

Eternal Hope
Series: The Eternal
John 16:32-33
March 28, 2021

Welcome again to worship.

The telephone rang, and the young mother answered. "Honey, it's mom. I called because I know that you're busy with the three children, and I want to give you some help. I'm going to stop by to clean the house, take care of the baby, and prepare dinner for when the boys get home from school. I want you to get ready to go to my beautician, I paid her already, she is going to give you "the works," your appointment is at 1:00. Give George a call at the office and tell him that you will meet him at Chez Jays for dinner, on me..."

The young mother suddenly interrupted and asked, "George, who is George?"

"Your husband." said the caller.

"My husband's name is Fred." She replied.

"Is this 555-3212?"

"No this is 555-3213."

"I'm sorry I have the wrong number," said the now embarrassed caller.

After a pause, the young mother sheepishly asked, "Does this mean that you're not coming over?"

Well, here's hoping, I guess.

We are in our 6th week of Lent and our series "The Eternals", the things we can hold onto in our faith, especially in a time of chaos and uncertainty. We have talked about the Eternal Word, Eternal Life, Eternal Nourishment, Eternal Comfort, and Eternal Love.

I invite you to turn to page 4 in your bulletin or if you are watching at home, pull out your journal.

Today's Eternal: Eternal Hope.

Hope is a funny thing. It comes so easy to some people – maybe too easy. Milton Berle told a story about those kinds of people, about how hope can triumph over good sense.

Four widows were playing cards in the retirement home they lived in. A good-looking older fellow walked in, bags under each arm.

"What's a good-looking man like you doing here?" one asked.

"I'm moving in," he said.

"Oh," said another. "Where ya from?"

"I've been in the can the last fifteen years. "

"The can?" they asked.

"Yeah, the can, the clink, the slammer, the state penitentiary."

"Oh," replied one. "What did you do?"

"I murdered my wife. I cut her up and buried her in the back yard."

There followed a long pause, and then one of them piped up, "Oh, so you're single then!"

We must be careful not to put our hope in the wrong thing.

I want us to look at John 16 this morning. Verses 32-33 are Jesus' final teachings to His disciples before He was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. Here's what Jesus told them:

But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when you will be scattered, each one going his own way, leaving me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”¹

Wow. Can you imagine these words running through John's mind at the foot of the cross, or during that Saturday before Easter Sunday morning? Through all that would happen, Jesus declared what is a key promise for them and for us:

Jesus has overcome.

But take heart, because I have overcome the world.²

Because of this hope, this assurance, that Jesus overcomes, then we can have Eternal Hope. And what is this hope?

First, We will have hope when we are scattered.

We can't deny it. Well, deny is probably a bad word to use here, for though it was only Peter that actually denied Jesus, the rest didn't do much better. They deserted Him completely. All except John, who stood at the foot of the cross.

Jesus told them,

...you will be scattered, each one going his own way...³

The Message is even harsher:

In fact, you're about to make a run for it—saving your own skins and abandoning me.⁴

We have all – at one time or the other – denied Jesus: before friends, in our actions or reactions, in our decisions. We have walked away from God – been scattered as it were.

But in the midst of being scattered, we have a promise: Jesus has overcome. He still comes looking for us.

Listen to Matthew 9:36:

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.⁵

If you find yourself scattered, walked away, maybe even ran away from God, He is still searching.

Ezekiel 34:11-12 reads:

For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search and find my sheep. I will be like a shepherd looking for his scattered flock. I will find my sheep and rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on that dark and cloudy day.⁶

If you are scattered, you have this eternal hope: Jesus has overcome. There is nothing you can do to keep Him from loving you.

¹ John 16:32-33 (NLT2)

² John 16:33b (NLT2)

³ John 16:32 (NLT2)

⁴ John 16:32 (MSG)

⁵ Matthew 9:36, NLT2

⁶ Ezekiel 34:11-12, NLT2

Second, we will have hope when we are lost.

I'm sure all of us have gotten lost in our lives.

FLYING PAST MACON AIRPORT. I FELT A BIT EMBARRASED.

I can even miss turns with the GPS in my car sometimes.

At times, we can feel lost: relationally, emotionally, spiritually. We need someone who will recognize that we are lost and come beside us, to be there with us, and show us the way.

Jesus said in the Upper Room:

Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me.⁷

Jesus was confident that the Father would be with Him, and we can have that same confidence.

You know the hymn, "What A Friend We Have in Jesus"? It took be a while for me to get over a lady in our church and the way she sang it. She'd swoop every note. But listen to these words from Joseph Scriven:

*Can we find a friend so faithful
who will all our sorrows share?*

*Jesus knows our every weakness;
take it to the Lord in prayer.*

*Are we weak and heavy laden,
cumbered with a load of care?*

*Precious Savior, still our refuge;
take it to the Lord in prayer.*

Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?

Take it to the Lord in prayer!

*In his arms he'll take and shield thee;
thou wilt find a solace there.⁸*

Jesus is the friend that will be there.

Hear this amazing Scripture from James:

And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith." He was even called the friend of God.⁹

Wow. The friend of God. When you are the friend of God, you have eternal hope.

Three, we will have hope when we face trials.

Jesus said in John 16:33:

I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows.¹⁰

The Message Bible says:

In this godless world you will continue to experience difficulties.¹¹

The Greek in some manuscripts could be read, "The tribulation is at hand; you are just about to be plunged into it."¹²

And no question about it, they were about to experience that. But God is faithful.

⁷ John 16:32 (NLT2)

⁸ What A Friend We Have in Jesus, UM Hymnal #526

⁹ James 2:23, NLT2

¹⁰ John 16:33 (NLT2)

¹¹ John 16:33 (MSG)

¹² Adam Clarke's Commentary, Mark 16:33

The Apostle Paul wrote:

*For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ.*¹³

If someone were to ask me today how I got through my first wife's death from cancer, I will tell them I still don't know, other than God. It was all God.

And I should have known that. You see, Julie was a classically trained soprano. People were always amazed how much volume and range could come out of her little frame. And one of my favorite solos she would sing was from Psalm 27:

*The LORD is my light and my salvation— so why should I be afraid? The LORD is my fortress, protecting me from danger, so why should I tremble?*¹⁴

These are words for us today, no matter what happens in our world: The LORD is my light and my salvation— so why should I be afraid?

Finally, we will have Hope when we are sad.

Jesus concludes His teaching to the disciples with these final words:

*Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows.*¹⁵

Beginning next Sunday, we are going to look into the feelings of the disciples within less than 24 hours of Jesus saying this, then what happened when Easter Sunday morning came. So, I will leave that for next Sunday.

But there will be times of sadness in this life. The effects of sin in our world is the cause of it, whether it is people hurting other people, or the curse of sin that brings about death.

So, Jesus warned the disciples that in this world, there would be many trials and sorrows. But we have the Eternal Hope that He has overcome that very world.

Paul reminded the Romans:

*Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled.*¹⁶

The knowledge of the Scriptures affects our attitude toward the present and the future. The more we know about what God has done in years past, the greater the confidence we have about what He will do in the days ahead. We need to diligently read our Bibles so we may have confidence that God's will is best for us.¹⁷

There is a story about how the caverns north of Yellowstone National Park were discovered. As the story goes, one of the original explorers was walking along the top of that mountain and fell through a hole, and he dropped down several hundred feet into this cavern and was stuck in almost total darkness for over a week, no food, no water. He cried out every day, "Help me!" hoping that somebody would hear his voice and figure out that he was down there.

Sure enough, a guy came along and heard this faint sound and looked around and found the hole. They dug him out and that's how they found this giant cavern. They asked him, "How did you hold on to hope day after day after day in the dark without

¹³ 2 Corinthians 1:5 (NLT2)

¹⁴ Psalm 27:1 (NLT2)

¹⁵ John 16:33 (NLT2)

¹⁶ Romans 15:4 (NLT2)

¹⁷ Life Application Study Bible, Romans 15:4

giving up?" He said, "There was one little pinhole ray of light that was coming through and I just kept focused on that ray of light."

Many around us today are like that man down in the cave. They are in darkness looking for a way out. Jesus is the light of the world. He is still shining today.

Paul closes 2 Thessalonians with these words:

*Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope, comfort you and strengthen you in every good thing you do and say.*¹⁸

¹⁸ 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 (NLT2)