

Service Notes Sunday 30th August 2020

Theme: The Living Hope, in collaboration with the Bible Society

Service Leader: Mick Warner

Speaker: Dr Andrew Ollerton, Bible Society

Lord Jesus we thank you for this chance to join together again, each in our own location, and yet with a sense of being part of something bigger. May we sense your presence this morning, and may we hear your voice in what we listen to, and Lord please help us above all else, to meet with YOU this morning! Amen.

Our pastor Mark Reid has enabled us to run these on-line services for over 5 months now! In our house, we've been thinking a little bit about the contrast between how we participate in church on-line at home, compared with how we participate face to face in the church building. We're fortunate to have a SMART TV, so our church services take place in our living room. Well once we've called Max to the sofa (I'd better do that!) – "Max come on it's started..." I must confess, coffee and cake at the start of the service has become my pattern... oops...

Do you join in the singing of the songs, and say out loud the liturgy? Do any of you stand up? We probably wouldn't sit for an hour in the building, but some of us do at home! Or do we press pause for a break, just for a moment.

Sometimes we press pause because a song or picture has triggered a thought, and we can have a topical conversation in the middle of morning worship!

So as we think ahead to perhaps participating in face to face church in the building, watch out for me with a coffee cup, and the Warners having a family discussion in the midst of worship!

Lord God, thank you for Christ the Cornerstone, our anchor in the storm. When we didn't deserve it, you sent your only Son to earth to be a sacrifice for my sins. After Jesus gave his life, you resurrected him from the grave and now he lives, so I too have a LIVING HOPE for heaven above. I have a purpose and a reason for living. Thank you Lord for your mercy, in the powerful name of Jesus, Amen.

But firstly, we continue to worship with another one of my favourite new songs, that we've been learning in our on-line services, with a treasure trove of thoughts. The song is **You were the word at the beginning (What a beautiful name)** – and it contains this amazing verse – "You didn't want heaven without **us**, so Jesus, you brought heaven down!" What a wonderful paraphrase of Christmas, God incarnate – but the reason why is even better: hello you – whoever you are, wherever you're sat, whenever you're listening to this – God and Jesus didn't want heaven without **you**, so Jesus set-out on a rescue mission, bringing heaven down to earth, to overcome your great sin with even greater love, expressed by his death on the cross and his resurrection to life, so that you may be rescued and brought into union with God in heaven above forever and ever, where nothing can separate us – Hallelujah!!

Bible Reading: 1 Peter 1: 3-9

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Intercessory Prayers

This morning our prayers focus on the work of Bible Society.

Did you know that with an estimated 7,000-plus languages in the world there may be a little way to go, but the full Bible has now been translated into 700 of them, with Bible Societies being a major player. There is much work ahead with 1.5 billion people still not having access to the full Bible in their own tongue. Over the next two decades, Bible Societies hope to complete 1,200 more translations, which will make Scripture accessible to another 600 million people.

One piece of news that escaped most of the world's media is the recent coup in the west African country of Mali. The Malian Bible Society's General Director Jacques Dembele said: 'Pray for our activities and the team.' He warned that while the departure of the president was a welcome development for many, the Church in the Muslim-majority country was the 'weakest link' in Malian society as minority rights could be imperilled during times of political crisis. However, he said the crisis was 'an opening for the gospel' and that because of Mali's endemic poverty, corruption and violence, people were turning to the Church. 'Now is the time for the Church to show God's compassion and love – to be a place of welcome and refuge and to participate in the development of the country,' he said. 'Pray that the Church will not remain silent despite the feeling of being "one against a thousand". During these times of crisis, people are turning to the Bible, people are looking for the truth.' He asked for prayer that 'we are able to meet the needs of Malians on all fronts – little by little making an impact'.

Closer to home, it is the 20th anniversary of Open the Book, is a project which offers primary school children an opportunity to hear key Bible stories, from a team of Christians from local churches, who present the stories during assemblies/acts of Collective Worship. 20th Anniversary. There are a few churches in Felixstowe who make up part of local teams. Let's give God thanks for these things and lift them up in prayer.

Father, we thank you for the work of Bible Societies worldwide and for the way in which you have been able to use them to translate Your word into 700 language. Thank you for the people who have been blessed with having the Bible in their own tongue and we pray that Your Holy Spirit will challenge them and bear fruit as people come to know Jesus as saviour

and Lord for themselves.

We pray for the country of Mali at this time of political stability. We pray that your church will not suffer persecution as a result of this, but may they find boldness by your Spirit to speak out truth at this time and take hold of opportunities to share Good News and may it have an impact on that spiritually needy land.

Finally, we pray for the schools work that Bible Society runs through churches in this country. Our land is also spiritually needy and may teams be able to bring truth about spiritual things to children who may not get to know of it in any other place. We pray too that opportunities for Open the Book will not be limited because of the coronavirus pandemic.

We ask these things in Jesus' name.
Amen.

Finally, in our prayers this morning, let's lift up our own ministry as we contemplate the re-opening of the church on 13th September, that arrangements will go smoothly. It will coincide with some of our Missions Month – details in the Weekly Sheet.

Father we thank you for the opportunity we have to open up our building for Sunday worship again. May arrangements run smoothly and we pray that coronavirus measures will not detract from worshipping you from our hearts.
We ask this in Jesus' name.
Amen.

Sermon Dr Andrew Ollerton "A Living Hope"

There was no written transcript provided so these are Mark's summary notes.

(Opening scene – a hillside at sunrise)

Sunrise reminds us of the way in which the Son of God has risen from the dead, broken the power of sin over us and brought back hope, which is the focus of the message.

Christian hope puts something on the far horizon, our hope of glory, and that shines on us. If Jesus rose on Easter Sunday, you can have hope on Monday, of hope etc. – whatever challenges we're facing.

Into darkness shines the light of hope. We have a living hope. Because Christ Jesus is risen, life is not a hopeless end; it is an endless hope.

1 Peter 1:3-9 What is our future hope and how does that hope help us live well now? This hope is kept in heaven for you. It's the hope of certainty, it's like an inheritance kept in heaven for you. You can begin to live for it now.

How can we know what is certain on that far horizon? Jesus Christ died and rose again and he is living proof of our living hope.

Hebrews 6: 19-20 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul – Jesus is our forerunner, He entered on our behalf. He is our guarantee that when we die, we will go where He has gone because He died, rose again and is ascended. He has entered on our behalf, we are connected to Him and He is bringing us to glory.

When we see Him, we will be like Him. We are now only a shadow of our future self. This hope shines back to fill us with hope in the present – this gives us confidence and courage.

Whatever we are facing now, nothing can take away our hope in Jesus Christ. Nothing can take that hope away. We have confidence now even if life gets scary. We have an anchor. Have you seen the size of our anchor? The anchor for our soul is sure and steadfast.

Courage means that we don't have to live a sheltered existence. CS Lewis – through history, Christians who did most for this world were well grounded in the next. Our hope cannot be lost so we can live free of the paralysis of the problems of our present life.

In the ancient world, during pandemics, the pagans left the city and the Christians went in love to help others. Let's not hide away spiritually, let's be bold in how we think and act. Let's live with courage and show our hope is real, practical and powerful.

Let's pray:

Almighty God, thank You today, that whatever challenges we have on this near horizon, that Christ is risen and we have a sure and certain hope that on that far horizon. I pray that we will allow us to experience the beautiful warm rays of a sunshine hope, this cosmic prize of Jesus' resurrection which has beaten death and secured a final outcome for the human story which is good and glorious as those rays shine back into our lives and give us confidence. Firstly, I pray for good sleep and confident living for the fearful. May they know the size of the anchor they are connected to; they are not alone or vulnerable but are secure through Jesus Christ. I pray for courage. May we not be those who are timid and fearful at this time. May we be bold and courageous, sharing this hope with everyone we can in a practical and spiritual way. We thank you Lord that we've been born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Closing Response

Still be my vision, O ruler of all....

Lots of inspiration in the message and some great Quotes:

We need to make sure we have the right horizons, from back in history and looking ahead to the far horizon!

I like that quote that life is "Not a hopeless end but an endless hope!"

And that phrase "have you seen the size of our anchor" – be not afraid, we have this living hope!!

We can say with confidence, Christ is risen, let's live with boldness and courage!

Until we meet again...

And now a Blessing upon you –

““The LORD bless you
and keep you;
²⁵ the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
²⁶ the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace.””

For Reflection & Discussion

Read I Peter 1:3-9 and Hebrews 6: 19-20

1. Why is it so important to have hope in life? Try to think of times in your life for whatever reason you felt hopeless and fearful? What caused it and what happened that made you recover from it?
2. Look at the two passages above. What is the nature of the hope in heaven that we have – what Andrew called “the far horizon”? What role did Jesus play in giving us that hope?
3. Thinking of hope now - “the near horizon”- what sorts of things stop us from having the hope that fills our lives with confidence and courage?
4. Spend some time in prayer asking the Spirit to save us from focussing as the world does on a hopeless end and fill us with that endless hope that we have in Christ.