

HOPE-FULL

WE CAN'T WAIT: Living Now Toward Then (Week 3)

1 Corinthians 15:58

OPEN

This past weekend we celebrated Martin Luther King Day along with all the work, labor, love, and initiative he took in a dream. Because we come from a variety of backgrounds, generations, and experiences, we approach this day differently. As you answer this question, listen to one another and be sensitive to each one's response.

- What does Martin Luther King Jr. Day mean to you?

Defining Hope

As we lean more into the nature of HOPE, let us remember the truth of Christian hope:

Christian hope is the abiding peace and forward-leaning energy that comes from living in the presence, power, and plans of a God of REDEMPTION and resurrection.

Redemption is powerful theme in the Old and New Testament. *Redemption literally means to buy back in order to build up.* We quickly translate this meaning to the work of Christ on the cross—God buying us back so we can be forgiven and have the hope of life with him. This is absolutely true. But...is that the only picture of what redemption looks like with Jesus? What about in our world today? Read the quote below from the weekend sermon and discuss how redemption intersects these ideas.

These redemptive themes continue in the practice and teaching of Jesus in the New Testament. Jesus labors long hours to heal the sick and open the eyes of the blind. He feeds the hungry and takes note of the invisible and forgotten in the crowd. Jesus champions the cause of children, women, and outcasts. He crosses religious and social fences to establish redemptive relationships with lepers and adulterers, Samaritans and Gentiles, hated soldiers and despised tax-collectors. Christ tells his followers that God will assess their heart on whether it beat like his heart with a passion to bring HOPE to the least and last of society. He forgives his enemies even as they crucify him. And in dying on that cross, Jesus pays the supreme price to

*buy humanity back out of its bondage to sin and death. Why? So that WE might be free and able to flourish.*¹

What does Jesus charge his followers to do in John 20:21?

- Brainstorm what the work of Jesus *could* look like today in our ordinary lives.

What encouragement do you find from 1 Corinthians 15:58 when it comes to partnering in God's redemptive work in our world and in the lives of people?

- What does the "Therefore" refer to in this verse?

DISCUSS

Read and discuss this quote from N.T. Wright in *Surprised by Hope*:

"There are two extremes toward which Christian people" have tended to slide over the years. On the one side are "those who declare that... the single main Christian task is to build the kingdom here on earth through social, political, and cultural revolution. Alas, this social gospel has singularly failed to deliver the goods... An enormous amount of good has been done: social conditions have been improved vastly... But we are still a fragmented, frightened, and battered world." We have failed to help enough people deal with the root illness of sin that will always wreck our social projects until people come to the feet of Christ.

"At the other end of the scale are those who declare that nothing can be done until the Lord returns and everything is put to rights. The forces of evil are too entrenched, and nothing save a great apocalyptic moment of divine power can address them or change the deep structures of the way things are... We [should] get on, such a view says, with the real business of the gospel, which is that of saving souls for the future world. We will do... Band-Aid activities, to look after the people at the bottom of the pile. But we won't do anything about the structures that put them there and keep them there..."

"Neither of these views begins to do justice—in any sense—to Paul's injunction to be steadfast and immovable in doing the work of the Lord because in the Lord our labor is not in vain... When we reintegrate what should never have been separated—the kingdom-inaugurating public work of Jesus and his redemptive death and resurrection—we find that the gospels tell a different story... It is the story of God's kingdom being launched on earth as in heaven, generating a new state of affairs in which the power of evil has been decisively defeated, the new creation has been decisively launched, and Jesus's followers have been

¹ Dan Meyer, January 15, 2017 Sermon, *We Can't Wait*.

commissioned and equipped to put that victory and that inaugurated new world into practice now."

As you close your group, interact with these discussion questions posed at the close of the weekend messages this past week. If you run short on time, commit these questions to personal thought this coming week.

1. **REVIEW:** Where do you see our society living badly out of sync with the life of the kingdom of heaven?
2. **RETHINK:** What steps can we take to educate ourselves further about one of the most glaring issues?
3. **RESOURCE:** And, finally, Why are we waiting to be the agents of hope, Christ has commissioned us to be?

NEXT STEPS

- Reflect on the nature and relationship between hope and redemption from this study.
- Watch your life this week as you consider being an agent of redemption (John 20:21) for the sake of others.