

DARE TO HOPE

December 2, 2007

Pastor Cynthia L. Hale

Isaiah 40:1-5,25-31

Do you ever feel like the times we are living in are hopeless times? We are going through. Going through is the sentiment of people in our world right now. Watching the news is depressing at best. In our community recently, 17 female gang members were arrested for an assault that left one young lady without an eye. While the president lowers the salary of some government workers to help pay for the war in Iraq, some of us want to know if there is anything in the budget to take care of the terrorism right here in America. You are wondering if there is any way out of the hole you have gotten yourself into. Hopelessness is what you feel when you don't know if you have the strength to put your life back together again.

You resolve to just live through it but you want to know if there is an end to the madness. The problem with us is that we have lost hope. Hopelessness makes us skeptical and paralyzes us by making us think that we are powerless to change our situations.

The worst thing to do is to do nothing. As the people of God, giving up is not an option. We have merely to call on the name of our God. Our God is a God of Hope. The Biblical concept of Hope is not mere expectation or desire. It is confidence and refuge in God. To hope in God is to have an expectation of a favorable future. When you dare to hope you are not just waiting in vain, because God has promised, "I know the plans I have for you." Hope is the heritage of the people of God. God understands our struggle. It is for this reason that he speaks to us through the prophet Isaiah. The oppressive regimes of Assyria and Babylon had taken its toll. When they thought it could not get worse, it did. The people who worshipped idols appeared to be getting away with sin and Israel's plight seemed to be getting tougher. They could see no end to their predicament, so they had lost hope.

Before they went into exile, the word had already been spoken. God speaks a word of hope in our lives. God knows where you are at this very moment. He knows that you are weary and tired. Through the prophet Isaiah, God said, "they that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength."

Isaiah could make such a bold assertion because he was focusing on the majesty of God. v1-7. They needed encouragement. God wanted the prophet to speak comfort to his people. Though he had to chasten them, they were still His people. Isaiah was bringing this message while the people were in the midst of their difficulty.

God loves us. He does not treat us as our sins deserve. When you are going through, don't give up; look up.

If you are estranged from God today, you can come back to him through Jesus. As the people of God, we can dare to hope because Christ is the source of all our expectations.

Isaiah points out the major contrast between people and God v.6-8, When God makes a promise he will fulfill it. 9-11. He talks about God's power and strength. God is a mighty king, but he is also a tender shepherd.

God's grace is greater than the circumstances behind us and before us. Isaiah helps the people put their problems in perspective. v.12-26. They, like us, were focused on the wrong things. What they saw, caused them to lose perspective. When you behold the greatness of God, you understand that no one is greater than our God. The bottom line is this: God is the greatest. He is greater than our problems. Nothing is beyond his reach. v.28-31 God rules and super rules. The reality is this: Bush will not be in office forever. The drought will end and the rain will come. We will stand in the midst of our storms and contend that He is king of kings and Lord of Lords.

When you are tempted to feel small and insignificant and think that God does not care. Praise God. Praise is the recognition of the greatness of God. We can get stuck and complain rather than celebrate. Watch your confession this season. When you are in those discussions with friends about the state of our world, be sure not to give more credit to satan than to God.

God is greater than our circumstances. God knows how we feel and what we need. When we trust ourselves, we stumble and fall. When we hope in the Lord, we will renew our strength. To hope in God is to look to him in confidence for all that you need. Those who hope in the Lord shall renew their strength. The word renew means exchange. It's like taking off old clothes and putting on new clothes. You take off your insufficiency and put on his sufficiency. Exchange your skepticism and discouragement for hope and confidence. To hope in the lord, you have to meditate on his word daily. This week read Isaiah 40. Pray daily. Seek to do what God has called us to do.

Through you, all nations on earth will be blessed. We are a chosen people. A holy nation. A people belonging to God that we may declare the praises of him who brought us out of darkness into the marvelous light.

Peace.

The full transcript of this message and others is available on cassette, CD and DVD

at

www.RayofHope.org

TRANSFORMING YOUR WORLD

www.rayofhope.org

Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Hale, Senior Pastor