

New Hope Sermon – (pp) The Promise of Hope
Scripture: Romans 15:13

I chose our theme of hope today because the birth of a baby into a loving Christian family is an act of hope for the future. With the care and nurture and modeling Zoe will receive, we are confident she will grow up to become a child and then a woman who will bless God, bless her family, and bless the world. In the cycles of life, that's what gives us older generations hope for God's work in the future.

So, briefly, let's reflect on the role of biblical hope as the Mushambis return to the blessings and challenges ahead of you in South Africa. You will need a steady dose of "overflowing hope," not just to stay the course, but see progress in your fight for equality and justice and freedom for all your people. That same overflowing hope is also needed for all of us in the future we each face.

(pp) There are a series of hymns and two analogies for hope in the scripture. First analogy: hope serves as an anchor for the soul. A couple of hymns come to mind.
"On Christ the solid rock I stand all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand... In every high and stormy gale my anchor holds within the Veil." We will all face high and stormy gales, and we will each shipwreck without Christ's anchor of hope holding us strong.

There is also another old hymn: "Will your anchor hold in the storms of life, When the clouds unfold their wings of strife? When the strong tides lift and the cables strain, Will your anchor drift or firm remain? We have an anchor that keeps the soul steadfast and sure while the billows roll, Fastened to the Rock which cannot move, Grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love."

Second analogy: hope is called the Helmet of our salvation, which means that we need to have our mind shored up with hope to counter balance all the negative thinking that Satan will give, that we give, ourselves, and that the world gives on a daily basis. Hope can keep your spirit strong and positive.

Third, the scripture: Psalm 42 and 43 say that hoping in God is the answer of the soul when one is *disconsolate and disturbed within us (42:5, 43:2), when we feel oppressed by the enemy, when tears are our food day and night (42:3)*. Hope is that answer because:

God IS OUR ROCK

God pours his love into us

God is our Savoir and our guide

God is the light of our countenance, dispelling our dark thoughts

Psalms 62:5 says "Find rest, o my soul, in God alone – my hope comes from Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation."

Lam 3:20-25 says "*My soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning, great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, 'The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him. The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him.'*" Hope can be our daily companion, behind all we think and do and dream when the Lord is our daily portion and we wait on Him.

In today's world, however, it is not enough to just proclaim truth. We want to see it lived out. So the story I bring to our minds is **(pp)** one story of Hope that you Africans know very well: Archbishop Desmond Tutu. In many ways I think he represents the struggles you all face as you return to Africa and the hope you have for peace and justice in your day.

Tutu's rise to international prominence began when he became the first black person to be appointed the Anglican dean of Johannesburg in 1975. Then in 1976 he was appointed Bishop of Lesotho...In 1978 Tutu was selected as the general secretary of the South African Council of Churches,

again becoming the first black citizen appointed to the position...In all these positions he advocated for the end of apartheid and for justice for all people. In 1984 he received the Nobel Peace Prize "not only as a gesture of support to him and to the South African Council of Churches of which he was a leader, but also to all individuals and groups in South Africa who, with their concern for human dignity, fraternity and democracy, incite the admiration of the world," as stated by the award's committee... His receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize transformed South Africa's anti-apartheid movement into a truly international force with deep sympathies all across the globe.

(pp)In 1986 he became the first black person to hold **the** highest position in the South African Anglican Church when he was chosen as the Archbishop of Cape Town. In 1987 he was also named the president of the All Africa Conference of Churches, a position he held until 1997. In 1993 South African apartheid finally came to an end, and in 1994 South Africans elected Nelson Mandela as their first black president. The honor of introducing the new president to the nation fell to the archbishop. President Mandela also appointed Tutu to head the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, tasked with investigating and reporting on the atrocities committed by both sides in the struggle over apartheid." He said: I never doubted that ultimately we were going to be free because ultimately I knew there was no way in which a lie could prevail over the truth, darkness over light, death over life."
(Desmond Tutu Biography Archbishop, Civil Rights Activist, Educator (1931–).

His is a legacy among several who have unwaveringly stood for an end to apartheid and the establishment of a full-blown peace and justice in South Africa. And, if I understand correctly, Hilary and Dambudzo, you go back to **(pp)** work in your generation toward that same messianic vision that Scripture proclaims is coming *when the lion lays down with the lamb*.(Isa. 11:6-7). We want to uphold you in prayer and support you any way we can in that vision.

One final hymn reference on hope: In *O Master Let Me Walk with Thee* verse 4 says "in hope that sends a shining ray far down the future's broadening way, In peace that only thou canst give in thee o master let me live." Hope can *send God's shining ray* to make clear the future path of each member of New Hope, whether they are still in the States or overseas in their home countries. Mushambis, we believe that God's "shining ray of hope" will guide you in your choice of residence and ministry and future study. It's God's hope that can hold your whole family when times get rough and you could get discouraged.

The most powerful prayer for hope I keep going back to again and again is Paul's prayer for the Roman Christians: **(pp)** "*May the God of Hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him so you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*" (NIV)

The New Living Translation says, "I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow (same word) with confident hope (note that adjective) through the power of the Holy Spirit."

The Phillips New Testament translation, "May the God of hope fill you with joy and peace in your faith, that by the power of the Holy Spirit, your whole life and outlook may be radiant with hope."

Radiant with hope – that's our security and our helmet as we each journey forth. Abounding in hope – no matter what is ahead because we can experience God's love poured into our hearts.

May it be so for you dear Dambudzo, Hilary and all the kids. God says you are precious in His eyes, and so do we. Amen.

Dr. M.L. Codman-Wilson, Zoe's baby dedication 5/6/18

