

THE PROCLAMATION

PROCLAIMING LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVES... ISAIAH 61:1



CrossWay Fellowship
Church

www.crosswayfellowshipchurch.org

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Hello everyone!

If you're like me, you are getting tired of all the talk going on these days about the Mayan calendar. I have a hard enough time keeping up with my own calendar to be worrying about the Mayan's schedule! Anyway, the year 2012 may be the end of the world and it may not. It really doesn't matter if it is or it isn't as long as we have placed our lives in the hands of the Lord. It will be over when He says it's over and there is nothing any of us, including the Mayans, can do about it.

However, as you will read in this message, we have a hope that is more precious than any amount of money you could obtain. A hope that Jesus will come again and take his children home, but also a hope that as long as we live on this earth he has promised to walk with us. There is no need to fear when you have abandoned all self-reliance and stood on the hope of God's promises.

In Christ's love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis Walton".

Pastor Dennis Walton

Come worship with us!

- *Sunday School* *10:00 a.m.*
- *Sunday morning worship* *10:50 a.m.*
(Children's Church provided)
(Nursery provided)
- *Sunday evening worship* *6:00 p.m.*
- *Wednesday worship/Bible study* *7:00 p.m.*
(Youth classes of all ages provided)

“got hope?”

We've all seen the “got milk?” commercials right? They usually went something like this. Someone crams about fifteen chocolate chip cookies in their mouth. Then they go to the frig to get the milk, only to find that someone had put an empty jug back in there instead of throwing it away. (*Which really irritates me by the way. That ranks right up there with not refilling the toilet paper roll.*) As crumbs spray out of their mouth, they shake the empty jug over their overfilled mouth in hopes that one precious drop of that refreshing milk might dribble out onto their tongue. As the despair settles on their face, the TV screen pops up the simple phrase... “got milk?” The idea is to make us think that we couldn't possibly enjoy cookies without milk. (*Which I happen to agree with.*)

So what does that have to do with hope you ask? Simply this. No part of life can possibly be enjoyed unless you have hope. More specifically, hope in Christ. Hope is an expectation of receiving God's blessings, both now and in the future. It's more than just wishful thinking. Wishful thinking is saying, “I hope we are having spaghetti for supper tonight,” or “I hope the Giants win the Super Bowl.” (*Go Giants!!!*) Hope is much, much more than that. It is having full assurance that no matter what happens, you know that God will be there for you and that He will work all things out for your good. And that is a promise that enhances every aspect of our lives. If you take hope out of the equation, you are left with hopelessness. And hopelessness will suck every last bit of joy out of you.

In **Psalm 39:4-7** David is reflecting on how vain life is when worldly success and riches are the main goals of our life. He realizes that everything this world has to offer is temporary and therefore cannot possibly offer any hope. So he finally stops everything and bops himself on the forehead and says, “**Lord, what am I waiting for? My hope is in you.**” That is the turning point that will completely change the course of any person's life.

So that leads me to two questions I want to ask you. 1. Do

you “got hope?” 2. If not, what are you waiting for? It doesn't make any difference what shape your life is in right now. Hope will unravel the work of the devil in your life, if you'll trust in Christ.

You may not see it right now and you may not feel it right now, but hope is always available. I once heard the late David Wilkerson preach a message called “The Path to Hope.” He explained that hope is not a feeling it is a path that we choose to be on. Look at it like this. Feelings are like roller coasters, they go up and down too much. You can feel happy one day and sad the next. You can feel energetic one day and lazy the next. If our hope were linked to our feelings then one day we would have hope and the next day we wouldn't. But that's not the way hope works. Hope is like a path that is always there. We just have to be on the right path. Then no matter what is going on in your life and no matter how you are feeling, you still have a hope that is solid.

He went on to say that the path to hope starts with knowing you are right with God. Paul said the same thing when he was talking to the Christians at Ephesus. He reminded them of their life before they were saved by the blood of Jesus Christ. He said, “**at that time you were without Christ...having no hope, and without God in the world.**” (**Ephesians 2:12**) No God in your life equals no hope in your life. If you want to start on this path to hope, you must first surrender your life to God by believing in His Son Jesus Christ and trusting His sacrifice on the cross to cover your sins. You'll find the path to hope that you didn't know existed.

There is a family in our church that raises goats. Several of their momma goats have recently had babies. But one of the momma goats was very sickly. In fact, it was so puny that they didn't figure it would even be able to have babies. Their exact words were, “we didn't expect anything out of that goat.” So they put it in a different pen all to itself. Then one day as they glanced into the pen they noticed a little furry object in there. It was a little bitty runt of a

goat. I mean little. It wasn't very strong but it was alive. So they nursed it with a bottle and gave it a lot of extra attention in order to help it live. Today that little goat bounces around with all the other young goats. Due to its amazing start in life, they gave it a very appropriate name...Hope.

So what lessons can little Hope teach us about hope? First of all, that hope comes out of the most unlikely circumstances. If you've ever gone through a situation and said, “nothing good can come out of this,” then you can guarantee that hope has been conceived and is growing right under your nose. You may not see it now, but just wait. If you are trusting in the Lord, out of your impossible circumstances hope will be born.

Another lesson from our friendly little goat is that we must give extra attention to hope. Though your hope may be small and sickly, don't pretend as though it doesn't exist and then let it die. Nurse your hope with prayer and the Word of God so that it can gain strength and grow. Hope can easily become hopelessness if we neglect it, but little hope can become huge hope if we give it the daily attention it needs.

I once heard another preacher by the name of Claude Houde tell a story about a revival crusade that he preached. He was preaching to other church leaders and pastors and was encouraging them to continue steadfast in the calling God had placed on their lives. He told the congregation that God had laid it on his heart to pray for someone that was there in the crowd that was considering resigning as pastor of their church. He said, “God wants you to know that hope may be gone, but hope will return.” He said for some reason he just kept saying it over and over, “hope is gone but hope will return.” Finally a man stood up in the crowd and yelled, “it's me, it's me.” With tears streaming down his face, he and his wife walked down to the stage for prayer. The man reached in his pocket and pulled out an envelope. It was his letter of resignation that he was planning on giving his church. The couple began to explain to him that the main reason for their discouragement

was because a few months earlier, their daughter had gotten mixed up with the wrong crowd. She had fallen into sin and became a completely different person. They tried and tried to reason with her but she became more and more distant from them. She finally left home and they had no idea where she was or if she was even safe. Their daughter's name was Hope. So the preacher prayed diligently with them and the couple left the service that night with a promise from God, "Hope is gone, but Hope will return."

Time past and the preacher was back around that area preaching another revival. During the altar call he looked up and recognized the man and woman coming towards him with grins a mile wide. Walking beside them was a beautiful young lady with a smile as wide as her parent's. You guessed it. Hope had returned! God hunted that young lady down and saved her, restored her, and put a fire in her soul. She was lovin Jesus with all her heart. That is a true story!!

In this couple's story Hope had been corrupted by outside influences. In our story we must be guarded against certain influences that can corrupt our hope. Such as lust, sin, worldly views, riches, legalistic religion and false teaching just to name a few.

I pray that this story will be a great encouragement to those of you reading this right now that feel like all hope is gone. Listen to what God is speaking to you. Hope is gone, but hope will return! Hope is gone, but hope will return! HOPE IS GONE, BUT HOPE WILL RETURN!

Okay so what about those who have been to the doctor and received the worst news of their life? What about the ones who have had test after test ran only to have the results end up with the guy in the white coat and stethoscope shaking his head? Is there hope? Absolutely! I don't have space enough to tell you of all the times that I've heard people say, "the doctors didn't give me any hope but God healed me!" I don't pick on doctors because I thank God that he has given them the knowledge and abilities to do what they do. Many times God works through their hands. But the truth is, doctors can't give anyone hope. It's not theirs to

give. They don't have the ability to produce it. The doctors can only do what they can do, but in the end it doesn't matter if they give you hope or not. Not as long as you know the One who invented hope. Hope is God's commodity. He holds the patent on it. And He makes it available to anyone who calls on Him. I personally know several people who are supposed to be dead. I guess God didn't get the doctor's report because He messed around and healed them.

Even though we always have hope that doesn't mean that we'll always see rainbows and hear angels singing in the background. Sometimes we go through very lonely and dark times, seemingly seeing no results. And sometimes the circumstances get much worse before they get better. It's during those moments that we feel like Job did in **Job 17:15, "where is now my hope? As for my hope, who shall see it?"** Job was a righteous man but he went through a trial that I can't even comprehend. In a day's time he lost everything he had. His money, livestock, servants, and even all his children were gone within 24 hours. One tragic natural disaster took out his whole precious family. Then on top of that, he himself got terribly sick. Torturously sick. It was during one of those moments where God seemed to be silent and nowhere to be found that he felt like his hope was gone. But all the while God was working His divine plan. To make a long story short, in the end God restored to Job everything, and twice as much, as he had before he lost everything. See the point? Even though it seemed like hope was gone, hope was there all the time. Though it may not seem fair to us that God allowed Job to go through that, you have to admit that Job definitely understood hope much better *after* the trial than before.

Let me share with you something that recently happened to me, although it's nothing compared to what Job went through. In fact it's very minor but it further illustrates this point I'm trying to get across. This Proclamation you are reading is the first issue that our church printed ourselves. We purchased a printer that enables us to do it at the church which is much more convenient and cheaper. However, learning to use this

contraption has been nothing short of excruciating. I was having difficulty with the software so when I realized I was not going to be able to figure it out on my own I called Xerox. They have a service number that they gave me to call if I have questions about the machine. (*Which would have been helpful if my call wasn't directed to some remote place in Jamaica, and if the person I talked to COULD ACTUALLY SPEAK ENGLISH!*) After a dozen phone calls and hours trying to explain my problem, each ended with the same result. None of them could give me an answer because none of them could understand my problem. I was just about to come to the conclusion that we had wasted our money when I decided to try it one more time. This time I said to the poor unsuspecting operator, "surely you have someone there that I can talk to that understands this software. Please let me talk to that person." She said, "oh so you need to talk to an expert?" "Yes, yes! An expert! Let me talk to the expert!" Finally, a word we both understood. So she put me on hold to go get the expert. Ten minutes go by, then twenty minutes, then thirty, forty, fifty minutes go by. I was on hold for a solid hour! Dead silence! They didn't even give me that cheesy elevator music to listen to. In fact, I checked my cell phone several times to make sure I hadn't dropped the call. During the silence I looked up to Heaven in desperation and said, "Dear Lord, please let me get someone who can help me." Then it happened. The silence was broken and I heard the most beautiful voice I had ever heard. The expert came on the line and said, "This is Jeremy how can I help you?" Perfect English! My heart leaped within. I explained my problem to Jeremy and he knew the answer. He walked me through my computer and told me what buttons to push. He fixed my problem in thirty seconds! (*I'm not sure where in the world Jeremy lives but I could have invited him to Christmas dinner.*)

My whole point in telling that story is because some of you reading this right now are having problems. You've tried to figure out and fix it but only hit a brick wall. You've asked family, friends, pastors, and anyone with a pulse what you should

do but still don't seem to get the answer you need. During the painful silence you have come to the conclusion that there is no hope. But I want to encourage you to look up to Heaven for your help. Jesus is the expert. He knows how to fix your problem. In His time He will break the silence and you will hear His voice of hope loud and clear.

Now let's change gears and go to the book of **Hosea** where we find one of the most unusual stories in the Bible. At this particular time in history the nation of Israel had turned away from God. They had adopted various idols to worship, exchanging the living God for a carved god they could hold in their hand. The Lord viewed this act of rejection as spiritual adultery and was left with no alternative but to bring judgment on them. However, He still loved them very much and wanted more than anything to forgive and restore them. He wanted to communicate to Israel just how much he loved them and wanted them to turn their hearts back to Him.

So he called Hosea to be his spokesman. In order to reveal His heart to Hosea, God told him to do something that I'm sure made him raise his eyebrows and say, "come again?" God told Hosea to go find a prostitute and marry her. Kind of an odd request from a holy God but there was a point to it. So Hosea met a prostitute named Gomer and married her. Shortly after that they started a family in which they had a few children together. But after a while, Gomer started longing to go back to her old lifestyle. She forgot all about the love and provision that her husband had given her and decided to leave him and their children to go back and seek the pleasures of her past. But she quickly found out what everyone who returns to their sins finds out. It wasn't all it was cracked up to be. After being used and abused by countless men that didn't give a rip about her, she found herself alone and feeling worthless. Each day her shame took over as she sold her body to any jerk that had some cash to spend. And each day she sunk lower as her money, self-respect, and hope slipped away. Finally she hit rock

bottom. Now just a shell of her former self she found herself on an auction block, being sold as slave. She was now destined to live the remainder of her life as someone's property.

As the bidding began the auctioneer said, "who will give thirty pieces of silver for this woman?" which was the going rate for a slave in that day. No bids were given. I'm sure she wasn't much of an attractive sight at this point in her life. She hadn't eaten for a while, nor showered for a while, nor had a good night's sleep in a long while. Nobody wanted her. Standing there in the silence, Gomer's last glimmer of hope was extinguished. Then suddenly one strong voice echoed in the room, "I'll buy her." With her head hanging low she recognized the voice. She slowly lifted her weak head and seen her purchaser standing in the back of the room. It's Hosea, her husband. With a kind smile on his face and a gentle touch he says, "come on babe, let's go home." In that moment hope came flooding back into Gomer's life.

This whole story is an illustration of God's love for His people. Not only for Israel in the days of the Old Testament, but also for you and me in the days of the New Testament. This is what God said to Israel after their failure and this is what God is saying to you after yours, **"I will allure you and speak comfortably to you. And I will give you the valley of Achor for a door of hope." (Hosea 2:14-15)** The word "Achor" means trouble. So what is God saying? He's saying that when you are in the valley of trouble, he will open a door of hope for you! Why? Because He loves you, no matter what kind of mess you have gotten your life in. So for those of you that think there is no hope for you because of the sins you have committed, listen carefully for His voice. He is bidding on you right now!

So again I ask you, got hope? If not, what are you waiting for? As long as you have breath, you have hope.

Decision Time

Life is full of decisions. We make them every day. But this decision is the most important one of your life. Whether God accepts you or rejects you will depend on whether you decide to accept or reject Jesus Christ.

You surely can admit that you have sinned in your life. We all have. And nature itself teaches you that there is a price to pay for your sins. If you commit a crime, you will pay the penalty for it with a fine, jail time, or even the death penalty. By disobeying God's law, we have all sentenced ourselves to death. But God loves us so much that He doesn't want us to die in our sins and spend eternity paying the penalty in Hell. Therefore, He sent His Son, Jesus, to pay the price for our sins so that we might be saved.

Imagine it like this. Let's say you commit a crime and are sentenced to die in the electric chair. But just as they are about to throw the switch, someone swings the door open and yells, "stop!" To your amazement, the person standing in the door way says, "let him go and I'll take his place." So the warden unlatches the straps, stands you on your feet, and lets you walk out the door. Then he sits the other person in the chair, straps him down, and throws the switch. That is what Jesus did for you and me when He died on the cross.

So now the question is, what are you going to do about it? Are you going to reject Jesus now and pay the penalty yourself on judgment day, or are you going to accept Jesus now and let his sacrifice on the cross pay your penalty for you?

If you will humble yourself and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, repent of your sins and be baptized, and commit your life to serving Him only, then He will save you from your sins and write your name in Heaven. It will be the best decision of your life!

Folks I'm nothing. I'm just a sinner saved by the grace of God. And my whole purpose in printing The Proclamation is to help you find what I have found...God's love is so sweet!



Meet Hope

I hope you'll look up these verses about hope

Job 31:24-28 Beware of fake hope!

Psalms 16:9 Hope brings rest.

Psalms 146:5 Hope brings happiness.

Psalms 71:5 There is hope for young people.

Proverbs 14:32 There is hope in death.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 Let your hope be contagious so that those without it might find it.

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