



## **An Invitation to Hope: A Summary from my Sermon of 8 March**

From our Lent Sermon Series using Krish Kandiah's Cover to Cover Lent Study Guide, *Living Faith: Invitations from the Cross*

### **Introduction**

Two scriptures were used as a foundation for the sermon: Luke 23:39-43 where one of the criminals on a cross next to Jesus asks to be remembered by Jesus in His kingdom and Paul's letter to the Corinthians where he talks of God as the Father of compassion and comfort; see 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. Paul tells the church that we share in sufferings, just as Christ did, and that it is in a place of trouble that we receive his comfort which enables us to share that comfort with others.

### **What is Hope?**

A child may gain comfort from a blanket, cuddly toy, or the arms of a parent. We think of comfort as being something we receive, whether passive such as in our creature comforts of being warm and cosy or active such as in the actions or words of a friend who provides wise counsel.

The comfort offered by Jesus is greater than these things and so takes more time to understand. When the criminal on the cross asked for Jesus to remember him, what comfort could he expect? He had just confessed that he was suffering the punishment for his crimes and he received no relief from being nailed to a cross and yet Jesus' words in response gave him the exact comfort he needed. Jesus gave him assurance of entering God's kingdom, which Jesus calls paradise.

Three things are notable from this scene. One, the criminal could do no good works to earn his place in God's kingdom (salvation); two, the criminal turned his life over to Jesus, albeit at the end of this criminal had little life left; and three, Jesus responded positively, having the power to grant the ultimate comfort of salvation.

The biblical word used for this type of comfort which is beyond human effort or control is called Hope. I offer you my definition:

**Hope is the delivery of comfort even when the experience is painful, whether physically, mentally or emotionally.**

### **Explanation of Hope**

When writing his invitation to hope, Krish Kandiah used the two scriptures readings noted above to centre Hope in the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> Krish shares an experience where his mentor and Bible teacher later becomes terminally ill with cancer. While receiving treatment to prolong his life that teacher spent his evening visiting the other cancer patients on the ward. He would listen to them and when some of them asked if he was afraid to die, that teacher explained his own hope in Jesus.



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“As a dying man speaking to other dying men, his witness to the Christian faith took on a new level of authority and contagion. In a pretty hopeless situation, his hope shone bright.”<sup>ii</sup>

### **Is it Hope if my circumstances haven't changed?**

**Example 1:** When Jesus was nailed to that cross, he had already asked the Father to make another way available if there was one, despite knowing the plan all along. Humanly speaking Jesus was only able to endure the horrific experiences because he consistently turned to the Father for support. And yet there was worse to come, for it seems there was a moment – just a very short moment, but one that would have felt long, where Jesus cried out, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ (Mk.15:34 NIV)

Nothing was so severe to Jesus as that moment, in the way it appears to us, where he is briefly separated from Father God. And yet, he had just given hope to one of the criminals hanging on another cross.

**Example 2:** Krish's former teacher reminds me of the apostle Paul. He hoped to visit as part of a trip to Spain (Rom.15:24) but it turned out the only way he got to go to Rome was as a prisoner of the Roman governors. He was put on Death Row – but served under house arrest and this is what Luke tells us about it:

For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ – with all boldness and without hindrance! (Acts 28:30-31 NIV)

This form of hope does not deny the experience, and it may not answer your questions and complaints about the experience. However, it was no false hope for Jesus had to take the place of humanity's rejection of Father God to enable this new hope to begin.

It is real hope for it is centred, arrow-like, into the crucifixion and rising of Jesus from the dead. That is why I say Hope is the delivery of comfort even when the experience is painful, whether physically, mentally or emotionally.

### **Hope helps us endure**

Paul spoke of the many sufferings he had and would continue to endure, not because he enjoyed experiences that were painful or tedious, but because this purest form of comfort, hope in Jesus' death and resurrection, is a hope that teaches us to endure.

As one phrase puts it, it is to 'play the long game'. It is to know that whatever our trials are today, remember that Jesus is intimate with suffering, and his spirit is alongside us as we too endure.



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Paul gives a reason for hope that is beyond our receipt of it, 'so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.' (2Cor.1:4 NIV).

Hope was not created to be kept to oneself but to be shared. One of the toughest challenges is to think that we are alone. Sometimes we want to prove that to ourselves, often without realising it, and we isolate ourselves.

Even if we have some notion that is what we are doing, we can justify it to ourselves in all sorts of unhelpful ways, for example because we are embarrassed by the circumstances or we cannot see a way out of blaming ourselves.

Sharing Hope helps break the barriers of isolationism. It provides comfort to both the giver and receiver. Again, it does not deny the experience but voices it and looks to Jesus as the only one who can bring comfort. For the third and final time in this sermon I'll share again my definition of the Hope Jesus brings,

**Hope is the delivery of comfort even when the experience is painful, whether physically, mentally or emotionally.**

Since writing and delivering this sermon my colleague, Robson Lopes happened to share with me his thought. I think it is helpful for us in this context so have added it here:

Referencing the apostle Paul's words 'our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.' (Romans 8:18 NIV), Robson says,

He does not minimise pain; he measures it against something greater. When suffering is viewed in isolation, it can feel overwhelming and final. When placed beside the promise of resurrection glory, it is revealed as temporary and purposeful. This perspective does not make hardship pleasant, but it does make it meaningful. The resurrection assures us that suffering will never have the final word. Pain may occupy a chapter, but it does not write the conclusion.<sup>iii</sup>

Pause just a moment to think about the things you have struggled with... do you hang on to those, feeling burdened by them?

... or are you able to begin re-framing those experiences as opportunities to give hope to others who have or are experiencing something similar?



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Try sharing how your hope in Jesus is has helped or is helping you though a difficult situation.

Here again the essence of Apostle Paul's teaching:

If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation

If we are comforted, it is for your comfort which produces in you patient endurance

Our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

### **Blessing:**

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom.15:13 NIV)

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<sup>i</sup> Krish Kandiah, *Living Faith: Invitations from the Cross*, Cover to Cover Lent Study Guide (Farnham: CWR, 2017), pp.28-31.

<sup>ii</sup> Kandiah, p.30.

<sup>iii</sup> Robson Lopes, chapter 1 in, *Between the Two Mornings* (London: self-published, 2026).