

# Coach House Church

# BEACONS

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## HOPE AGAINST OUR INSTINCTS

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It's popular to hear that Christianity is an escape from reality. Basically, you have a hope that you'll get to heaven when you die, and that's a pretty nice deal, and in the meantime you can eke out a smile, tolerate your neighbours and cope with the messiness of work, relationships and family while you're alive on the earth. Obviously, that kind of hope is for later. Yet, we can't mistake that when Jesus prayed that: "This is eternal life that they might know him" in John 17:3 he was talking about a relationship that wasn't a conceptual future hope, but one we can taste and experience the reality of now.

Fast forward to what your reality might look like now: perhaps you live like this and you're doing pretty well. The kids are behaving, marriage is blissful, work is on the up and those bad habits are all in the check – you know, the ones you've really worried about in the past. Perhaps it all looks good. In other words, the structures and circumstances of life allow you to live peaceably, nicely, freely. If that is you, then thank God! It is wonderful when life is not crushing or overwhelming, and God rejoices when you experience good things, and when good things happen. For it does say in James that all good things come from above, our father of lights. (James 1:17)

Perhaps, on the other hand, life is the opposite. The kids are a riot, marriage is rocky and work is utterly unstable. In the midst of that, you find that those vices and bad habits are coming back to haunt you – outbursts of anger, lust, greed, pettiness, divisiveness and anything else that haunts you when things aren't going well. I find that when reality does not fit what I want it to be, I look for an escape, for something that will sand the rough edges off reality.

After all, what if the circumstances around me do not go well? What if I lose my job and remain without one for a long period of time. What if I slip into irresolvable

depression which is impervious to anything I throw at it? What if my vices become completely out of control and start to ruin my life?

Jesus gives us a hope that is for now and the future. He says: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4) That is our reality. That even though we might struggle with the weight of our problems and circumstances, our fight against sin, Jesus still says 2 things that we need to take away for our daily lives.

**1)** As Christians and believers of God, we are blessed, he doesn't say we will be blessed in some vague distant future, he doesn't say we have to perform in order to be blessed. We are blessed. It's a Fact. Even in the darkest times, when we feel far from God, when everything is out of order, when our circumstances are choking our perception of who God is.

To be blessed is simply translated from the Greek to mean happy or content. At first glance, it looks like a contradiction.

**2)** This leads me onto the second point. Jesus then says that those mourn will be comforted. That is a definitive statement. That is a promise from God. There has been not a single time in the History of the Universe in which God broke his promise. Our hope in God is not vague, it's based on his faithfulness and his promises which he declares over us in this sermon on the mount in Matthew 5. We can be happy now because Jesus says with this example, that God sees our suffering and our struggle, God knows it, and he recognises it, that's why Jesus is addressing it, if God was not aware of your situation Jesus would be silent, but God knows what you're going through and acknowledges it, with this he shows that he sees us and is with us in our mourning and in our pain. Furthermore, we shall be comforted refers to not only now but also to the promise that whatever is happening now on earth, there will be a day in which everything will be realigned to the perfect reality of his kingdom. We are blessed even though we are in the middle of the storm. He is with us he is in the boat.

### **So how do we live this out?**

We trust Jesus' words. Every time our lives are full of struggles and disappointment, we are trusting in what God's word says and we do not waver in it. We encounter a brilliant example of this in Romans 4:18-21 where Abraham continues to trust God that he will be blessed with a child even at a 100 years old.

God is able to act to bring about his purposes even when circumstances seem hopeless.

We continue to hope and praise him. Regardless of our circumstances, because our circumstances do not change who he is or what he promised.

We need to orient minds towards reality as God describes it, and his description is correct. This often runs counter to our feelings, so we need to continually remember who God is and, with his help, choose to believe it. Colossians 3:2 describes this process "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" – it is a choice we make not to let our feelings about reality prevail. And this is hard!

**Questions for you to ponder:**

How often do I allow my present circumstances and disappointments shape my view of God?

How often do I remind myself of my hope that is in Christ?

How much time do I spend learning more about what he promises and what he says about me?

Finally, I encourage you to read Romans 8, which goes into detail about the hope that we can have because of Jesus, and what he has done for us.



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