

“Hope. It changes everything!” Isaiah 65:17-25

- ¹⁷ “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth,
and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.
- ¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create;
for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness.
- ¹⁹ I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people;
no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress.
- ²⁰ No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days,
or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a
hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.
- ²¹ They shall build houses and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
- ²² They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat;
for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.
- ²³ They shall not labour in vain or bear children for calamity,
for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD,
and their descendants with them.
- ²⁴ Before they call, I will answer; while they are yet speaking, I will hear.
- ²⁵ The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox,
and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain,” says the LORD.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Today for our meditation we have this elevated poetry from Isaiah the prophet. The vision of the New Creation which the Triune God wanted to reveal to His people, so that they would have a hope like no other.

Hope... does it matter to have something to hope for? What do you think? Sometimes hope is misunderstood as our day-dreaming about something that may or may not happen. No so with Christian hope. Our hope is not something that may or may not come about, our hope is firmly grounded in God’s promises. For He said so!

What is our Christian hope? Do we ponder on it much? Do we delight and meditate on what awaits us? Does it matter in this life at all, or is it just a “pie in the sky” as it is sometimes mocked. Too often even Christians are tricked to hope for too little.

Sure, we all need our daily bread, and we would like this life to go well for us and our loved ones, comfortable, without big worries, but that is not what we call Christian hope. What do you hope for? How would you describe what Christian hope is?

I propose we structure our meditation this way. First, let's briefly consider **why we need hope**? Then, **what is our Christian hope**? Finally, **how does our Christian hope shape our lives** in this age? Why we need hope, what is our hope, and how it shapes our life.

Why do we need hope? Do we need it? We can simply reflect on our own personal experiences. It answers this question. Have you ever been in a situation where you were waiting for something to happen, looking forward to something, but that hope was lost?

How did that make you feel? Most likely it was quite disappointing. Or how would we feel, if there was nothing to look forward to in our lives, nothing to hope for? How would that change our lives today? That may not be a life anymore, but merely an existence.

Hope does give a meaning to our lives, it powers our lives, it enables us to move forward and to accomplish the impossible. A fellow pastor used this example, and I think it is a very helpful illustration on how much having hope changes everything for us. Now.

Imagine two scenarios. First, you are hired for a job. It is not your dream job. It is one of those menial tasks, physically demanding, long hours, quite boring. And you are told that after you have done it for a year, you will get paid – 20,000 dollars.

What will your attitude toward the job be? How happy would you get up in the morning? How motivated? But now imagine the second scenario. Same job. Same period of time. Same long hours, physically demanding, same tedious activity. But...

Your pay will be paid... 20,000,000 dollars. And actually, you get them on your account right now, and at the end of the year, you will have full access to that money. What will your attitude to the job be? How much this arrangement, this hope will help you to overcome any obstacles and challenges? Joyfully singing and humming...

Because of that firm hope. I think it is a helpful illustration. It shows that future hope is not only about the "pie in the sky", it does very practically change everything in our lives; our mood, our attitudes, the way we tackle anything that we face during our journey.

Now, more importantly, what is our Christian hope? Oho! The grandeur and magnificence of our Christian hope corresponds to who our God is, the Creator of all things visible and invisible, the Almighty. Our hope is so great, so glorious that it is not easy to wrap our minds around it.

Our hope is the earthliest hope that there is. How come? Look at the beauty of God's creation, the incredible diversity and abundance of creation, the indescribable splendour of sunsets, majesty of mountain ranges, calm beauty of lakes and rivers...

...playful waterfalls with rainbow arches, enormous oceans swarming with countless colourful creatures, lush forests and meadows filled with the pleasing aroma of countless flowers; it makes our senses rejoice and our hearts sing praises to the Creator.

This world was created good, very good. But now, **“behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness.”**

“Good” and “very good”, these adjectives are insufficient to describe what is coming, what our God has prepared for us. This God’s vision for the age to come delivered through Isaiah is very similar to the one revealed to John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, as we can read it in the book of Revelation chapters 21-22.

Now, one aspect of this vision is that the whole vast creation will be renewed, restored, made even more bountiful and enchanting. But also, all the living creatures will live in wonderful harmony. The cruel laws of the jungle will be gone forever.

“They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain.” There will be no more predators and prey, no more bloodshed, pain and fear, only amazing diversity of living creatures, large and small, fast and funny, grazing together, for us to enjoy and delight in them. Can it get better? Yes, it can!

It is about us. Human beings. God’s chosen people. He will create us **“to be a gladness”**. With our hearts purified, in new resurrected bodies, as glorious, as powerful, as beautiful and capable and perfect as we potentially could be, free of pain, ready to embrace the blessed joys that New Creation presents for us as we begin to reign together with Jesus.

We will be different. We can be quite amazing now, but then, everything that makes us less than our Creator God designed us, it will be gone. We all will have our unique gifts and abilities, but there will be no envy anymore, no more jealousy, no more greed and coveting, nothing that suffocates our hearts and deprives us from deeper joy.

Besides, all the threats and experiences that make our lives less enjoyable here will be gone. There will be no more death, no more loss of loved ones, no more mourning or crying, no more illnesses, suffering and pain. You won’t remember them anymore. And you will be reunited with your loved ones who departed in faith; what a joy that will be!

Can it get any better? Yes, it can! Our dwelling place. It won’t be garden-temple like Eden anymore, as it was in the beginning. It will be this new temple-city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God, where we will dwell together with all God’s saints.

What makes our lives worth living? People in our lives. What makes our lives amazing? Amazing people in our lives. Now, just think about this, what company awaits you; Adam, and Eve, yes, and Noah and Abraham and Sarah, Isaak and Rebecca, and Jacob and Rachel and Lea, Moses and Aron and Miriam.

Naomi and Ruth, Samuel and David and Bathsheba, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, Mathew the tax collector, Mark and Luke the doctor, and John, and Paul and Peter and Mary and Martha and Lazarus, and Martin Luther and Kathy von Bora.

And so, so many others... brightest scientists, Kepler and Pascal, Newton and Faraday, most gifted musicians Mozart, Bach and Beethoven and countless others. And you among them. You will know them all. And they will know you.

They will rejoice seeing you. You will spend time with them fellowshiping, conversing, laughing, feasting. That will be an active and fulfilling life. Our work will bear fruit, we will be able to enjoy it to its fullness in everlasting joy and blessedness.

Can it get any better? O, yes, it actually can! Jesus Christ... He will be among us. Our God will dwell among us in that amazing city-temple, and we will know Him as our God, we will see Him as He is and we will be made like Him. Our hearts will finally be made deep and wide enough to appreciate and receive all the love He pours over us.

Our Triune God makes this temple-city Jerusalem to be His joy. As some Hebrew scholars have suggested, Jerusalem means “a city of Shalom”, a city of complete well-being, where everything is as it is supposed to be.

And what else could we expect, for our God Himself will dwell there, sitting on His cosmic throne of glory, having authority over everything in heavens and on earth, bringing to completion His eternal plan, cosmic restoration and the life everlasting.

For His people, for His beloved children. For you! This is our hope. Firm and unshakable as our God. This, and nothing less. Don't you dare to hope for anything less! For you are heirs of God the Father and co-heirs with His true Son Jesus Christ. Yes, you are!

Now, our third question – **how does this hope change our lives?** O, my... This glorious hope makes our lives here and now incredibly rich, for everything we do in this life, it has eternal meaning. We are eternal beings, and we live and serve other eternal beings. What we do in this life, it does matter. Your life here matters eternally.

It matters how we care for others, with kind words, with helpful hands, with acts of service, with worthy work, for God the Creator Himself cares for everyone. **“For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”** (Matt 5:45) And we are privileged to take part in His care for all His creatures as we journey to our ultimate destination.

And, it also matters greatly how we participate in God's work of new creation. He has entrusted to us the Words of eternal life, the life-giving Gospel, and as we speak them, as we proclaim what God has done in Jesus Christ, as we witness about His grace...

...suffering and victory over death, as we share God's wisdom, as we pray as His royal priests, all of that matters eternally. For what we do, or rather, what our God does through us, it has eternal consequences.

This glorious future hope also helps us through all the challenges, sufferings and injustices of this life, it makes us into people of patience and forgiveness. We know what awaits us. We know that justice will triumph and evil won't have the last word. We can be generous with our grace and leave judgment to whom it belongs, to our Lord Jesus Christ.

This hope helps us to see our lives from the perspective of our eternal home, of that promised New Creation; we can see ourselves as travellers, with every day approaching our ultimate destination. You already belong there even as there is still a way to go and things to do in this life.

Concluding, there is something else about this hope. You don't need to earn this hope. It is not something that you may or may not be found worthy to receive. It is already promised to you. Now it is simply about focusing and holding to that unshakable promise, no matter what.

Everything will change, but the Word of God's promise will remain forever. You know who you are. You are children of God. Already now. And when that hour comes, you will be transformed, you will see Jesus, and you will reign with Him. These words are trustworthy and true, coming from our God Himself, spoken to you.

Remember, Jesus went to prepare a place for you. That is the place. The New Creation, that glorious temple-city. And He will come back for you and take you to live with Him forever in everlasting blessedness. This is our Christian hope. Glorious. Firm.

Unshakable. This hope does change everything. Hope and rejoice, brothers and sisters!

Glory be to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit!

Amen.