the conversation in our news cycles is about the salaries of some of the world’s highest-paid Parliamentarians. It’s ridiculous to imagine that Kenya has barely had a house of parliament that did not amend the laws to make their lives better at the expense of Kenyans.

The worst part is that this has to be shouldered by an already overtaxed populace. And I am not against remuneration. And maybe some of the arguments they put across are true. But simple economics tells us that you may have a family that needs a 3 bedroom house but if you cannot afford it, you don’t get into one. And you certainly don’t make other people pay for it.

And unfortunately, this political and economic oppression is not unique to Kenya only. So the announcement of the just King who comes from God is an announcement of hope for all humanity. For Kenya and all the world. We need the hope that it will one day be better with God the just King on his throne.

For the Jews, Spiritual oppression had driven them to such hopelessness that it was dangerous to hope. something so valuable for the jews was their worship. They had a temple they valued so much but the Romans had taken control of the temple. They were the ones choosing the religious leaders so that they could control them. At some point, they even demanded that Zeus is worshipped in the temple. This was so bad it caused an uprising.

Spiritual leaders of that day were mostly not faithful to God and were in league with Rome.

It was a time of spiritual oppression. Israel had not had the voice of a prophet for such a long time, In fact, an expression that they used was that the heavens had been shut. There had been no visions in the land for a long time. Which then translated to them as being abandoned by God and it felt like the enemy had won. They felt abandoned by God.

So the promise of a child who would be called the son of the Most High, the announcement by an angel. The visions around this time. The heavens were opening. Hope that God remembers Israel. Hope that God hears their cry. Hope that God was with them, Emmanuel was sparked. Maybe the future was not that dark after all.

Spiritual oppression nothing new to us. We live in a time where to be a religious leader means to be greedy and exploit people who are hungry for God.

I was shocked that there was a national debate about whether the government should require the Kenya Revenue Authority to directly deduct tithes from people's salary. I mean this is ridiculous. People given the honour to serve people in the church are often driving cars that they could never have afforded on their salaries and the worst is that they conned people into funding those purchases.

How are leaders of the church owning four jets and several mansions after financed by people who could barely afford a living in their own countries let alone travel to another? People desperately in need of hope.

There is a spiritual hunger in the world just because men and women were wired for God. You know the growth of spiritual awareness in the world has been tremendous in the past few years.

We have lived a life that no there human generation has lived. The world's wealth, the world's health has never been better. We have had it all and now realized that our Souls need more. There is a need for God that nothing else can fix. For God our Souls won't stop calling out. Deep calls too Deep. Our Souls are forever crying for whence they came.

You know the way young people have thrust themselves into mysticism and New Age Spirituality. Witchcraft is making a come back in our movies and even in everyday life. Quite frankly even in the west, just that if you do it in subtle funny ways the unsuspecting mind won't care.

So the announcement of the birth of Jesus was great news to all Humanity. That the future is better. That God is with us and our souls will be satisfied in him. That we will be set free and find our meaning in him.

And what better way than God coming in the humility of being human. A man like us who also desperately needs to be close to the father? Because only on shoulders of humility can hope be carried.

Years removed we fail to see the humility with which the hope of the world was announced. They had no idea whether they could believe Mary's story. All they saw was a pregnant teenager. Even the man who wanted to marry her was not too sure, what about the rest of the community.

Our family got bigger this week. I have a new niece. Her name is Lexi and when I went to receive her I realized she is helpless. She cannot even feed herself let alone save the world. And this how God chooses to bring hope to the world in the eyes of a helpless babe who will need his nappies changed, need to be hugged, cry sometimes. Hope come to us in God humbled so much that He comes as a baby who cannot even save itself let alone save the world.

If we fail to see this humility in God we will fail to see how significantly that story of hope is for you and for me and for her and for all the world.

This is the God of all creation deciding that His story will be your story. This is the God that holds everything together deciding that He will identify with our oppression, our weakness and limitations. Instead of standing aloof and suggesting that we find hope, he comes to us and walks us to hope.

And this was not a show of powerlessness, rather a show of how powerful humility is. God knows that to bring hope that will spark our hearts into life again, he will have to speak our language and only then will we hear his voice. And he is so secure in that. He loves us so much that he is okay with going through an incredibly humbling process just so that he can spark hope into our hearts again.

Because the future is better politically with him as King. The future is better economically with him as King. Because our souls are safe with him as saviour and friend. Because the future is with God. And for this future to be ours too, God will walk in humility besides us.

Have you ever chased a child? You are confident you are faster than them. I mean one step and you have caught up with them in their ten steps. But you dramatically slow yourself down because you are trying to invite them into relationship. Where is the joy of just catching them when they start running?

But when they run and look behind their little shoulders and see you running after them and they start laughing so hard, something is happening right there. A relationship is being formed. This child is being filled with joy they know that they can trust you. That you are not unreachable. That you are not going to always be lofty. Even though you could run faster you slowed down for them.

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge are always seen bending to the eye level of their kids when talking to them. And at some point, there was a bit of unease in some of the royal establishment because Prince William, the Duke of Cambridge is superior in rank and age obviously being his dad, to the kids. He should not be bending or bowing to the kids. But psychologists say that this is building something in the kids that are special.

You see, I think this is exactly What God is doing. God is keen on inviting us into a relationship full of hope, that makes him reach down in humility. In order to let us know that we can trust him, that we can choose to be in this relationship rather than be coerced into it, He comes like a child. Because the relationship with God is just so important if Humanity is to ever have hope again.

And here is the thing I have realized, for us to be a source of hope to anyone we must get off our high horses. We must humble. Because the people who gave us hope are those who

not only were familiar with our weaknesses but were not afraid to show it. Because God who gave us hope humbled himself enough to be one of us, even among the poorest of us.

If we are going to offer hope to this broken world we must accept that we are not perfect and that we have had mistakes along the way. We must show them that we are after all human. The world needs to know that the church is not a museum of perfect people but people loved perfectly by a humble God. That is the source of hope for the world.

When we came into town, we were faulted by people for the kind of people we accept into church. Interesting I met someone who really did not like us for who we embrace until one day they were faced with their own failures and kicked out of their churches. Only then were they willing to meet with me. Because finally they had been humbled by their own need for hope.

But I have a necklace that says, human. We made 3 of them for Adam Melody and me. Because we needed constantly to remind ourselves that we are human. If I am going to be a beckon of Hope to a generation that needs God, then like God himself I must embrace my humanity and mine comes with all my weaknesses and shortcomings and failures and limitations.

To give hope we must accept humility. But I have also realized that to receive hope too we must also accept the path of humility. When the shepherds came to see Jesus, they accepted that a King could be born in a barn. Because they had accepted their lowly place in society. Shepherds were the least in that society, they had accepted that they do not have a say, that they were not smart enough, that they were not important and maybe not even important to God.

And guess what, they were in the right place to see the hope of the world. So when the angels told them about a bay they ran. They found faith and went to a barn in the throne room of a newborn King.

I think some of us are struggling to find hope because we have not accepted that we are at the bottom. Some of us will not find hope and a longing for tomorrow because we are not ready to accept that today is all burnt.

Some of us have not found the hope that Jesus is offering because we are still going through life as if we have got it all together and we know we have not. And unless you accept your need for a saviour, your need for forgiveness, you remain in hopelessness.

So funny that people who struggle with addiction, until they are humble enough to accept they have a problem and ask for help there is nothing anyone in the world can do for them. Because Hope is carried on the shoulders of Humility and can only be taken into humbled hearts.

Some of us will not find hope of overcoming sin tomorrow until we accept that we could not do it on our own.

So in so much humility, God came bringing hope. All in the eyes of a helpless child. Born to a mother whose story did not sound very credible. To a nation that had lost all hope of ever rising again. To a father who was with no notable name. Because he knew that you and I need hope that must be spoken in the language our frail souls understand.

It's a powerful declaration that no one is too lowly for God. That everyone who may find themselves outside of favour of human systems will never fall outside favour of God's Hope.

Are you willing to take the path of humility this Christmas? Because there is hope for your marriage but it will take humility for you to accept there is a problem and when you do your eyes will be clear enough to see where to run.

Are you willing to answer the call of humility? Because so many people need hope from you but unless you take off that mask and show that you too have struggled like they do you will never offer any hope to them. Unless they see the marks of humanity on you, they might not know how much hope you can offer them?

Are you willing to take the path of humility? Because the human soul, your soul needs hope and truth is you have to be humble enough to accept that everything you have tried has not been working, Alcohol, sex, science, philosophy, religion. Because let's be honest, every human being has a longing that nothing really takes away and it is a longing for God. And it takes humility to accept that.

Until we get to that point where we realize our poverty and weakness and oppression and limitation, we will not embrace hope.

Let's pray