

Abiding Hope

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the importance of Christ within, which is the indispensable necessity for life and work, and the secret of the church's power.

Duration: 50:38

Scripture: Luke 9:1

Topics: "Hope"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the devastating impact of the cross on every follower of Jesus, particularly focusing on Peter. Despite 40 days of appearances and miracles performed by Jesus, the most vital thing is still lacking. The speaker highlights the importance of having Christ within and receiving the Holy Spirit as the secret to true faith and Christianity. The sermon encourages listeners to understand that their faith does not solely rest on historical facts, but on the presence of Christ within them.

Transcript

In the first letter of Peter, and the first chapter, at verse 3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who by the power of God are guarded through faith a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the letter to the Colossians, chapter 1, here again we must read the whole section. At verse 24, I rejoice in my sufferings for yours sake, fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church.

For of I was made a minister according to the dispensation of God which was given me to you, Lord, to fulfill the word of God. Even the mystery which hath been hid from all ages and generations, but now hath it been manifested to his saints to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory, whom we proclaim, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ. This mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory, a living hope, the hope of glory.

We have to put these two fragments together to understand the real meaning of the hope referred to. To Peter, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was an experience which opened for him an entirely new prospect. The context of that clause, a living hope, gives us just a little of the prospect that the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead had brought to Peter an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, faded not away.

That is what opened up for him with the resurrection of Christ. To Paul, resurrection of Christ was the very heart of the mystery which had been hid from all generations, but is now revealed. We look first at Peter in this connection.

Peter sits down to write this letter to the elect scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Aesir and Bithynia. Here he finds himself caught up at once in a doxology. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

And perhaps of all men, Peter had cause for a doxology over the resurrection of Jesus. But we take Peter as representative of all those who had become followers of the Lord Jesus in the days of his flesh. Not only of the twelve, but evidently quite a large number.

Beyond the twelve there were the seventy, and beyond the seventy many more who followed Jesus and had some attachment to him. Peter can be taken as in a very real sense representative of them all. We are thinking at this moment particularly of the effect of the cross upon him and upon them all.

The utter devastation and then the despair that the cross of the Lord Jesus brought upon them all. For we are told they were all scattered abroad and we know how even before the cross became an actuality any reference to it brought a terrible reaction. From time to time the Lord did just make some mention of the coming death, and as he did so many went away, followed no more with him.

Then again others said this is a hard saying, who can hear it? Apparently off they went as well. The very thought and prospect of the cross was impossible of acceptance. When it came, Peter as the very center of that whole company is found most vehemently denying any association with Christ.

Just because of the cross, terrible denial. And they all shared that if not in word and in the same form of expression for it says they all forsook him and fled. And he had said to them you will all leave me.

You will all leave me. And it became true. And we meet them after his crucifixion.

We meet those two on the Emmaus road, the embodiment of despair. For them everything had gone, was shattered. All their hopes and their hope were eclipsed.

We had trusted or we had hoped that it had been he that should redeem Israel. Now everything is gone. And the hope laid in his grave.

We meet Thomas from time to time. And we know what Thomas thought about the cross. He again was in the grip of an awful despair and hopelessness.

Loss of faith, loss of assurance. We move through those forty days after the resurrection. Find the Lord repeatedly having to upbraid them because of their unbelief.

Rebuke them. They believe not it says. Some doubt it.

We can see that what a shock the cross had been. And I have not used too strong a word when I have said that the cross was nothing less than a devastation for every follower of the Lord Jesus. And right at the heart of them all was Peter.

To say that it was all concentrated in him. It must have been in view of what he had done. Put yourself in his place if you can.

See whether you would have any more hope for anything or for yourself. No. Now that is where it all is.

But forty days. Forty days of appearances, disappearances. Coming and going.

A build up. Steady. Of the fact that he was risen.

Overcoming day by day. That despair and that unbelief. Building up a new hope.

That even after forty days of that kind of thing. The most vital thing is still lacking. You might think well given all that.

Given all that they have enough. They have enough to go on. But no.

The most vital thing even at that point is still lacking. What is it? It is Christ within. All that yes.

But not Christ within yet. Hence the restraint. Tarry ye in Jerusalem till ye be in due with power.

Don't move yet. You really have not yet got the vital thing. The essential thing.

With all that you have. The thing is Christ in you. The hope of glory.

Christ in you. And that dear friends. Is why the apostles were so particular.

So particular. As to converts receiving the Holy Spirit. Before ever they felt assurance about their conversion.

Yes. There are all the reports. No reason to believe that they were false reports.

Mere rumors. Things happening in some area. Had not the Lord said.

That they should be witnesses unto Him in some area. The report comes back of things happening. People turning to the Lord.

Real conversions taking place in large numbers. Why not be satisfied with the report. A good report.

And there is surely no reason to doubt it. But no the apostles are not just satisfied with that. They sent down from Jerusalem.

And when they were come down they laid their hands upon them. That they might receive the Holy Spirit. You see again and again that happened.

For then things were not really settled. Until they were sure that Christ was on the inside. That Christ was in them.

Which is saying the same thing as receiving the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Jesus. And that I say is why the Lord said Terry.

Don't move yet. That is why the apostles were so meticulous on this matter. Receiving the Holy Spirit.

And again that is why the Holy Spirit gave evidences in those times. That He had come within. We believe that this book of the Acts is a book of fundamental principles for the dispensation.

And when principles are being laid down in the first instance. God always bears them out with mighty evidences. That they are true principles.

These are governing things for all time. God puts His seal upon them. So when they received the Spirit there were the evidences of the Spirit.

They spake with tongues. Mighty things happened. It was clear to all.

Without any doubt whatever. The Spirit was on the inside. Christ had entered in.

That universal Christ transcending all human language. That Christ of heaven transcending all earthly things. He had come in.

The evidences were given. No mistaking this. No mistaking it.

This matter of Christ within is the fundamental essential of Christianity. You may have the mightiest facts. The mightiest facts of His birth.

His marvelous life. His death. His resurrection.

I say these are the mightiest facts. You may have them all. And they may all be impotent until He is inside.

That's a tremendous statement but it's borne out you see. By at least this threefold truth. Harry, don't move yet.

The essential has not taken place after all. Make sure. Leave nothing to chance.

Let it not just be an emotional revival in scenario. Whatever there may seem to be on the outside. To prove that something's happened.

Make sure that it's got inside. Make sure that Christ is in. The Holy Spirit is in.

Make sure. For you may have so much. As we are going to see.

As we go on. We have so much. And then that vital thing being lacking.

Calamity. Calamity. As with them.

This mighty hope dear friends. Does not rest just upon historic ground. That is the ground of the historic Jesus.

This mighty hope rests upon immortal reality. Christ in you. That's super historic.

That's where we have to go to Paul. For the full, full meaning. The mystery which has been hidden from all generations.

It's been there through all generations. The mystery which has been hid from all generations. But is now made known.

Which is Christ in you. The hope of glory. Now all that we have said is but a general approach to the matter.

It has to be broken up. So again. We will take Peter.

And the others. Whom he undoubtedly represents. Firstly then.

The hopelessness ultimately. Of a merely outward association with Christ. However sincere.

There is no question about the sincerity of Peter. Or of any of these followers. They were sincere.

There was a devotion to Jesus. Their motives could not be called into question. It was all well meant.

There is no doubt about it. They left all and followed him. And to follow Jesus of Nazareth in those days involved in a considerable amount of trouble.

At least with the high up people. And the prevailing system. There was something in their association with him.

And look. While perhaps they were not able to see and understand. While they were not in the full light of who he was.

The fact of who he was was present with them. For instance there is a fact of the incarnation. The fact of it that this one amongst them was God incarnate.

Was the son of God. Was God come down from heaven. Dwell in human form.

There is the fact. They were in closest touch with that fact. Every day of their lives.

Then there was the fact of his personality. And there is no avoiding this. That that was a personality.

I mean there was a presence where he was. That was different. That made it so felt.

That registered. He was a very very impressive presence. Beyond perhaps anyone else.

With whom they had any association or of whom they had any other knowledge. Some mystery about this man. You cannot fathom him.

You cannot explain him. You cannot comprehend him. He is more.

He is different. And wherever he comes. His presence has an effect.

And a tremendous effect. The fact of his personality. And then although we do not know how far it went.

There was the fact of Mary and her secret. We don't know to how many she spoke of her secret. We told that she hid all these things in her heart.

But it is difficult to believe that no one, no one knew anything about it. We do know that some did know about it. We know that she told the whole thing to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth knew it. Father of John the Baptist knew it. John the Baptist knew it.

Mary's secret. And she was there with them all the time. There's the fact of Mary and her secret.

Without pressing that too much, but it's there. Then there is the fact of the miracles. Can't very well get away from them.

Miracles in the realm of the elements. The sea and the wind. In the realm of nature.

As our hymn says. It was springtime when he took the loaves. And harvest when he break.

In the realm of nature. In the realm of sickness and disease and death. He's healing and he is raising.

Son of the widow of Nain. Yes. These are facts.

And then in the realm of the powers of evil. Muzzling demons and casting them out. Delivering the demon possessed.

These were all facts present with them. It's a tremendous accumulation of things. Further the fact of the teaching.

The teaching. That without special education. He bewildered.

Confounded and defeated. The authorities of his time. All the men of information and knowledge.

Scribes. The lawyers. The best representatives.

Of the intellect. Of Jewry. And they picked out on occasion.

Their best intellects to go and try and catch him. In his words. And these very men had to ask the question.

When has this man. This. Having never learned.

There was his teaching. Well now. There's a build up for you.

What a tremendous situation. They had all that. They had all that.

And how much more that embraces. And yet dear friends. With all that.

That whole mess. Of mighty facts. And realities.

About him. And they were in the closest association with him. And with all that.

With all that. We have the havoc. And the despair of the cross.

I venture to say that if. That you. You would think that if you had only a bit of that.

You'd be safe forever. Never have any reason whatever. To doubt.

Your salvation. Question. Christianity.

And they had it all. And here we have them after the cross. In abject despair.

I have not exaggerated. I don't think one could exaggerate. In this matter.

And yet dear friends. When it came to the supreme test. All that.

Did not save them. There was lacking the one. Essential.

To make it all vital. To make it. The very triumph.

In the trying hour. And that one essential is. Christ.

That Christ. In you. With all that.

Still as objective on the outside. And you being in the closest association with it. With it all.

And that. There's something lacking. And that lack.

May still spell disaster. For it did with them. By the resurrection a new hope was born.

By the resurrection a new power came into the world and human life. By the resurrection the way was opened. For that Christ.

To change his position. From heaven. From outside.

Into the inner life of the believer. Short of that. You'll never be sure.

Never be sure. It's all got to be. Christ in you.

The hope. Of glory. See this is.

Just the essential. Nature of this dispensation. In which we live.

From a dispensation. The spirit moves from the outside upon. Jesus said.

When he has come he shall be in you. He shall be in you. That's the change of dispensation.

That is the character of this present dispensation. The spirit within. What is the secret of the church's power? What is the secret of the believer's life? Strength? Persistence? Endurance? Triumph? Against all hell and the world? What is the secret of ultimate glory? Is Christ in you.

Christ in you. That you have really and definitely received the Holy Spirit. That you have really and definitely received the Holy Spirit.

It's only saying the same thing. In other words. Oh how important this is.

You and I shall know. Shall know. That our Christianity.

Our faith. Does not rest upon. Even the greatest historic fact.

But. We know that Christ is inside. We know that we have received the Holy Spirit.

That's the secret of everything. It is dear friends. Let me carry this then.

A little further. Take this next thing. The hopelessness.

Of work. For Christ. Without Christ within.

He called unto them. Unto himself the twelve. And he called.

He chose seventy. And he sent them forth. And he gave them power.
Over unclean spirits. Over all manner of diseases. And they went forth.
And they returned with great joy. Saying. Even the demons are subject unto us.
In thy name. Menace. Heal the sick.
Yes. Heal the sick. Raise the dead.
Cast out demons. Freely ye have received. Freely give.
They returned with great joy. It was done. They seen it.
You have this picture after the cross. Of those same people. Same people.
Devastated. Is that possible? Is that real? If you know your own heart. You know it is possible.
Well. What's the meaning of this? You see in the case of the twelve. And the seventy.
We have set forth. A strange. Wonderful.
And almost frightening fact. It is. That within the vast scope.
Of the sovereign rule of God. Which is only another. Definition of the kingdom of God.
The sovereign rule of God. Many things obtain. Which only express.
That sovereignty. They are not of the central and permanent essence of God himself. As in the nature of things.
They are the works of God. I say within that vast scope of his rule and his reign. There are many, many things like that.
They are official. They are providential. God has numerous.
We might say countless instruments of his sovereignty. Which he just uses in his sovereignty. In relation to his end.
There is a purpose to be served. An end to be reached. Concerning his son.
Jesus Christ. That is. It has got to be made known in this world.
That the kingdom of God has drawn near. And that Jesus Christ. Is the center of that kingdom.
It has got to be known. And to make that known. God will employ sovereignly.
Even the devil himself. His sovereignty gathers into it. Many, many things which are not essentially of the nature of God.
You understand that? You have been amazed sometimes. And perplexed and bewildered why God should use that and that and that. And such and such persons.

So in principle it is all contrary to what I believe has to be necessary to God for his work. I see that the Bible says that instruments have got to be. According to God's mind in order to be used.

But history doesn't bear that out. I say he has used the devil. The devil is not according to God's mind.

There is a sovereignty of God spread over. In relation to his end. But when you have said that dear friends.

It is a frightening fact when you come to the work of God. In this that we may be working for God and doing many mighty things. Employed, employed as employees of the kingdom of God.

The rule of God. And in the end be cast away. In the end we ourselves might just go to pieces.

Well here it is you see. This strange, strange thing. That these men went out twelve and seventy.

And had this delegated authority. This delegated authority. And exercised it and mighty things resulted.

And then these people are found after the cross. They shut it. Nothing to rest upon.

What does it say? Oh thank God the book of the Acts transforms the whole situation. Because the book of the Acts brings in this mighty thing. That Christ who delegated authority.

Is now indwelling as the authority himself. And the works now are mighty works. But they are not just works for the Lord.

They are the works of the Lord. But I have only used that again. It is self evident.

Self evident. You have you not been amazed. Amazed men.

Who could go out like that and be used like that. And see the demons being subject unto them. And a sick healed.

All this wonderful work. These men should all deny him. All should flee from him.

Forsake him. And be found in a state like that. Yes.

We might well be bewildered. At such a possibility. If we hadn't got the secret.

Dear friends it all goes to prove this tremendous necessity. It is Christ in you. That is the indispensable necessity.

For life and for work. Like that. Christ in you.

You can see in the beginning. That all that they had in their association with him. And then all that they were allowed to do.

By his dedicated authority. All that fell short of something to make them triumphant in the hour of the deepest testing. And that is something.

Well Paul put his finger upon it when he got to Ephesus. You remember. Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? Was ever there a question? Was ever there a quest? They knew.

They knew afterward. They knew anything at all. But nothing will stand up to anything but Christ himself in dwelling.

Now we can of course take that both ways. The negative. I say it's an almost frightening possibility.

That there should be all that, all that and then disaster at the end. But let us take it positively. What a marvelous thing it is.

It is. That we are in the dispensation. When the one thing above all others.

That God will make true. Is Christ in you. Christ in you.

No wonder Peter burst forth with his dark solitude. Blessed. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Who hath begotten us again to a living hope. By the resurrection of Jesus. He wanted Peter to be able to speak like that as he spoke.

To have gone through the awful shattering. Into that unspeakable depth of despair. Loss of hope.

To be able to say a living hope. A living hope. And what is it? Christ in you.

The hope of glory. I wonder what you're thinking. Trying to read you as I speak.

What are you thinking? What are you feeling about this? Am I depressing you? Am I making things difficult again? My dear friends, if you really would think again. Think again in the light of all this. I'm quite sure you would agree that this is an important word.

And a very necessary word. I'm not saying it to you because I think that you need it and I don't. God only knows.

There's more to say about this yet and I'm quite sure presently you will be more convinced still of the vital necessity of this word and of this reality. If you forget all that which has been drawn in to prove the point. Get hold of the point itself.

There's no hope for us individually. There is no hope for our companies, our churches, our assemblies. There is no hope for Christianity.

Only here. But the living Christ, with all the tremendous significance of his coming into this world, of his life here, of his cross, of his resurrection, has come by the Holy Spirit on to the inside of things. Of people and churches.

There is Christ in you. All the other may be there. The creed, the teaching.

You may with all sincerity and honesty cite it. I believe in God the Father. So on and so on and so on.

It may all be there. And there may be disaster where that thing is the most frequently declared. It's the impact of Christ that matters.

We have said he could not be present without it being known. That's the thing that you and I need. That's the secret of the Church's power.

It's the presence of Christ on the inside. Of you and of me. And of us as people together.

This mystery among the nations. Among the nations which is Christ in you. You're among the nations.

You're among the nations. The deepest, the profoundest, the most inexplicable thing. Christ in you.

As you're amongst the nations. The hope of glory. Oh, bear your heart to the message.

Not to the form of its presentation. Or to the one who tries to give it. But listen.

It's a question of hope. It can be touched by deep and terrible despair. We can see disintegration and disruption.

What we need is a mighty, mighty hope. A living hope. That is, Christ risen.

Christ himself. I want to get beyond even the resurrection of something. And say it's Christ present.

What Christ means as within us.

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