

Hope in Community
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You'll be able to download an outline or the full transcript of the sermon on the live page of the Bundy website

Please feel free to use those if they will help you follow along

Most importantly, please keep your bibles open

I'll be referring to a number of different passages in the bible

And those are in the talk outline

And make sure that you test everything you hear from me against the Bible.

By looking at the context of these bible passages

Today we will be finishing our series on Community

By looking at the topic of Hope for Community

Next week, Neil will be resuming our series in Ezekiel

By returning to chapter 36 which speaks of great hope for God's people

Let's pray

When I speak to people in Melbourne about this year

I hear these two words "write-off"

A wasted year

A year of loss

And some have suffered more grief than others

Think of those in year 6 and year 12

With scars of remote learning rather than happy milestones

Think of those who have lost jobs

Think especially of those who lost loved ones

But with favourable COVID numbers

Restrictions easing

Warmer, sunnier days

There is a growing sense of hope

Hope for a better year in 2021

Our hope though is tempered when we look at Europe

Who are currently approaching Winter

With rising infection numbers

And various stages of lockdown.

All of us in Melbourne know

That the longer lockdown goes

The less and less hope we feel

And every community needs hope

According to dictionary.com

Hope is defined as a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen.

By its very definition,

hope is not something that seems 100 percent secure

A desire for something that is never completely guaranteed
But that's not how the bible speaks of hope
Today I want to show you a hope that you can be completely confident in
A hope that will never disappoint you
A hope centred on Jesus

So today I want to ask one question
And I want to make two points
Here's the question
What do you hope in?

And here are the two points:
Hope in the resurrection of Jesus
Hope in your resurrection

Let me ask you
What do you hope in?

Finish this sentence. I hope in.....
Here are some examples of what people hope in our community

I hope in community

The term Utopia was coined in the 1500s by Thomas More in a fictional story
Utopia is a term often used to describe a perfect society
But the term utopia comes from two Greek words
Literally translated as "no place"
And I think deep down we know that Utopia doesn't exist on earth.
Even though we still chase after it
Many people on earth would describe Australia as a bit of a Utopia
But you only have to live in Australia to realise that we are not a perfect society
We don't treat everyone in our community equally
We are often suspicious of our government
We try to get away with as much as we can
Whether that be work or taxes
I expect that in coming months
There will be many people moving out of Melbourne in search of Utopia
Hoping for a better community somewhere else
Only to be disappointed wherever you go.
Because all communities are broken by sin

I hope in the economy

In Australia in recent years, we've been banking on our main export partner China
And one of our major exports has been education services to international students
Both of these sources of export income are seriously under threat
We could always trust in increasing property prices
And the reserve bank could always pull the lever of interest rates
But these things are not always guaranteed to work
All of this under the shadow of a giant government debt
that is fast approaching a trillion dollars

We pin our hopes on superannuation
But all retirees now that you're only one GFC away from financial disaster
Hope in the economy is shaky at best.

I hope in science

Science has delivered many great benefits
Life-saving and life extending medicines and procedures
Research into understanding our impact on the climate
But science is just a tool isn't it
A tool that can be used for great good or great harm
The internet empowers people with information
Yet can manipulate the same people with fake news
Science can develop vaccines and breakthrough drugs
But human greed can deny the distribution of those drugs
The same companies that make MRI machines that save lives
Also make weapons systems that take lives
Hoping in science
Is like putting your hope in a hammer.

But to be honest,
I don't think most of us actually stop and think about what we hope in
We just go about our normal lives
Assuming the things we hope in

We own a board game called
The game of life
And I had a look at the instructions this week
And this is what it says:
Hit the road for a roller coaster life of adventure
Family and unexpected surprises
The wealthiest player wins

You start the game with a little car as your game piece
And the purpose is to travel through the spaces on the board
Which reflect the various achievements of life
College graduation
Getting a career
Getting married
Buying a house
Going on holidays
And then I like this one
Spin for babies
If you spin a 9 or a 10 you get triplets
That simple
And the eventual goal

Is to retire in either Millionaire Mansion or Countryside Acres
You choose
Sounds nice doesn't it?
What's the point of the game

How to win

“Once everyone’s retired, the wealthiest player wins”

You see while we wouldn’t be so crass as to say it like that

I think these are the things most of us put our hope in

The next holiday

The next phone upgrade

Graduation

Starting a new job

Getting married

Paying off a mortgage

And so on

None of these things are bad

In fact they are good gifts from God

But should you put your hope in them?

Here’s the thing

At the end of the game of life

It all goes back in the box

And that’s true of real life as well

It doesn’t matter how much money you made

Or what your achievements were

Where you went on holidays

It all goes back in the box

In Luke chapter 12

Jesus tells the parable of the rich fool who put his hope in his material possessions

After tearing down small barns and building bigger barns and storing them to fill his grain

He was ready for a cushy retirement

Living off his superannuation

Verse 19

And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”²⁰ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

Each of us will be called to account for the lives God gives us

And at that point

It doesn’t matter what things we stored up

What experiences we had

All these things will come to an end in the face of death

Death is the great enemy of the things we put our hope in

And death will come to each one of us.

So let me ask you again

What do you put your hope in?

Are your hopes load-bearing?

When your hopes are tested

Will they pass the crushing weight of death?

Here’s my first point

Hope in the resurrection of Jesus

Earlier this year, I was attending a funeral when I got a message on my phone
My uncle had fallen and was in the hospital in a serious condition
From what we understand
One moment he was washing his car in his retirement village
He had a heart attack, fell
And fractured his skull
Then he died at the Royal Melbourne Hospital the next day

I conducted his funeral in March just before our first lockdown
And I shared from chapter 11 of John's gospel
Mary and Martha were both weeping at the death of their brother Lazarus
Just as my uncle's sisters wept at his funeral.
We are told that Jesus also wept with Mary and Martha
Jesus wept
And we weep because
Death is a terrible enemy
Death closes the door of relationship between you and those you love
As it stands globally, over a million people have died from the corona virus this year
Think of all those grieving communities
Relationships have come to an end
Hopes dashed
But in the game of life
Jesus is the game changer

Jesus made this promise to Martha
John 11 verse 25
Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

With Jesus
Death is not the end.
Jesus is the resurrection
Those who trust in Jesus will live again even after physical death
Jesus is the life
He is life eternal
When you believe in Jesus
You already have a taste of eternal life
You are already seated with Jesus in heaven.
A reality that continues after death
Do you believe this? Jesus asked
Do you believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life?

And to prove his point moments later
Jesus raised Lazarus from death to life.
But this was just a sign pointing to an even greater resurrection
The resurrection of Jesus himself.
Jesus told his disciples he would die for the sin of others
And then God would raise him to new life

And he did it

None of his disciples believed Jesus would rise from the dead
Especially Thomas the Doubter
But in time, the disciples not only believed it
They realized just how important Jesus' resurrection is

In 1 Corinthians 15

The apostle Paul dedicates a whole chapter to the resurrection of Jesus
Verse 17

¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. ²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

The resurrection of Jesus is the key to our hope
If Jesus rose from the dead
Then it proves that the cross worked
That Jesus' death paid the price of our sin against God
And death did not have power of Jesus
The resurrection proves that Jesus' word is true and we can trust him

If Jesus did rise from the dead
Then he is the first fruits
That a whole crop of people who put their faith in him will also rise again
Jesus is the key to our hope of life after death

But if Jesus's didn't rise again then it is an empty hope
Verse 19, our hope and faith is futile
If you've ever played the game Jenga
There is one block that makes the tower fall
Remove that piece and everything collapses
The resurrection of Jesus is that block
Remove it and all hope collapses

Not only the apostle Paul,
Listen to the apostle Peter speak about this hope

1 Peter 1 verse 3

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, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you

The resurrection of Jesus gives us a living hope
That's a great expression isn't it
Born again to a living hope
Knowing Jesus brings us new life filled with hope
A living hope because Jesus is not dead but alive
A hope that points to a future with God that is indestructible.
Notice the confidence with which Peter speaks about Christian hope

And he is speaking to Christians who are experiencing suffering
People who were suffering and dying for being Christians
And Peter is reassuring them that regardless of what happens in this life
The resurrection of Jesus gives believers a guaranteed, secure future
And this hope is not wishful thinking
Because it is anchored in the resurrection of Jesus himself

When Jesus was dying on the cross
Hanging next to Jesus
Was a hardened criminal
And this is what Luke recorded in his gospel

Luke 23 verse 42

⁴²And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." ⁴³And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

That promise is meaningless without the resurrection of Jesus
Jesus made that promise on a Friday
And on the Sunday, the risen Lord Jesus was showing the scars in his hands to Thomas
The resurrection of Jesus matters.
Our hope depends on it

Christian hope is anchored in the resurrection of Jesus
If Jesus rose from the dead, then everything changes.
If death is not the full stop on your life
And there is one who has victory over death
Then it changes everything thing you hope in.

I've attended funerals where people speak of life after death
With a sort of wishful sentiment – I'm sure Grandpa is smiling down on us
I've also heard of people speak of going into nothingness after death – a void of existence
If you are watching today
And you are not certain about what awaits you after death
And you have a vague notion
Maybe a wishful sentiment
You owe it to yourself to figure out what happens after you die
Start with the resurrection of Jesus
I know it's hard to believe in someone rising from the dead
I invite you to come and look at the evidence
Come join our next Christianity Explored course
Make sure for yourself that it's either real or false
Don't face your death with a handful of vague hopes
I've attended funerals of Christians where people speak with confident hope
Why? Because hope anchored in the resurrection of Jesus is confident hope.

Here's my final point

Hope in your resurrection

I want to speak now to those who follow Christ
Because I wonder how much of your hope is anchored in your resurrection.

I'm going to share this line with you

"Don't let the good become the enemy of the best"

Often we get caught up in the good don't we?

I haven't been out of Melbourne all year and I'll be honest

I'm looking forward to a holiday

I'm looking forward to the first swim of summer

To have a barbecue with friends and family

And to watching the cricket on Boxing day

To celebrating my wife's birthday today

All good things.

Good things that can capture my heart

Good things that I can invest my hope in

Good things that I think I am in control over

But in reality all these good things could be swept away in an instant

All it takes is one growing tumour

Or a freak accident

A tiny virus

And you see the trouble with hoping in the good is that it robs you of the best

The best thing is to be raised to new life with my Lord Jesus

No one and nothing can ever take this away from me

Not even death

Thank God for the good things

But put your hope in the best thing

Here's a glimpse into your resurrection.

Isaiah 25 is a prophecy of a wonderful, heavenly banquet

God is the chef

Verse 6

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples

a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,

There is plenty to eat and drink at this party

But that's not the best part

The best part is this

Verse 7

⁷And he will swallow up on this mountain

the covering that is cast over all peoples,

the veil that is spread over all nations.

⁸ He will swallow up death forever;

and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces,

and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth,

for the LORD has spoken.

God will swallow up death

God himself will wipe away our tears.

God will do away with our sin, once and for all

The prophecy of John in Revelation 21 is very similar

Death will be no more
No more grief, tears or pain
Because sin has been dealt with forever
And John describes
The coming together of God's resurrected people and Jesus

As a wedding between a bride and a groom
For those who trust in Jesus Christ
This is what you look forward to at your resurrection
Your own wedding to Jesus
And a wedding reception like no other
Even the best wedding celebrations come to an end
But not this one.

Resurrection hope
Is a hope that will never put us to shame.
The apostle Paul talks about this process in Romans 5

²Through 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. ³Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and 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.

When you come to believe in Jesus
You stand in the grace and peace of God
God is no longer your enemy
But you are also given a hope of sharing in future glory with God
And any suffering you experience, only strengthens that hope
Normally we think that suffering weakens our hope
That's a hope that can only look at what's happening now
But the hope Paul is talking about looks forwards and backwards
Backwards to the cross
Where we know for certain God loves us his enemies
And looks forward because God will not love us any less
He will take us into glory despite our present suffering

The hope of resurrections allows you to grieve properly.

1 Thessalonians 4:13

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

Paul is addressing a fear
Christians had of their brothers and sisters in Christ dying before the return of Jesus
They thought that those who died would be lost forever
But Paul says that those who die trusting Christ are merely asleep
For that is what death is for those in Christ
A sleep that they will rise from
And Paul assures believers that upon the return of Jesus

Those who are asleep and those alive in Christ
Will be caught up together with Jesus on the day of his return.
This is the hope of your resurrection
Eternal life with Jesus
Eternal life with others who trust in Jesus
Where death is not the great enemy but a temporary sleep
Believers grieve with hope not fear

I attended a zoom conference where one of the presenters who was originally from the UK
And he said that in his home country
With so many COVID deaths
You either knew someone who died from the virus
Or you knew someone who knew someone who died from the virus
In Australia, many people don't even know someone who's had the virus
We have been spared the worst of it so far
But the shadow of death is never far away
Italy had low daily infection rates in June and July
They've in the last week to above 40,000 new COVID cases each day
Their daily death rates have been in the hundreds
The enemy of hope is death.
But the enemy of death is Jesus

1 Corinthians 15

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

⁵⁵ "O death, where is your victory?"

O death, where is your sting?"

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

When your hope rests firmly in Jesus
It is not death to die

Listen to the apostle Paul in Philippians 1

²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

When you die in Christ
Death only makes you better.
Death is gain.
Because it is better to be with Christ for all eternity.
Paul didn't have a death wish.
He was just entirely focused on Jesus in life and in death.
And for Paul that meant that because he had no fear of death
He gave his life in the service of others like the Philippians.

You know what our community needs.
People who live fearlessly for the good of others.
You know where you get that kind of courage?
From the hope of resurrection
You see I understand why people have bucket lists

I understand why people are selfish
Because they're running scared
It's a race against the death clock
You see if this life is all there is
Then every second is lost time
A bucket list is effectively a fear list
You have to tick off all the things you want to do in this life
Before you kick the bucket
That is a terrifying way to live
And the pandemic has only set everyone further back on their bucket lists

But those who put their hope in Jesus
Have all the time in the world
Because the best is yet to come
Your wedding with Jesus awaits you
The endless wedding reception with those who love Jesus
No more tears, no more suffering, no more sin and death
You can live this life without fear
For those who follow Jesus
Don't write a bucket list
Write a fearless list
A list of all the people that you will serve fearlessly
The people that you will pray for
The people that you want to share the hope of Jesus with
The places you will go to serve Jesus even though it may be challenging
You see fearless people are not worried for themselves
Fearless people, give their lives for the good of others.
And it is my privilege to know people who live fearlessly
Fearless people who have given up opportunities of marriage to serve Jesus
Fearless people who have left comfortable suburbs to share Jesus in harder places
Fearless people who give away their money generously rather than hoarding it
Fearless people who suffer chronic illness with grace and not grumbling
Fearless people the best is yet to come.

In Christ alone my hope is found.
He is my light, my strength, my song
No guilt in life, no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first breath to final cry
Jesus commands my destiny.