

Hope for today in the Promises of God's Word Psalm 119:73-80

In today's world we often hear the words, Sure thing, no worries I promise to, or I give you my word, and from the old days it was "my word is my bond". Which is a saying taken from Latin "dictum meum pactum" that has been the motto of the London Stock exchange since 1801 when everything depended not on a hand shake but on the word of the person making the deal because there was nothing written down as a pledge, neither was there an exchange of documents so everything depended on the assurance of your word and therefore the integrity of the individual concerned. Peoples livelihoods depended on it, everything depended on it, so trust was not to be taken lightly.

I think however we have long since moved from that particular era of the London Stock Exchange to what we could call the 'Tui Era' including the most recent global economic recession where many people lost a lot of money and retirement savings, the typical response of our heart becomes the same as that of the Tui's Billboard 'Yeah Right'. And often we as human beings are let down by others words and promises after someone utters them or we let others down because we have said them. So we should never take it lightly when making a commitment and saying that we will do something. Think about it, we offer such words to one another every day and on many occasions, in our wedding vows, in our families, in business and at work, when and where ever we relate and communicate with others. In our daily lives when the words spoken and the promises made are not lived up to, what we have said we will do or we are let down because the other person or people fail to do what they've said they will.

I believe this human behaviour has a carryover effect that affects our attitude and belief of then how we might then view God and what God says as recorded in His Word. As imperfect humans who have a habit of disappointing one another it makes it more difficult for us to then trust what another might say and put our hope in their word and its fulfilment, even more so if it is parental or other authority figures, people who you either look up to or have trusted, who have let you down. It may even have been in the church. I've been here for 5 1/2 years as your minister so there's a possibility that I've disappointed someone in this way somehow or might in the future. Therefore, as a Pastor I sense that because we have less trust, faith and hope in believing in the word and promises of others I think this human attitude could serve to have a great effect on our ability to be able to

confidently put our hope and trust in God's Word and promises contained in the Bible, because of the way we view our relationships with others in this area of our heart and mind, we can actually transfer it over and project on to God and God's Word.

It is my desire that you would be challenged to consider what I am saying and actually grow today in your faith and trust to want to put your hope in God's word, what it is that God says to be true. To begin with I ask you, where are you at with your engagement with God's Word, with your Bible reading? If you do not read it or have been put off reading it lately then the first challenge for you is to get over it and make your first decision based on hope and that is to pick it up and begin again, or start for the first time your personal devotional time with God in his Word which may mean for you finding the time and place to do it, putting aside other interests along with the busyness and chaos of our daily lives to make time for God in this way as a very important priority. And then we can ask ourselves once you've got the Word of God in your hands and a heart that's open and ready to go, you may already be at this stage which is great, now ask yourself this...

Are you finding as you read, study, meditate, and spend time in God's Word certain biblical promises precious or encouraging?

So let's take a moment right now to ask ourselves, what has been the most recent word of hope that you have received from God in the bible?

Hebrews 4:12 says ¹² For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

God's word is living and active and sharper than any double edged sword! So you do have the hope of it getting in, penetrating your inner being, if you choose to listen to it when it is read or discussed or when you pick up the Bible and read it, opening the eyes and ears of your heart to let it in, to experience it a deeper level where it reveals the truth about ourselves along with its precious promises and God's encouragement for our daily lives, for our future on earth and for all eternity. Even if you haven't been reading your Bible have you been to a study, reading or listened to radio or Christian TV programming or even listened with the ears of your heart over the last few weeks to messages on Sundays...

I have had limited but specific feedback that God has at least been encouraging a few through this series on HOPE with his Words such as **Proverbs 13:12** Hope deferred (or long drawn out) makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.

Hope that never becomes a reality makes the heart sick but a longing fulfilled is life giving so in the meantime I can state the obvious by honestly and openly acknowledging my soul sick heart but then choose not to focus on the deferment but concentrate on the hope just as the Psalmist did, and then answer it and proceed with encouragement...

Psalm 42:11 Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God.

Further precious encouragement came the following week to deal with the deferment of hope highlighting the positive that during such a long drawn out time of waiting that you could actually be completely and totally spiritually, mentally and emotionally renewed by God, just like an eagle is during a 5 month process, with this promise from his word in **Isaiah 40:31** But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Then there was the recognition of the true hope and prosperous peace, God's shalom, that we have for our future as God's people in this life as individuals, families and the church. Listen again as we read from the prophet **Jeremiah 29:11** For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Then there was the eternal God's Word to us last week of our very own hope of eternal life, of living forever in ETERNITY! Listen to what is written in **Titus 1:1-2**

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness – in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time,

At the absolute minimum I hope that you have been encouraged by God's very own Word- with these precious promises for us, along with other scriptures that I have used in this sermon series on Hope, to actually choose to turn from self and the world, and even the devil and his lies,

to put your Hope and trust in God and God's Word, following in the faith filled steps of those who have long gone before us in their walk with God, such as the testimony of trust laid out by the writer of Psalm 130 who knows that even though he's a sinner the Lord hears the deep cry of his heart...

Psalm 130 ³ If you, LORD, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?

⁴ But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

⁵ I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, **and in his word I put my hope.**

And then there is this week's word from what is both the longest of the Psalms and the longest chapter in the Bible, Psalm 119 written by one who is pious and passionately devoted to the word of God as the word of life that brings him hope in the face of any difficulty, persecution or suffering, which includes self inflicted suffering because of his own sin. This Psalmist knows that no matter what others say and do to him, or how much he screws up and falls short of God's glory, he knows that no matter what, his only remedy is to turn to his Lord to continually receive the grace and compassion, God's *unfailing love*- merciful forgiving kindness, along with God's discipline and correction. Having received and experienced both the Lord's divine love and discipline he can still, no matter what the circumstance, put his hope in God's Word.

We can do this too and enter in to receiving and experiencing the Lord in the same way as those who are passionately devoted to God's Word as the very word of life that will bring hope for us sinners in any and every circumstance that we will ever face in our lives. Let's begin by asking ourselves, 'What is the connection between our hope and God's promises'? We live in the 'now but not yet' in the era between Christ's first advent, his coming to earth ushering in the kingdom of God and Christ's return or second coming. So we live in the time when God's kingdom has come and as such our Christian Hope looks to God's promises and believes them- that one day they will be fulfilled! That is the connection between our hope and God's promises- we believe that God's Word containing his promises will one day be fulfilled. So let's make God's Word the hope of our lives!

The actual word for God's 'Word' used throughout the Old Testament and Psalm 119 is *dabar* a general designation to God's word or God speaking. So *dabar*, God's Word, is a divine communication from God to humanity. It is spoken, and can be written down, in the form of a commandment,

a prophecy, warning or encouragement. And as such the LORD's word we know is not to be shunned or taken lightly by angels or men for that matter. So if we are to make God's Word, God's law and promise's the hope of our lives we need to believe it and take the weight of its truth and promise for our lives seriously on a day to day basis along with the challenges that each day may bring us, good, bad or indifferent.

Psalmists often make reference to their sorrow, suffering and affliction, slander and persecution. The author of Psalm 119 is no different and in the face of suffering at the hand of his adversaries this devoted servant of God has made a choice, and that is to make God's WORD, God's promises, the hope of his life in face of and in spite of his own suffering. And he has an amazing comeback if we read from the earlier verses 41-42, for with the promise of unfailing love and salvation he can answer or respond to any taunt- because He trusts in God's Word! He has total confidence in the truth of God's commands which are not lies, deceitful or even fickle, which is why throughout this Psalm he along with other Psalmists can say over and over again, "I have put my hope in your Word" [vv 43, 74, 81, 114, 147] or words to that effect. And further to the refrain of his heart, in order to make God's Word, His law and promises the hope of his life, he calls upon the one who can make this a reality in the difficult circumstances of his daily living as we read in verses 116-117

Psalm 119 ¹¹⁶ Sustain me, my God, according to your promise, and I shall live; **do not let my hopes be dashed.** ¹¹⁷ Uphold me, and I shall be delivered; I shall always have regard for your decrees.

In declaring a confident assurance and a single focused hope in God's Word to sustain him and bring him life the Psalmist boldly prays an expectant prayer, "do not let my hopes be dashed. Uphold me, deliver me, and no matter what, I am going to hang on to what you say, your word, your law, your promises because they are what will serve to bring me life." For you God are not like some fallible or even nasty human being who will lie, abuse me or let me down. You are the one who has declared your promise that I will live and that is what I'm hanging onto right now- today."

The Psalmist is so positive, upbeat and assured about this hope because he knows, he understands that when God speaks his word, **it is a promise**, one and the same thing!

And a promise is a word that projects ahead of the speaker in time as well as the recipient so that it forms ahead of both of them a point in time, a future appointment. So the Word that God speaks, He can and will perform.

The Old Testament is a case in point where there is a pattern of God speaking his word, his divine promises that are recorded as fulfilled. You can actually look and see the point of convergence of the OT promises to Abraham, Moses, David and the Prophets is... Jesus Christ! All the promises of God's word are confirmed in him and affirmed by believers in the church whenever we chime in with them in agreement with a big Amen!

The promised Word became flesh ushering in the new Covenant and Jesus is the guarantee and the Holy Spirit the promise of its first instalment while we await the promise of Christ's return and of the new heavens and a new earth. God's word does not return void unlike the word of human beings and pagan deities, spirits and powers, it is the LORD God who speaks ahead of time his promises both knowing and commanding the future. And that is why we can today put our faith, trust and hope in the promises of God's word. Can you say Amen to that? Give God in Jesus a big AMEN!

Let's Pray...