

Sermon 15 November 2015 'Future Hope'
Hebrews 10:11-14, 19-25 Mark 13:1-8

Prayer: ay the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight Lord, our Creator, healer and guide. Amen

One of the gifts we bring to our neighbourhoods, work places and gathering places is "future hope". NO matter what is happening "now" or looks like it will happen or.... No matter what – we **have future hope** we can **bring** into every situation and **gift**. It just might be irrational, illogical, unable to be tested in a double blind randomised trial... but it is true and it works!

It works because of Jesus, God's gift to us. But future hope is not to be mistaken for 'Church / Temple' activity or building. As Jesus said – Stones come tumbling down! Nor is future hope is not to be found in winning wars, making millions, passing exams, discovering life's vocation or following a false messiah / god.... It is in our God as Jesus who loves us, works with us, holds us, challenges and comforts us in our 'now' so giving us a taste of 'later'. Jesus says all that we experience 'now' is the beginning of the 'later'. The time when all will be made known, God's kingdom of peace, justice, dignity **will** happen. When we and our all the world live in God's shalom; this is our dream, our hope, our life's goal. Cv

Of all the teaching points within our Bible verses today – I want to look at just two. 1. In Hebrew's we have the 'how' we belong to the 'dream-team' – God's co-workers of future hope. 2. Jesus warns us it will be hard figuring out who else belongs in our team and who the team boss is! I am fascinated that both have in common teaching about the role of the 'church / Temple' in future hope.

One of the effects of giving your minister time out was just that! My regular patterns of daily life were turned around and I visited / spoke to/ in completely different contexts. In all of this I had 2 conversations where I realised that both people had found themselves in a faith place without God. I am sure you know the kind of conversation, when meeting someone new and they find out you go to Church (are a minister) they either confirm this as a common point of interest – or tell you why it **is not!**

What I heard made me sad. They were without God because of the Church. One said because the 'rituals' were empty and said the same thing – over and over – nothing changed and so for them **God was empty**, *said* the same thing and *didn't* change. It seemed to me there was no 'now' – present – living – hope of God in their world, places of living, their life. My question is; how can they have hope in the future when they have none in the 'now'? How sad that the 'church' let them / taught them / allowed ritual to be exchanged for Jesus, the God of our 'now' and our life now, where change is a constant!

The Hebrew's verses teach us we have Jesus God in our lives: now, and tomorrow and forever. We don't have to repeat any kind behaviour as/or bribe to be in the presence of our Divine and Holy One. Jesus is not a ritual, repeat action, same old, same old. When we accept Jesus as our Christ, he works to complete us, to make us whole and all this work is perfected *one day*, and **usually not now** because we're human!

So in our Hebrews verses we are being taught that there was one thing that changed forever in the old Temple-Priest faith expression. Jesus was the last, and greatest High Priest and **using a model of sacrifice** to explain what he did when he died; he became the last sacrifice for us. Nothing else is needed to bring or offer salvation for us enabling us to join God's dream-team.

The sacrificial model explanation of Jesus death may not be a favourite, and it certainly is not our language or culture (as diverse as we are here this morning!) but it was absolutely the language for the people reading **this** letter the first time. What I want to emphasise this morning is that it tells us how we belong, are made right and clean, and so belong with everyone else who has hope; *despite* any sense of unworthiness, *despite* what we know of / in our lives and the things we have done – or not done. We have hope because we are Jesus works in progress; who know it is not a building that we belong to, not a ritual

that we belong to, not same old-same old with no change. We belong to Jesus and as the writer to the Hebrews encouraged us: 'let us strongly hold on to our hope' because of him.

Then the writer got personal! Future hope is firmly grounded in the 'now' and future hope takes shape, form, made solid is when we provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, (*opps how did he know about our 'going to church pattern???'*) **not** neglecting to meet together, *as is the habit of some*, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day approaching.'

We are not to stop living 'now' - but try harder to show we belong to Jesus as the future comes close. So we join Jesus disciples and ask - 'When?' **When** will 'the day approach'? How will we know? Of all the 'things' that are happening in our lives, the life of our country, (we would add 'our world') - how **will we know** 'that day is approaching'?

We want to know because we know that our life decisions / priorities / focus **will** change in that instant of knowledge. The *self-interest road* may well include: Selling all stocks, cashing up investments, selling retirement housing and going on an extended holiday because in XX months 'that day will arrive'. Why bother sitting exams? Why bother staying at work? Why bother stressing about finding life's vocation???

A *spiritual interest road* may include: I'll go to church more often; I'll make that donation to that good cause I've always promised; I'll pray, I'll change to behave like I think Jesus / church want.... I don't know what each one of us would do, but I do know that the instant we know **the** 'when' we would change. Sadly I fear, few would change in the way the writer to the Hebrews taught. But that is the only road that actually leads to life, now and 'later'. It is that road that Jesus leads us to - and on **now**.

Our biggest challenge is hearing his voice over the noise of our 'now', and as he warns - there are lots of false voices / leaders. I was very appreciative of being told about one such false voice earlier in the year. You may have seen the headlines in the national news in September; "the end of the world (the day approaches) - is coming - follow me" said Robert Breaker of cloudchurch.org.

He has lots of Bible verses and historical facts and worked the numbers to make his message of the end of the world **sound to be so real**. Earthquakes are happening, wars are happening, nation is rising up against nation, famine is real, ... Millions of people watched his You-tube video - he was 'loud' in proclaiming "I am he" and .. just donate to ... buy my book... and you will be good - rescued - saved!

Maybe, one way we can distinguish a false voice is that Jesus gives everything he has and is; **freely**, in love, not asks for donations? Is another clue for us is that Jesus didn't promise us we'd be good - rescued - removed from the 'now' trials of our living - he said **they were all 'birth-pangs'** - PAINFUL!!!!

Jesus knew what his disciples / his people's lives were like and certainly by the time of the writing of our Biblical texts life was very hard. Petty says: ^{1*} these years were some of the most difficult in Hebrew history. They began with the conquest of Alexander the Great, which initiated a "culture war" between Hellenism and established Hebrew orthodoxy, and ended with two wars against Rome, the first and second Roman Jewish Wars, AD 66-70 and AD 135-138, both of which the Jews lost.

Throughout the first century, the economic situation of the native population kept deteriorating. More and more people were forced off their land and into poverty. The totality of the tax burden approached 50% of peoples' already tiny (~~meagre~~) incomes. Any resistance was met with brutality. Sometimes, roads were lined with people hanging on crosses.' Don't make a mistake and think our 'times' are 'worse' than what they had to live through. We all have a hunger to know 'when' the buildings and rituals will come falling down and the day arrive; when the true God, whose name is 'I am', will arrive.

And through it all, the true voice of Jesus tells us to have hope - new will happen, it **is** coming, **will** arrive through this pain. Have hope in the future - because of Jesus, our "I am". Amen