

Luke 7:18-23  
Hope is Dawning

Part of being a pastor is walking into and with people through what seems to be some hopeless situations. Despite tragedy, or life altering news, there are certain situations that are easier than others. Time and time again, I have heard followers of Jesus Christ say after a time of healing, "If I did not have Jesus, I don't know how I could have done it." What are they referring to? They are referring to the hope that Christ gives those who profess faith in Him. You know what they are talking about right? Maybe you have said it either from the inside of the storm or looking from a far at the storm in another families life. We as believers can sing:

*Blesses assurance, Jesus is mine!  
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir  
of salvation, purchase of God, Born of  
His Spirit, washed in His blood.*

*This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Savior all the day long;  
This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Savior all the day long...*  
- Fanny Crosby (1873)

Today, as we turn to Luke 7 I want us to learn the hope that Jesus gives those of us who are His - His Church.

Read Text

2 Truths this morning to show you that Jesus is the Hope of the Church

### **1. Jesus Gives us Unshakable Hope**

During Jesus' teaching in Galilee, he is teaching, healing, and being rejected. All of these events beg the question - "Who is this Jesus?" Chapter 7 deals specifically with this question. The narrative of 7 falls after Jesus' discourse encouraging his followers to build their lives upon the rock and avoid the shifting and unstable sand. Jesus then demonstrates what he is teaching in dramatic fashion by 1) Healing a Centurion's servant with just his word from a distance; 2) Raising a widow's son by calling him back from death to life, again with just his words; and then 3) John the Baptist's disciples come asking who he is; and finally 4) this Jesus being anointed by the oil and tears of a sinful woman whose sins he will forgive.

All of this leaving us who love him asking the same question; though this time, this side of the cruel cross and empty tomb, and with the empowerment of the Spirit, we understand that this Jesus is the Jesus who gives us both a realization and a hope. We wonder with awe and amazement at these two truths being combined in him. When we read of Jesus through Holy Scripture, doesn't it both give us great satisfaction and a great longing? How can both of these things be true? How can both reality and hope be summed up in one person? Or maybe we should say, what kind of individual can contain both fulfillment and longing? The same one who

is both God and Man in one person - Our Lord Jesus Christ who for our sake and our salvation became incarnate. Only in this one who both was and is as well as is to come. Only this Jesus can give us unshakable hope.

As we enter this text we come to John the Baptist at a very dark time in his life. John has been imprisoned, a prison from which he will never be released from. From this jail cell the executioner will collect his head and present it on a platter to satisfy the blood thirsty lusts of the people that he preached against. In this dark moment of John's life, he has a question. Now before we look at this question I think there is a certain aspect of John that we miss here. This is in no doubt a period of doubt for John, but look at the way that his question is asked. It is not a hopeless question. His question is filled with hope, he just wants to know where to place his hope. *Are you the one, or are we to expect another?* John knows that there is more to the prophecies than what he has seen. John has a firm foundation in trusting in God and is not easily swayed by the times even if these times represent John's greatest test of his faith.

From the floor of a prison cell, John can confidently ask Jesus of who he is with the assurance that if he is not the one then he must know someone who is. This reminds us of the way that we find John before his days in the prison, on the banks of the Jordan River baptizing when several came to him and asked him questions of his identity. Remember what John said?

*As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."*

(Luke 3:15-17)

John was expecting this Messiah and doesn't dismiss Jesus but instead is assured that if he is not, he knows who is just like John knew that Jesus was greater than he.

But look at the way that Jesus answers. Before we get to the way that Jesus answers remember that John is the last of the Old Testament Prophets. The message that Jesus is giving John is in essence saying, "If I can do all these things, I am able to save to the uttermost all who draw near to God through me." (Heb. 7:25) In other words, Jesus is calling John back to his own words as a true prophet who when he saw Jesus coming to be baptized raised his hands and said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

To answer John's question, he takes his disciples and says nothing, but does deeds and then explains to them to go and tell. Jesus is teaching the disciples of John in this moment Psalm 34:8-11:

*Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack! The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.*

Jesus is the one who gives the blind back their sight, his light penetrates the deepest darkness. Jesus is the one whose touch can make the lame walk. Jesus is the one whose cleansing power can make the foulest clean. Jesus is the one whose voice can be heard by both the deaf and the dead. Jesus is the one who is the preacher to the poor. The poor are those privileged people who know what it means to hope in God. Jesus said of the poor in 6:20, *Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.* Jesus is reminding John of his privileged position as one who has no hope in this world other than this Jesus that he preached being the one who gives us both hope for the present and a promise of a better tomorrow.

The promise for a better tomorrow begins now! Look at what Jesus final words to John is. *Blessed is the one who is not offended by me.* Hope is put in the present tense. Jesus tells John in his prison cell to keep hoping in him.

## **2. Believing in Jesus Is the Key to Hope**

Because Jesus is this one who is fulfilling the expectation of the prophecies that John spent his whole life studying, we can rest assured that He will be the one who will be coming to fulfill the rest of the prophecies concerning the whole world. But until then, we are people of faith awaiting for what we have heard to become sight.

By the way, how does John believe? Through the testimony of others! Faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ (Rom 10:17). We too believe the testimony of Jesus based upon what others have seen! So until he comes or takes us home, we have a solid rock to stand upon! We are people of hope, Jesus is our hope. He is the author of our faith and he will be the finisher of our faith. Until he comes we patiently wait while trusting in Him with great endurance no matter the fiery trial. We can endure by believing in him, by fixing our eyes on him.

I wonder how will he find you. He is your only hope and has secured and guaranteed your future. Will you be found tripping over him, or will you sing the song with the rest of the church through the ages:

*Perfect submission, all is at rest,  
I in my Savior and happy and blest,  
Watching and waiting, looking above,  
Filled with his goodness, lost in his love.*

*This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Savior all the day long;  
This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Savior all the day long...*