



Hope Has A Name

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

Speaker: Rev. Annie Duncan

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Good morning, BelPres. Good morning. My name is Annie Duncan. I'm the executive pastor here. And as always, it is wonderful to be with you in worship. The scripture passage for today comes from 1 Corinthians 13, verses four through eight.

Love is patient.
Love is kind.
It does not envy.
It does not boast.
It is not proud.
It does not dishonor others.
It is not self-seeking.
It is not easily angered.
It keeps no record of wrongs.
Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth.
It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.
Love never fails.

Well, this fall, we have been journeying together through a sermon series called *Marked by Love*, looking at the most important characteristic of a follower of Jesus, and that is to be marked by his love. And we have read and re-read this passage of scripture from 1 Corinthians because there are so many virtues of love in it. First, it talks about what love is like.

Then it describes what love is not like. And then in verse seven, it has this beautiful cadence, almost like staccato notes, proclaiming what love continually does without limit. Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Another translation puts it this way: Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. And last week, Pastor Scott talked about a love that perseveres and endures all things. And this week, we are going to zero in on hope. What does it look like for love to hope all things? Because on a first pass, we might think that a love that hopes all things sounds kind of naive. I mean, you're going to hope for the best in all things, in all situations, and in every single person? Like, that sounds naive, right? But that's not what Paul's describing here in 1 Corinthians. There's a difference between human hope and this 1 Corinthians kind of hope, which we're going to call biblical hope.

Human hope is tied to circumstances, whereas biblical hope is tied to Jesus. And here's a circumstantial human hope example. Some of you know that I went to Norway last month, and I traveled there with a really good friend of mine, and it had been a trip that we'd been planning for a long time, because early in 2024, National Geographic put out this article that said that 2024 was the year to see the Northern Lights. And then it told you all the places that you should go to see them and the times of the year that you would be guaranteed to see the Northern Lights. So we were crazy with anticipation, and we planned this trip with lots of hope that we would see these beautiful, bright lights. I think you know where this is going.

And while we went to Norway to see the Northern Lights, we mostly saw the Northern Clouds.

We still had fun, but it's a good example of human hope, where we hoped for a certain outcome in a certain circumstance. And I think we all are familiar with this kind of hope. We can maybe think of an example or two. And there's nothing wrong with this kind of human hope. We can have deep-seated hope in really good things.

And human hope is essential to how we live our lives, and it's actually really critical for healthy development. But human hope, it can be a gamble, like flying thousands of miles to Norway to look in the sky and hope to see something. And it's a gamble because the thing that you're hoping for, well, it might go your way, and it might not.

Biblical hope, though, is not a gamble. Biblical hope, when it's tethered to love, that is different.

It goes supernatural. And as Christians, this is our secret sauce. This is our superpower. Author and activist Bryan Stevenson has this great quote about hope, and because he's a follower of Jesus, I have to think that he is talking about biblical hope here. He says, "Injustice prevails where hopelessness persists. Hope is your superpower."

So how do we understand biblical hope? As tangibly as we understand the things that we can think of for human hope, how do we understand this tough theological concept of biblical hope?

Well, what do we know about biblical hope? First, hope has a name. Hope has a name. His name is Jesus. I'm going to say that probably seven more times in this sermon. I encourage you when I do, say it with me. So hope has a name. His name is Jesus.

And Romans 8:34 illustrates this perfectly. "For in this hope, we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all, for who hopes for what they already have?" We were saved in hope. That is past tense. That is something that has already happened. We were saved in hope, in Jesus.

But we remain in hope because we look forward to the ultimate and future hope of Jesus, that he promises us. A theologian explains it this way: "Easter was when hope in person surprised the whole world by coming forward from the future into the present." Hope has a name. His name is Jesus.

During Jesus' ministry and time on Earth, we actually have no record of him using the word "hope." He never said to people, "Gosh, that sucks. I hope you get healed." Or, "Wow, I can't believe you're sleeping with another guy that isn't your husband. You're really in a bind. I hope that works out for you." Or, "Hey, catch you later. I hope you have a good summer."

Jesus didn't say phrases like those, because those are all examples of human hope, which are tied to a desired outcome. But biblical hope that has a name is tied to the love of God.

And Jesus didn't ever have to use the word hope, because in almost every single interaction he had with people, he embodied hope. He showed people how they could place their hope in a love that they had never experienced before, a love that restores and heals and brings wholeness, a love that sees all things and hopes all things, and a love that points them to the more that they have in Jesus. Jesus embodies hope that points us to the love of God. Hope has a name. His name is Jesus.

So second, what do we know about biblical hope? It's something we wait for. From Genesis to Revelation, we see the people of God waiting on God and placing their hope in God. Oftentimes, these hopeful people that we read about, they had zero evidence that things were gonna get better, but they chose hope anyway.

In Psalm 130, the psalmist writes, "I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits. And in his word, I put my hope." The prophet Isaiah writes about the dark, dark days of Israel and how God was hiding his face from his people. And so Isaiah waited on God. In other words, the only hope that Isaiah had during those dark, dark days was hope in God himself.

The psalmist and the prophet, they both illustrate tiny seeds of hope that the people of God had, not bucketfuls, but tiny little nuggets. They looked to their past, saw how God had been faithful, and then pocketed that tiny seed of hope that helped them look to the future with hope while they waited.

I have a friend who lost her firstborn son when he was just 13 days old. And during that season, she felt like God gave her a new name, hope. She still went by her given name, but she heard in prayer God give her a new name. And she had been waiting to be a mom for a long time. And so losing her son, she felt a ton of hopelessness. And so when

God spoke to her in prayer and gave her this new name, hope, you can imagine how significant that was.

This new name of hope, it didn't change her circumstances. In fact, there were harder days to come. And this new name of hope gave her no guarantee that she would someday be a mom. But this hope that she had was stronger and deeper because it was tied to the promises that Jesus was giving her. Jesus promised that he would never leave her, that he would be her comfort, and that he is known suffering too, and would one day do away with it.

In the waiting, the things that we place our human hope in are not promised or guaranteed to work out the way that we want them to. But biblical hope is promised, and we see those secure promises in scripture, like my friend experienced when she was given this new name of hope.

The Bible Project writes about biblical hope in this way: So Christian hope is bold, waiting for humanity and the whole universe to be rescued from evil and death. And some would say it's crazy, and maybe it is. But biblical hope isn't optimism based on the odds. It's a choice to wait for God, to bring about a future that's as surprising as a crucified man raising from the dead. Christian hope looks back to the risen Jesus in order to look forward. And so we wait. And that's what biblical hope is all about.

Did you catch that? Biblical hope looks forward by looking backward. We look back to what Jesus has done for us, and then look ahead to the promises that Jesus has given us, which gives us hope for today and hope for tomorrow.

So, BelPres, have you ever experienced this kind of hope? A hope that chooses to wait on God to bring about what you anticipate?

So back to Norway and those northern clouds. Because my friend and I had traveled so many thousands of miles and were going to be in Norway for 12 days, we were determined to see the northern lights. And though the weather was showing clouds for 12 days straight, we would put on tons of layers at night when the sky was dark, and we would sit outside in the cold and look up at the clouds, and wait for a break in the clouds.

And local Norwegians looked at us looking up at the clouds and thought we were a little crazy because it was just clouds up there, right? And we downloaded apps that told us at what point during the night, the lights would be the brightest, and so we'd go out there and look up at the clouds.

And here's a picture though, when we were there, a pilot was flying into Norway, into the city that we were staying in, and he saw the northern lights. And so this is a picture of that. And so that picture, you can imagine, like that fueled our hope to see the northern lights. They were there. They were just above the clouds.

And so one night, we went on this four-hour boat tour to scout the northern lights, in which all we saw were clouds. And as we were docking the boat back near where we were staying, we continued to wait on the dock and look up at the clouds thinking, they're there. It's just, we gotta wait for a break in the clouds. And then it happened. There was a break in the clouds. You can, production, you could go to the next slide. We saw them. It was not as cool as the picture that I just showed you, right? And this is definitely enhanced by my iPhone. It wasn't as bright as you're seeing now. But we saw them. We were so thrilled and excited that we got to see them while we were there.

I tell you this story because I think it's a really good metaphor for the biblical hope that we have to wait for. As people who follow Jesus, we have hope in what exists beyond our own metaphorical clouds. We believe that Jesus is still at work. We anticipate Jesus' future coming, and sometimes we even catch a glimpse of Jesus' miraculous kingdom in the here and now. And we know that one day, we will experience it completely. Biblical hope is something we wait for.

Which brings us to the last thing that we know about biblical hope. It's a shared and communal hope. Because waiting can be so gosh darn hard, it's integral that we understand this final aspect of biblical hope. Biblical hope isn't individualistic. It is shared and communal. It isn't something that we just keep to ourselves, but it's something that we share with others and point others to when the waiting gets hard.

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul's call for us to love indispensable isn't for our own sake, but it's for the sake of community and Christian community. Paul was convinced that if we could just love and hope this way, that it would bring order to chaos. That if we could just love and hope this way, then the fighting and division among God's people would diminish because our love would be tethered to Jesus. We'd be marked not by our own ambitions or desires, but marked by Jesus' love.

In his book, *Surprised by Hope*, NT. Wright writes about first, the ultimate future hope found in the Christian gospel, the hope that is for salvation, resurrection, and eternal life. And second, Wright writes about the discovery of hope for today in our present world and all the practical ways which hope can come alive for communities and individuals. Our future hope in Jesus generates and sustains the hope that we have for today.

And there's something so powerful about being a part of Christian community. As we follow Jesus together, we break bread together and we share our lives together. And I've heard countless stories from this community here where people have felt supported during hard times. And I know many of us here are facing hopelessness in ways that maybe we never thought we could ever imagine. And there are refugees and immigrants in our community that are facing uncertainty that they were not expecting. And some of you are experiencing the tragedy of an unexpected loss of a spouse. Some of you are facing scary diagnoses. Awful things happen in this life. And following Jesus doesn't shield us from those things.

But in the midst of the good and the hard and everything in between, Jesus calls us to live a life we cannot live apart from Him. And He calls us to live a life we cannot live apart from each other. We need each other. Biblical hope is shared and communal and done together.

In scripture, Jesus makes a lot of promises to us. I will be with you. I will never leave you. You can never be separated from my love. And Jesus also promises that this life won't be easy. In John 16:33, he says, "In this world, you will have trouble." Jesus doesn't say he might have trouble, but he says you will have trouble. That is a promise that Jesus makes to us.

But this verse isn't done. It says, "In this world, you will have trouble, but take heart," says Jesus. "I have overcome the world." Well, Jesus promises that we will face hardship. He also points us to the biblical hope that we have in him, that he has overcome. Because this world is going to give us trouble, we need each other. We need to be reminded of Jesus' promises, that they're for all of us. That's why community is so important, because sometimes the hard that we face gets too hard. And as humans, we forget the hope that we have. And so sometimes we need to hope on one another's behalf and stand in the gap for each other.

In Christian community, our lives are so impacted by Romans 8:39, that there's nothing that we can do to be separated from God's love, that we in turn are filled with the Holy Spirit and hope and love for others.

Now, there are things that our human hope will put its hope in that have expiration dates. Like in two weeks, I really hope that the Huskies beat Oregon. That is tied to a fixed date, right? But biblical hope is fierce and persistent. It has no expiration date. Always hopes is an onward look. And when we love like this and have hope like this, there is nothing that love and hope cannot face. Nothing.

I'll close with this. John 21 is the final chapter of the Gospel of John. And John intentionally closes his Gospel with an interesting story about Peter. John could have ended his Gospel narrative with the climax of Jesus being raised from the dead, but instead he ends his Gospel with the story of a struggling Peter. Peter, as we know, denied Jesus three times before Jesus died. And in John 21, we find Peter struggling, and he says to his friends, to the disciples, he says, "Well, guys, I'm going fishing." And that's one of the saddest and most depressing, hopeless phrases in the Bible. We know that Peter goes on to be an amazing apostle that helps start the early church, but here in the last chapter of the Gospel of John, in John 21, we find him struggling.

Peter has seen the risen Jesus, but he is stuck in a sin spiral for having denied Jesus. So he goes back to what he knows, what he's comfortable with, his old life as a fisherman. And his friends, his disciples, they're with him, and so when Peter says, "Well guys, I'm going

fishing," they say, "Okay, we're coming with you." Even though Peter is having a hard time, his community isn't going to let him go through that hard time alone.

And while they're fishing, Jesus appears to them. And after they get their boat on land, Jesus has a conversation with Peter. Jesus knows that Peter loves him, but Peter, after what he did to Jesus, isn't sure. He's lost hope. He doesn't think that he can get back to what he had before. And this encounter with Jesus reinstates Peter and redirects his course.

Peter had been more focused on circumstantial human hope, and when he failed Jesus, that hope failed him too. But having this encounter with Jesus in John 21, Peter finds access to a different kind of hope, which is why he later writes about Jesus and calls him our living hope.

BelPres, hope has a name. Help me say it. His name is Jesus.

So this week, in the midst of all your human hoping that things might go your way or things that might not go your way, look for the nuggets of Biblical hope that we all share as followers of Jesus. The secure promises of a love that hopes all things. The promises that we share together as brothers and sisters in Christ. And if you aren't sure what those promises are, if you aren't sure where to start, pick a gospel, read through it, and highlight all the promises that you see Jesus make.

And in the month of December, you already heard, we're going to do a Bible reading plan. That's also a great, great opportunity to walk through scripture and look at all the promises that we share together that fuel our Biblical hope.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

So pray with me.

Jesus, we thank you that hope has a name, and that you embody hope for us, for us today and tomorrow and the next day. Jesus, help us be a community that turns to you as our true hope. Help us be a community that shares this hope with those that so desperately need it. And Jesus, help us be a community where our hope is built on nothing less than you, Jesus, and what you did for us on the cross. That hope is secure, and that love will never fail us.

We love you, Jesus, and everybody said together, Amen.

Discussion Questions:

Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.

Opening Question: Looking back to last week's sermon and scripture... How did you live differently or practice what we talked about in your life this week? What did you do and how did it go?

Scripture Reflection Questions: Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- As we read through this same passage again for a third week, are there different things that stand out this week for you?
- What do we learn about God and what do we learn about people as we reflect on this passage?

Sermon Reflection Questions: Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- Human hope is more tied to circumstances, and Biblical hope is tied to Jesus. Compare/contrast both types of hope.
- Another way to translate verse 7 is "love hopes all things." Is this a call to be naïve? Why or why not?
- How have you experienced a love that hopes all things? How have you demonstrated this kind of love and hope to others?

Closing Question and Application: Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

Closing group prayer: Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.