

## SERVICE TRANSCRIPT SUNDAY JULY 4<sup>th</sup> 2021

*Service Leader: Delyth Mayhew*

*Speaker: Mark Reid*

In the first letter of Peter we read

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

Jesus is our hope, He is hope for the world.

We sing - Jesus Hope of the nations

### **SONG          Jesus hope of the nations**

Prayer

Father God, in a world that is ever changing and in a society that has all but rejected the truth of Your Word, we thank You that You are our never-changing Saviour, who knows the end from the beginning and has the universe in the palm of His hand. Develop in us an unwavering trust in the hope that is set before us, knowing that in Christ we have already received Your gift of eternal life, by grace through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Develop in us an unwavering hope in Your promises, knowing that despite the evil and wickedness that seems to be suffocating all that is good and pure in our world today, Your plans and purposes for mankind will one day be brought to fruition. On that day, Christ will be all in all, and the whole world will be brought into submission under His feet as He rules and reigns on earth as King of kings and Lord of lords. May we hope in Him unswervingly and live our lives to His praise and glory.

In Jesus' name I pray,

Amen.

### **SONG          In Christ alone our hope is found**

Today, July 4<sup>th</sup>, is an important date in the United States of America

IN 1776

representatives of the 13 colonies that then constituted America met in Pennsylvania State House in Philadelphia, and claimed independence from England - an event which eventually led to the formation of USA

Thomas Jefferson, with others, drafted their Declaration of Independence –

This includes in the second paragraph , these words -

***We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.***

187 years later, August 1963, Martin Luther King used those words in a speech that rang around the world.

Here is part of that speech –

*When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir.*

*This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of **life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.***

*Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.*

*I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "**We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.**"*

*When we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men, and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"*

In a speech in 1964 when he received the Nobel Peace prize - he said this

*- I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits.*

How true is any of this of America today, indeed of any country in the world?

Does the world really believe that all men are created equal – and all have the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness?

I leave you to answer that!

In GALATIANS chapter 3 Paul says what MLK drew on -

*There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

In God's sight, in his heart – all people are the same – all are His children. He wants only the best, only good things for them all.

And he looks only at the heart of each person – he doesn't see differences – all are perfect in His sight.

The wonderful thing is that,  
For all who believe in God, who declare Jesus as their Lord and Saviour – whatever they are going through in life,  
all can know true LIBERTY - true freedom – the freedom that comes from following Jesus  
All can have the amazing gift of LIFE that is life in Christ.  
And all can know the HAPPINESS, the sheer joy of knowing that we are children of God, and He is with us always.

And - all can have the Hope that is in Christ that we sang of earlier - that hope of a life eternal with God in glory and the knowledge that He walks with us through everything.

This is the good news that we have been given – to give to others.

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We sing this as a prayer and an encouragement to us to continue in our service to God – doing all we can to bring justice, peace and hope to all

### **Beauty for brokenness**

We say together:

Father,  
Thank you that in a world of despair,  
You are our Hope.  
In a world of darkness,  
You are our Light.  
In a world of sorrow,  
You are our joy.

Help us to share the Hope of our hearts with one another  
Enable us to give Hope to others through Your work amongst us

Holy God, our only hope is in You. We thank you for the past, trust you for today and believe for the future;  
In Jesus name we pray

**READING** Genesis 15

## **RIGHT WITH GOD?**

PEOPLE FALLING OUT Relationships go wrong don't they? People fall out. Sometimes it's over trivial things, but I'm sure most of us have at some time in our lives fallen out big-time with someone close to us. We may have been deceived, lied to, had stuff stolen from us. We become estranged from our families or maybe we lose close friends.

We've also all probably also made up with someone we have had a falling out with. One of the greatest things Jesus taught us was forgiveness – that willingness to put aside the past and start anew. It can be painful and costly. **HAND OF FRIENDSHIP** One of the biggest, bravest and most loving thing anyone can do is make the first move and offer that hand of friendship. Often it is the one wronged that makes that first move. In doing so it's the first step to putting things right.

The book of Genesis starts with the greatest estrangement there ever was – between God and the human race He had created. **DOWNHILL** It goes largely downhill for the first 11 chapters: chapter 4 – murder; chapters 6-10 the story of how the world became so evil that God flooded it; chapter 11 where Nimrod and his people opposed God by trying to build a tower to heaven.

**HAND OF FRIENDSHIP** Amongst these personal disasters we see God reaching out his hand in friendship. He reached out to Enoch, to NOAH, and after the debacle of the Tower of Babel, He reached out to Abram. **HAND OF FRIENDSHIP** In the wrongness, the sin that the human race was inflicting on itself, in their rebellion against God, we see a divine hand reaching out towards people who were ready and willing to take it.

TITLE

God wanted it to be right between Abram and Himself. Not that God had done anything wrong, it was the human race that was wrong. God in his mercy and grace made the first move and reached out.

He reached out to Abram. Despite Abram's willingness to respond, we've already seen that the growth of Abram's trust in God was something that was a process. He didn't start off as the great hero of the OT, and we have seen in the past three weeks how he started well but then his trust waned during the Egypt debacle. God re-affirmed His call as Abram returned to Canaan and when his faith was tested again Abram was spectacularly successful and gave God his worship for it.

God spoke out His promises in one form of another 3 times to Abram before chapter 15, but it was only when God made the promise a **fourth** time that we get verse 6.

*VERSE Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*

That was the point that Abram finally truly believed in God's promises and we read that it was at this point that he became truly right with God.

What, you mean that up until that time Abram hadn't fully believed in God's promises? Basically yes. He probably believed that he was strong and powerful enough to survive in Canaan anyway. Terah certainly thought that as he planned to go there before Abram. But Egypt showed Abram what trusting his own wisdom was about and look what happened. **MELCHIZEDEK** The battle with the Mesopotamian kings was the turning point. God really was powerful!

After this event, God comes to Abram and again affirms his favour on Abram: *the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.'*

As before God makes the first move. Abram's reply is amazing considering that previously God had promised *'To your offspring I will give this land.'* (12:7) Then after Lot left He said *I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted.* (13:16). Abram had just not got it. In chapter 15:2 he responds to God's words *I am your shield, your very great reward.'* in unbelief: *'Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?' 'You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.'*

Abram had heard but didn't believe, until God says it for this **fourth** time. He was too old for a blood heir wasn't he?

But this fourth time time Abram actually understands and believes. He trusts that what God is saying is true and will come to pass, however unlikely for an old man! *'This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.'* 5 He took him outside and said, *'Look up at the sky and count the stars – if indeed you can count them.'* Then he said to him, *'So shall your offspring be.'* At last Abram got it. The God who had been with him in the rescue of Lot was the God who really could make good on a promise like this.

*Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*

Are you right with God? Do you know His forgiveness, do you know His presence day by day, are you certain of your future in Him, do you find Him your comfort and help in times of trouble? Is He your shield and great reward? No?

Then the good news for you is the same as Abram's: God has made the first move. As we come to communion this morning, we remember that Jesus died on the cross; His body was broken and His blood was shed so that we could know forgiveness for our wrongdoing, our sin. We are made children of God and receive the promised Holy Spirit who is in our lives day by day and an eternal hope in Jesus as we live His risen life.

So as we break bread and drink wine this morning, we remember that it was God who first loved us and in Jesus offers all this as gift to us. He makes us right with Him as He made Himself right with Abram. And how do we come into all this – we believe in Him. The Hebrew word for believe in Genesis 15 is *âman* which means to believe, have faith, to be assured, to put our trust in. It's a word of faith, not a shallow kind of belief like someone who believes in Father Christmas or the latest conspiracy theory. Abram's belief was one of certainty that God would deliver on His promise. VERSE The writer to the Hebrews said *"faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."*

VERSE At that point of belief Abram accepted God's promises *Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*

Being right before God isn't just being good friends, it's also being right with God in satisfying His just requirements with regard to the sins we have committed. It's being right with God in every way imaginable. In this phrase the most interesting word is credited. *Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.* The hebrew word translated as credited in the NIV is *châshab* which is usually translated as counted as or considered as, but the root of it is actually in plaiting or weaving. When Abram believed God, he was made right in the sense of being bound up together – or to use a modern symbol they were like that (fingers crossed).

We are here to mark our relationship with God by faith today, that was bought for us by the broken body and shed blood of Jesus that we have received freely by faith. God made the first move we responded. Now we are so closely bound up with God that the Holy Spirit lives in us.

We have an inheritance that's ready and waiting in heaven for us; in the meanwhile we walk on this Earth with God. And we are about to embark on new adventures with Him as we come out of Lockdown and as we seek to serve God again out of our base in Maidstone Road. May Jesus have the glory.

So to conclude are you right with God? If you are rejoice and ask "Lord, where do you want to lead me where do you want to lead us?" In faith be expectant.

HAND OUTSTRETCHED If you don't know Jesus; if you know you're not right, then God hold His hand out to you today. Are you ready to take it? Are you ready to follow Jesus? Are you ready to receive His offer of forgiveness? Of friendship? He loves you. Won't you walk with Him?

#### CONFESSION

I've got to say that Abram still got it wrong walking with God even though he was now prepared to follow God trusting Him with renewed vigour as we shall find out. God desires to be a close parent to us (like that!) but so often we're less than enthusiastic aren't we? We do things that we know offend God. But look at Abram's life – he did too but he always found God was there with him and for him ready to accept him back and ready to take him on the next part of life's journey.

Let's have a time of reflection as we bring our failures, our personal sins, our wrong ways of thinking, words we shouldn't have said, prayers never offered. Let's confess them before God, knowing that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. Let's do that in the quiet now.

Christ Jesus has not come to punish sin with death,  
but to call us through God's grace

and, in compassion, to raise us from death to life  
through the word of truth, the gospel.

Sisters and Brothers,  
through faith in Christ,  
and because of His finished work  
your sins are forgiven;  
be at peace.

**Amen**

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**SONG Only by grace can we enter**

### **COMMUNION**

As we come to the virtual Lord's Table today, let's hear Jesus' word's of invitation:

**For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said,**

***"This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."***

**In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying,**

***"This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."***

**For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

So as we break this bread, we remember the body of Christ broken for us.

As we drink this wine, we remember the blood of Christ shed for our sins.

*Only by grace (reprise)*

*Father, we thank you that we have been able to break bread and drink wine and remember again that we are who we are because of the sufferings and shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you that He is risen and gone before us into heaven – He is our eternal hope. Thank you that Your Spirit is in each of us. May we have the vision, strength and power that comes through Your Spirit to speak and act like Jesus day by day. We ask this in His name. Amen.*

**FAMILY PRAYERS**

Let's take some time to remember those who we know need prayer at this present time. Perhaps the Lord has placed the need of individuals on our hearts – let's lift them before Him now as we have this short musical interlude.

#### INTERLUDE

Father for each person whose name has been lifted before You today, be close to them, bring hope, bring healing, bring wholeness, bring faith bring assurance, bring Your presence. Whatever they need Lord, we ask that you bring it into their lives.

We ask this in Jesus' name

**Amen.**

#### ***The Lord's my shepherd (I will trust in You)***

Let's close with this super blessing to one another:

*Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Ephesians 3:20-21*

That's it for this week. May God bless you, stay safe and good bye.

## **FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION**

Read Genesis 15:1-6

1. Why is it that even though we are familiar with God's promises to trust Him, we can still find ourselves acting out of impulse, fear, doubt or for our own ends. Why is that?
2. Think of times in life when you had a "faith lift". What caused you to want to trust God more fully?
3. *Abram believed God ....* Many people reject the Christian faith as "easy believe-ism." Yet this verse is the foundation of the Bible and of the Christian faith. We can see an explanation of this in Romans 4. Why as God made it so "easy" to be right with Him? To what extent is it true that becoming a Christian is easy, but being a Christian can be very difficult?