

Finding Hope in the Emptiness

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 April 2014

Preacher: Tobin Miller

[0 : 00] He is not here. He is risen. I'd like to welcome you to Watermark Community Church if this is your first time here. It is normally this chaotic, but at this time we let the kids go, but this time we are not letting the kids go because we have a special treat planned for the kids right after this service.

And so we thought we would do a shorter version of this service, involve the kids, and then afterwards there's about 2,000 Easter eggs and candy that the kids are going to go and they're going to take part in.

So hopefully the kids are really patient and quiet for 10 minutes. Then they get to get all that candy and Easter eggs and all those things. My name is Tobin, and I'm the teaching pastor here at Watermark, and I have been given the task to preach on hope in 10 minutes.

I don't think I can do an illustration normally in 10 minutes. If you've been here for a long time, you know that my illustrations are longer than 10 minutes. But, you know, I think that there is probably no greater topic or subject that we need to talk on in the world today.

As I look around and I see people, I read books, historians, sociologists, just most of them would say that today we live in the age of skepticism, that we live in the age of crisis, we live in the age of meaningless, and that most of the people around the world, even in Hong Kong, have a hard time finding hope in their daily lives.

[1 : 35] In fact, many people would say that they would say that the world, history has lost its story, history has lost its meaning, that there's no purpose in life, and it seems like they just go day to day to day to try to get by and try to figure out what's going on.

One of my favorite historians and philosophers said it this way as he struggled with hope. He looked at his life, he looked at the world around him, and this is the illustration he gave for us today. He said, I don't know if you feel like that, but I know that often we feel like that in our world is out of control, and we feel like we're on this long march, and we're getting hit by all different types of foes, and all kinds of things are trying to drag us down, and we wonder if we're ever going to get to the destination we want to get to.

We wonder if we're ever going to become that principal or that teacher. We wonder if we're ever going to be that professor. We wonder if we're ever going to be that managing director. We wonder if we're ever going to get there, and we keep hoping towards that direction.

And the question we have to ask ourselves is, will we get there, and what does it look like? Another one of my favorite readers and philosophers and historians, as he looked at the world around him today, he tried to compare and try to figure out what was going on, and his philosophy of life came down to this.

He said, we came from nothingness, we're going to nothingness, and our life right now is nothingness. He looked at the world, and he realized there was no hope.

[3 : 25] There was nothing that he could cling to. If he was really honest with himself and his heart, all the things that he was gathering for, all those things he was going for, as he got to them, he felt dissatisfied, and he felt empty.

So the question I have to ask us today in eight minutes is, where do you find your hope? Because you can't live in the emptiness.

I mean, you can't live in the darkness. If you live in the darkness and the emptiness, you just go crazy, and you become crazy people. So where do you find your hope?

Where do you find that thing that you cling to? Where do you find that thing that you depend on when things get really difficult and really hard? What is it that you're hoping in? And when I use the word hope, I'm not saying like in English, because I think English words have been kind of changed

and diluted.

But when you think of English, we say, I hope. It means maybe, probability, maybe this will happen. I don't know, but it could happen. It's uncertain. But when I talk about hope, what I mean is, like the Greek and the Hebrew authors would say, in Hebrew, the word is tekvah.

[4 : 35] I usually don't like to use words because I don't want to show off, but I don't try not to show off, but I think it's an important word. Tekvah. Hope. It means something solid, something strong, something certain, something you know is going to happen.

It's not something you doubt. It's something that you're holding onto. You're grasping onto it. You depend on it for your whole life. And actually, the word in Hebrew means rope, a strong rope. And so the imagery is this. Your life is like this carabiner, and you're walking through life, and you're hooking onto something. And this strong rope, this tekvah, is going to hold onto you. It's going to support you.

It's going to take you through the difficult times. It's going to take you through the simple times. It's going to take you through the happy times. It's never going to let you down. It's never going to disappoint you. What is the tekvah that you grasp onto?

What is the tekvah, the rope that you hook onto your life and say, I'm going to put my life on this. I'm going to depend on this. And no matter what happens, it's not going to let me down. You can answer that question for yourself.

[5 : 40] And my prayer for everybody in here, I just prayed one thing. I prayed that in our prayer time, I said, I hope in these 10 minutes, in seven minutes, I hope in these seven minutes that all of us would have a chance to look at our life honestly for five minutes and say, what is it that we really hope in?

What is really my tekvah? What is the thing that I'm clapping my life onto, and I'm going to say, this is going to support me. This is going to keep me alive. This will never fail me. You can find that out for yourself by answering this question.

You just say, blank will never fail me. Fill in the blank. My work will never fail me. Tekvah.

My friends will never fail me. My family will never fail me. My spouse will never fail me.

My mind will never fail me. My body will never fail me. My fortune will never fail me. My MPF will never fail me. My boss will never fail me. Whatever you stick in that sentence, that is what your tekvah is.

[6 : 47] That's what you're clinging to. That's what you're saying. This is where hope, this is where I'm going to find hope. I realize in this group, we're all trying to find hope because we are deeply hope-oriented people in Hong Kong, aren't we?

I mean, what we hope is going to happen in the future determines how we act right now. I mean, if you have no chance of becoming managing director, you're going to get out of that job. If you don't have a chance of getting that raise, you're going to find another job.

If you don't have a chance of finding happiness and true contentment, you're going to divorce that spouse. If your friends are jerks, you're going to get rid of those friends and get new friends because you're looking towards the hope and you're wondering, if I can hope in this, then I'm going to stay here because the hope is going to be worth it.

And I realize that all of us in this room try to find hope in different ways. Some of us try to find hope in just gathering stuff. We want to gather life.

We want to gather money. We want to gather people. We want to gather titles. We want to gather positions. We want to gather cars, spouses, friends. And our hope is that we gather enough, if we get enough stuff, if we get the right type of things, then we will have hope and our life will be satisfied and we can go click and everything's going to be okay.

[7 : 54] Now hopefully you're only thinking that way if you're young because if you've been older, you've had some years put on you, you've been fired, you've lost a job, you've lost a spouse or a good friend who's left you, or you've had a heart attack, and your health has failed you, then you start looking for another tech ball.

You look for something else to cling on to because those things, you realize really quickly, they don't satisfy you. Now there might be some of us in here who say, yeah, but I'm going to do it differently. I'm going to have it all.

I'm going to make it all. I'm going to experience it all. I'm going to have it all. Everybody else before me has failed, but I'm going to do it right. My life's going to be perfect. I'm going to have all the

money. I'm going to have the job. I'm going to have the experience. I'm going to have the spouse. I'm going to have the kids. Everything. I'm going to do it right. Einstein called those crazy people. Einstein said, that's crazy. Einstein said, craziness is when you do the same experiment over and over and over, and you expect the same result.

And some of us are doing the same experiment over and over and over, and we expect the same result, and Einstein says, that's crazy. It's not going to work. It doesn't work in the life.

[9 : 05] It doesn't work in the lab. It won't cling on to you. Now, there's some of us in here, we're trying to find our tech ba in being good, being perfect, being dutiful, doing all the right things, doing and saying all the right things.

Those of you who are in families, and you're trying to be the perfect son and daughter, you know who I'm talking to, and what I'm talking about. Some of us try to find that hope in doing all the right things, being the right things, but you know, after a while, that becomes really, really tiring, doesn't it?

I mean, we get tired. We get tired because we do the right thing over and over and over, but we never get the result that we expect. And after a while, we go, why am I doing this?

This is craziness, because I try to be the good son, good daughter, good employer, good employee, good whatever, and no matter how hard I try, I always get let down, and my tech ba fails me.

And I go back to the nothingness, I go back to the emptiness, and I try to reinvent myself. The passage today is the third type of tech ba. It's the gospel passage.

[10 : 16] It's the Easter passage. When you look in the passage, you realize something really quickly. None of Jesus' disciples expected him to raise from the dead. There's no one at the tomb.

I mean, just think about it. Jesus had been, he'd been betrayed, he'd been tortured, he'd been captured, he'd been sentenced, he'd been crucified, he'd been buried all in record time.

All of it was illegal, according to Roman law. It was all illegal. It should never have happened that way. And all of his disciples, they just scattered. They ran away, and they just started thinking, hey, I'm next. I'm going to be the one who gets killed next.

And historians tell us that in that time, there were at least two dozen other messiahs. Did you know that? There were two dozen other messiahs that came on the scene.

And they said, I'm the messiah, I'm the anointed one, I'm ready to come. And the same thing happened to them that happened to Jesus. The Romans grabbed him, they tortured him, they crucified him, and immediately after they were crucified, the movement stopped.

[11 : 18] The movement stopped. But something different happened with Jesus' followers.

Because we're told in the passage that no one was waiting, it was the Sabbath, so Friday evening ended, so the Sabbath ends on Saturday evening, so they didn't even go to the grave until Sunday morning, so it's 12 hours later, because no one expected anything to happen.

And these ladies go to the grave, and the first thing they see on the cover of your bulletin is the stone, this huge stone is rolled away. It's massive stone, you couldn't do it by yourself.

And they walk in, and there's no one there, and all of a sudden these two men appear. And the scripture's really clear, it says that they had lightning for clothes. Right away, the women knew that they were angels, they were special visitors.

And these men said the word, the tekvah, the third option that we have in our life that changed history, and they said this, why do you look for the living among the dead?

You know he's not here. He's risen. And those words have been the tekvah that Christians have held on to for 2,000 years, because those words have changed everything.

[12 : 37] Think about it. An empty tomb and Jesus walking around means that death did not win, that death is not the end, that maybe we were made for something else.

An empty tomb and Jesus walking around meant that Jesus' words were true, that we could trust him, that we never had the doubt about our future, we never had the doubt about our past, we never had a doubt about our sins, we never had a doubt about our brokenness, because he said he came to heal all those things, and the fact that he rose again meant that God was pleased with him, and that he was a tekvah that we could cling to.

An empty tomb and a savior walking around meant that you and I have something greater than we can hope for, something that is not of this world. One of my favorite books I was reading at C.S. Lewis, it's called Mere Christianity, and in chapter 10 on hope, he says something very interesting, he says, the reason that we go through life and we grab things and we collect things, we get a wife,

we get kids, we get a job, we experience a new car, and the minute we get these things, we're really excited, but all of a sudden we just become, huh.

He says there's something that's missing there, that the thing that we wanted to, the hope that we wanted to get into it, the minute we got it, it dissipated somehow. And Lewis says this, he says if we are having or experiencing a need for hope, and we can't get that satisfied completely and wholly in this world, then maybe it means that you and I were made for another world.

Maybe it means that you and I were made for another world. So the question I have for you today, one minute, what is your tech bot?

[14 : 29] What are you hoping in? What is the thing in your life that you say this will never fail me? This is going to take me all the way to the end. This is going to take me through cancer.

This is going to take me through my kids not getting into Harvard or Yale. That's a joke. This is going to take me through losing my job. This is going to take me through not getting my 12-month bonus. This is going to take me through Hong Kong to my next destination.

What is it that you cling to? And the passage today says that the only thing that we can cling to, the only thing that is sure, the only thing that is true is Jesus Christ.

And the question is, will we allow Him to be our rope that we hang on to? Will we allow Him to be the rope that brings us home?

Will we allow Him to be the rope that helps us scale this journey which is crazy called life? Or will we try something else?

[15 : 39] What's your hope? the empty tomb and Jesus walking around and everybody sees Him says that God loves you. He came to set you free.

He came to give you a new hope. And the question is, will we trust Him? And we accept that for ourselves. Let's pray. Father, we thank You for this day.

We thank You for Your goodness and Your mercy in our life. We thank You that You are the true hope that we never have to worry about. You are the true hope that we never have to doubt. You are the rope.

You are the certainty. You are the strong anchor that we can cling to and that we know that wherever or whatever and whoever comes through our life and blows in as a storm that we have a rope that is strong and has finished everything and we can trust You.

Father, I pray for some of us in here right now who have never accepted that truth who doubt and they're skeptical and they're still clinging on to other things. I pray just in this moment that they would at least look at what they cling to and they would ask themselves, is this really what I want to hope in for the rest of my life?

[16 : 54] Has this really been secure for me up until this point? Or I'm like Einstein trying to do the same experiment over and over and over but expecting different results. Lord, I pray that in that moment those friends of ours who are here today, they would just ask themselves what is it that they hope in?

And Father, I pray for the rest of us who've hoped in You but sometimes we forget. Sometimes we go on the busyness of journey and the craziness of life and we forget what we're hoping in and we start to hope in other kava that we used to and all of a sudden we find our lives slipping and we find the rope breaking and we find our life in chaos and we wonder what the heck is going on.

Father, we just come to You and we just ask Your forgiveness. And on this Easter we realize over and over again that You are the God of second chances and that You've come to give us an ultimate and true hope.

A hope that we can cling to forever and into eternity. We pray these things in Your Son Jesus' name. Amen.