

RENEWED HOPE

SERMON NOTES

SLIDE 2

I, like many of you, have had moments over the last few years when I have felt hopeless. Wondering when our world will make sense. Frustrated by the lack of opportunities for connecting with people. Saying goodbye to a mother and grandmother over the computer and having to grieve at a distance. Experiencing for the first time supply chain issues and shortages on the store shelves. Changing my normal life and work routines for a different way of doing things.

Perhaps for some of you, you have been longing for something different?

The new normal has become greeting people at a distance. Uncertainty and chaos at airports. Making a wide berth as you pass people on the sidewalk. Immediately looking in the direction of the person coughing at the grocery store. Embracing technology like zoom and even being so brave as asking people if they would like to meet for a “zoom coffee meeting!”

The last few months have brought talks of recession and rising interest rates. The housing market has been crazy and many question how they can afford sky rocketing rental increases. Local food banks face issues that they have never had to deal with before as many in our neighborhoods access food banks for the first time.

SLIDE 3

All that without even turning our attention to other places in our world where over 300 million people have slipped back into extreme poverty. Where price increases have taken away the ability for many to be able to afford basic necessities like flour and cooking oil. Inflation is running rampant. Changing weather patterns have decimated many farmers and what little livestock they had have died from lack of feed.

Where is the hope when all around seems hopeless? When you cannot see the way out? When there is no food. When the weather does not cooperate. When a disaster throws everything upside down. When a loved one dies prematurely. When the way you have

always planted your crops can no longer provide enough for the family. Where is the hope when there is no money to send the kids to school or pay the hospital bill. When despair threatens to overwhelm!

SLIDE 4

At Tearfund Canada we hear from our partners serving in places like in rural Kenya:

- Its normal to be hungry
- Unpredictable rains cause constant worry about water
- Crop failures are common
- There is a belief that the government will help, but they never come
- Disunity cuts across multiple levels of people's lives
- Where is the hope for the average person trying to survive?

Where is the hope for those facing multiple challenges in places like Kenya? Where is the hope in the middle of your area of crisis and uncertainty?

SLIDE 5

When we lose hope, fear creeps in. So we live in fearful times. Fear continues to pour into our world.

- Fear of new viruses and unknown sickness.
- Fear of the conflict in Ukraine and what the next steps are going to be.
- Fear of inflation, rising interest rates and financial uncertainty.
- Fear of climate challenges and unpredictable weather
- Fear of living at a time with so many unknowns

SLIDE 6

Fear becomes a virus that eats away at people. It paralyzes individuals, families, communities and even countries. It holds people back from seeing any way out.

SLIDE 7

God's inoculation to the virus of fear is hope.

The true meaning of hope has almost been lost as we use it casually and with no depth:

- I hope that my team wins the game
- I hope they arrive in time for supper
- I hope that I do not get laid off at work

We use the word with reference to our desires for a situation. A desire for a good and positive outcome that protects us from hurt and fear.

The Dictionary defines hope as “to cherish a desire with anticipation: to want something to happen or to be true.” This definition is based on doubt and uncertainty, but biblical hope is knowing for a fact that the desired outcome will happen. It’s not wishful thinking, but a confident expectation.

SLIDE 8

In Matthew 19:16-30, a rich young ruler comes to Jesus with an honest question: “What good thing must I do to inherit eternal life?” Perhaps he was at a point in life when he was searching. Perhaps he had tried all other means to find happiness. Perhaps he was fearful and looking for deep inner peace. Perhaps he was searching for hope that would quench his restlessness.

We know several things about this individual:

- This man was educated and he knew the commandments. From an early age he had learned the laws and traditions
- He was very wealthy. Most likely had many people catering to his every demand. He did not think about where his next meal would come from. He had few cares about physical things.
- He was living a moral life and living up to a standard expected of him
- He was seeking assurances for his life. He is asking deep, soul searching questions. He is searching because of a sense of lacking something.
- We could even say that he lacked hope. So he comes to Jesus with a deep question desiring an answer that will put his mind at ease.

In response to the questions he is asking, Jesus gives him the answer that he fears the most! Give up the security of your wealth. Give up the things you have been holding onto. Give up your treasures on this earth to receive the treasure of heaven.

The Bible tells us that when he heard Jesus's answer he went away sad. This was the very thing he could not do because he was so locked into his earthly treasures.

Sometimes the things we love the most are the very things that prevent us from moving forward in life!

- Maybe a job that is limiting your potential
- Maybe a friend holding you back
- Maybe a habit that is destructive
- Maybe a way of thinking that keeps you from moving forward

At this point Jesus turns to the disciples who have been on the periphery of this conversation. I can imagine that they are keenly attentive to this fascinating exchange.

They would have observed the trappings of wealth that surround this rich young man. At the same time they would have been aware of those living in absolute poverty on the fringes of the conversation. They also would have been astonished with the end results of the exchange. In their minds if anyone could have been saved it was the rich. Culture considered the rich to have been especially blessed by God. Those with great hope would have surely been those who had all their earthly needs taken care of.

SLIDE 9

Jesus unpacks what this hope looks like and when it will be a reality. V 28-30. Not only for rich young rulers, or for fishermen who left their boats, but for each and everyone of us. For everyone who embraces the words of Jesus, this is the hope that you can cling to.

He describes it in a strange way that can easily be lost to us. He uses the words “at the renewal of all things.” What was he saying? Jesus uses the phrase in a casual way. To those in the crowd when these words were spoken, this would have been something that they understood. Jesus did not have to launch into a long explanation of this idea.

Devoted Jews would have quickly made connections with OT passages stored in their minds. Maybe taken to the words of the prophet Isaiah:

- “The ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.” Isaiah 51:11

- “Behold. I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.” Isaiah 65:17-19

This word renewal is a keyword. In the Greek language it is the word palingenesia. You will recognize the last part of the word. It is made up of two root words: “palin” meaning again, and “genesia” meaning beginning. We think of Genesis, “in the beginning” and the Garden of Eden, that perfect place. So we have this idea of Genesis again.

In the Greek way of thinking, this is something that happened cyclically, just making life a bit better. So it happened over and over. But where is the hope in that for those in despair?

When Jesus sits on the throne there will be the renewal of all things. Jesus is saying that the philosophers got it wrong. This is not a reset of a broken world, like we reset a glitchy computer. How many times when you have a problem with technology do you simply unplug and restart? That is NOT what this is! This is the renewal and rebirth of God’s world.

One time. That is our great hope that we can be sure of! For rich and poor. For those living in comfort and those living in poverty. For those living in despair today there is great and real hope!

So we can think of words like those in Revelation 21:3-5 and the description of the New Heaven and New Earth: “I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, ‘Look, God’s home is now among His people! He will live with them, and they will be His people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.’ And the one sitting on the throne said, ‘Look, I am making everything new!’ And then he said to me, ‘Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.’”

I want to introduce you today to a lady named Francisca who is living in rural Kenya. Her life was without hope.

SLIDE 10

(VIDEO)

SLIDE 11

Our Tearfund partner in Kenya is an organization called Fadhili Trust. They are led by a gifted team of individuals and a strong network of committed volunteers. Their calling is to work amongst the most vulnerable in rural Kenya. Bringing hope through savings groups and sustainable agriculture as they work with churches pointing people to a sure and certain hope.

SLIDE 12

Francisca's story is one that could be told over and over again across many parts of our world. In 2019 her husband died, leaving her with the burden of trying to provide for her family of 5 children. They were locked out of the house because she could not afford the rent. She faced the daily struggle of feeding the kids. Stress was overwhelming her. What was she to do? Where was she to turn? To put it simply she was hopeless. She was in this place of hopelessness that can be overwhelming.

SLIDE 13

Thankfully in 2020 she connected with our Tearfund Partner in Kenya, Fadhili, and began to see new glimmers of hope. She boldly began to learn life changing skills.

SLIDE 14


New farming methods radically changed the way that she farmed and the results were incredible! The yields increased dramatically off her small plot of land. She tells how she saw immediate results. She was able to now feed her children and have money for school fees.

SLIDE 15

Increased income was a significant change for her. We might even say that it was a renewal experience for her! She joined a village savings group that introduced new possibilities and a safe place to save money. Through the group she could now take out small loans for other income generating activities.

SLIDE 16

At the ongoing center of her story is the church. Sharing the message of palingenesia and hope. God is in control. Followers of Jesus have eternity planted in their hearts.



SLIDE 17

Her story is not one that ends with hopelessness, but one that points towards renewed hope! Francisca had to give up what she knew. She had to give up the security of her way of farming. The security of the known for the unknown. Her resiliency shines through in her beautiful smile. Today she has hope for her future and for her kids future. She can see possibilities where once there was only darkness. She has food, a means of providing for her family and new relationships at church.

In a small way her life has been renewed and she has ultimate hope in God's final renewal.

SLIDE 18

I am inviting you today to be a part of the work God is doing in the lives of people like Francesca. Bringing hope in the middle of despair. Fanning the flames of resiliency that lead to restoration and hope.

In giving a monthly gift, or a one-time gift, you are joining us in following Jesus to where the need is greatest!