

DECONSTRUCTING DECONSTRUCTION

Sermon Points

Week 5 - 9.11.22 | Terrell Spears

Title: What is Hope?

Scripture: Jeremiah 9:23-24

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Main Point: Genuine hope is found when we understand our greatest need is inseparably tied to our greatest problem – our glorious hope is the perfect life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection of Jesus that brings redemption to undeserving sinners who become adopted sons and daughters through God’s mercy and grace.

What is hope?

What’s at stake if we get this wrong?

1. How we define our greatest problem dictates our greatest need, and whatever’s perceived to be the greatest need will determine our pursuit of the best solution and remedy
2. Redefining truth and love leads to a misdiagnosis of the problem and therefore our need, which moves us towards a false hope in a false Gospel

Thus says the Lord: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.”
Jeremiah 9:23-24

Examples of people misdiagnosing the problem and our need, and therefore putting their hope in the wrong things:

“There are even signs of change in the political sphere. “The hope is that good science doesn’t just produce good policy, it produces good politics,” says Paul Testa, a Brown University political scientist and Bowers’s coauthor. So even when competing sides violently disagree on principle, he says, “if they could agree on a process to generate evidence of what works best, that would help reach consensus.””

- **M. Mitchell Waldrop** (on science solving poverty), *Can science solve the poverty problem?*

“There is NO reason we haven’t implemented solutions to eliminate war, the socio-economic issues surrounding the economy and automation, famine, poverty and overpopulation. We are stuck in our own emotions of fear, and honestly, some leaders are taking advantage of this fear to force us to take decisions that aren’t in our own long-term best interest.”

- **Sylvain Rochon**, *Why can't we solve humanity's biggest problems?*

“I have found the permission and freedom to be a new kind of Christian, a progressive Christian, a contemplative-activist Christian, a Christian humanist, or whatever you want to call me. I am learning to be content whatever I am called, as long as I remain passionately eager to embody a way of being human that is pro-justice, pro-kindness, and pro-humility.

You have that permission too, if you would like it.”

- **Brian McLaren**

“Jesus was an activist.

He died on the cross because he was a political threat to the Powers that Be. He died on the cross because he could not fathom sitting quietly by as others suffered at the hand of the powerful. He died on a cross because he was an activist.

So, for me, the answer to the question of “why did Jesus die on a cross?” is, he died on a cross to show us how far love will go to protect those who are used and abused by the powerful. It was not sin that he was saving us from. In many ways, it was our own complacency and our own feelings of being too overwhelmed to confront those who abuse their power. For me, that is what he was saving us from.”

- **Mark Sandlin**, *Jesus the Activist*

“For far too long, Evangelicals have preached a Gospel that says if you come to Jesus that you will find shalom, satisfaction, health, wholeness, rightness, certainty, a foundation, clarity, abundance, and direction. This message doesn’t belong to the “Prosperity” churches, but also to the neo-reformed, the mainstream, and the progressive Evangelical communities. We have promoted a Gospel that says peace and wholeness can be yours today, when in fact, they can't. We have said that “God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in him” when the reality is “God is most glorified in our reliance on him in the midst of our brokenness, dysfunction, and lack of satisfaction.” There isn’t a single human being on earth who has “perfect peace” or “total wholeness”. And maybe that’s a good thing.

Everyone is searching for meaning and satisfaction and no one has ever found it. Not even in Jesus. Because that's not the point."

- **Brandon Robertson**, *Christianity Can't Replace My Zoloft*

"While the gospel does liberate us from the oppression of sin, with its penalty and power, this requires the penal substitutionary atonement of Christ and our trust in His work. But that is not the case on the emerging gospel of McLaren and others. We are not separated from God on that view, for sin is but disintegration of relationships in which we already stand, including with God. So the solution is not that we need to be born from above by the Spirit. Instead, we need to embrace the way of Jesus now by living according to the way (or story) of Jesus now, which is one of justice, love, and nonviolent resistance to evil. Yet, these are not objectively real standards but our interpretations."

- **R. Scott Smith**, *Emergent Christians and the "New" Social Justice*

"Penal Substitutionary Atonement Theory [PSA] is probably the worst Christian doctrine ever imagined...Please understand: God does NOT need anyone to bleed before He can love or forgive us. God just forgives. That's it."

- **Keith Giles**, *Why Did Jesus Have To Die?*

"Dear Charles,

I do not know the actual reason that Jesus was killed."

- **Fred Plumer**, *If not for our sins, then why did Jesus die?*

"One thing to bear in mind is this: the point of the Easter story isn't whether or not Jesus LITERALLY rose from the dead. We're missing the point if we're fighting over the historical accuracy of a bodily resurrection. There's SO MUCH MORE depth to the story than that and we would do well to dig in for ourselves – we'll likely find lots more way to discuss it with our children when we do.

Stories don't have to be factual to speak truth. And it's okay to question a literal resurrection – questions are how we learn. And there is always truth to be found in curiosity, even if the answers don't turn out to be what you thought they'd be.

All we have is this life – let's live it well, even unto death."

- **Anna Skates**, *The Trouble with Easter: How To (and not to) Talk to Kids About Easter*

Misdiagnosed Problem > Misunderstood Need > Misplaced Trust

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we

stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”

Romans 5:1-11”

- Our greatest problem is sin in the human heart rebelling against a holy God, we are enemies separated from God's eternal presence
- Our greatest need is to be forgiven and reconciled to a just God, we are dead in sin and under the wrath of God's just judgment
- Our greatest hope is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus that brings redemption to undeserving sinners, we are adopted sons and daughters who receive God's mercy and grace