



# Sermon Growth Guide

September 20, 2020

## The Beautiful Story - Beautiful Hope

### Isaiah 51:1-8

**Key Verse:** Isaiah 51:5

“My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations. The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm.”

**Big Idea:** Hope expects what faith believes.

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## Foundations

Welcome to week six of *The Beautiful Story*.

“Hope is the thing with feathers / That perches in the soul,” pens Emily Dickinson, “And sings the tune without the words / And never stops—at all.”

Christian Hope makes the heart sing. The hope of the believer is anchored in the very resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus was foretold for centuries and He was foretelling during His ministry. He spoke of His sacrifice on the cross and of the inauguration of the Kingdom of God in the here and now, eternal freedom for all who believe.

The believer is “imprisoned” by the hope of the gospel. “I’m not optimistic, no. I’m quite different. I’m hopeful. I am a prisoner of hope,” proclaims South African human rights activists Desmond Tutu. That’s how real hope feels. It won’t let us go. Hope keeps our heads above water and our bodies afloat.

This week we study and grow through God’s prophetic pronouncement through the prophet Isaiah about a day coming when “the arm of the Lord” will save the peoples of the earth.

Open and close your time of further study and application in prayer. Ask the Spirit of God to guide and guard your

time in His Word.

## Understanding God’s Word

What hope-filled future is painted in verse 3?

The word “my” is employed nine times across verses 4–6. Host a discussion on this emphatic proclamation. What’s going on here?

In verse 7, what is the believer charged not to fear? Instead, what ought the believer do?

## Applying God’s Word

This week we learn that hope is a source of strength for the child of God. Hope expects what faith believes.

How can you apply the hope of the resurrection to your life this week? How might the ways in which you treat others be directed by your heart being further planted in the hope of the gospel?

## Witnessing God’s Word

Think of one person who is unfamiliar with Christian Hope. Take a moment to close your time by praying for that person. Discern an action step you can

I'm reading a book about Winston Churchill. One way to deal with stress in a year like 2020 is to get yourself into another period of history for a minute and gain some perspective. Colorado Springs in 2020? Pretty Rocky. But London in 1940? In 1940, Hitler's strategy was to overwhelm Europe with a wave of violent force, blitzkrieg, so that England surrendered without a fight. It almost worked, but then "Herr Churchill," as Hitler called him, became Prime Minister in May, rescued the British Expeditionary Force from France as it fell, began to ramp up the Royal Air Force and called a special meeting of Parliament where he declared, "We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender." The Queen requested to be trained on firing a pistol saying famously, "I shan't go down like the others." The wave of Nazi advance crashed against the firm resolve of British resistance. I don't share all that to glorify warfare, or just to share my excellent Winston Churchill impersonation, but to point out—what Churchill did was give people hope. It turned the tides of war. Hope can make a difference. Hope can change everything. Hope is a beautiful thing.

As we continue to struggle through this year of COVID-19 and all the various challenges, don't lose hope! Hope is expecting a good end, optimistic expectation, a cherished anticipation of a good future. Hopelessness gives up. Hopelessness drains energy. Bryan Stevenson, the author of *Just Mercy* and founder of the Equal Justice Initiative said, "hopelessness is the enemy of justice ... injustice prevails where hopelessness persists. And so, hope is our requirement, it's our superpower." You can't lose hope. We can get through this hardship. We can live into a brighter future. We can imagine a Colorado Springs and a First Pres of Colorado Springs thriving and rising to

heights of vitality, diversity, relevance, faithfulness and outreach that we have never seen before. We never lose hope. We are, after all, resurrection people. If the Lord died and rose again, there is no basis for losing hope. Hope is more than optimism. Desmond Tutu said, "I'm not optimistic, no. I'm quite different. I'm hopeful. I am a prisoner of hope." Because, he said, Christ has risen from the dead. Today let's talk about a **Beautiful Hope**.



In every story—and we are talking about **The Beautiful Story**, the greatest story ever told—in every good story the hero faces a challenge, a conflict, and you are left to wonder if they will carry on or give it up. What is needed in that moment is hope. A beautiful God made a beautiful world with beautiful people in it, and all that beauty is threatened by the ravages of sin. But God, last week we saw, made a beautiful promise—a covenant—with Abraham. Things will be repaired and restored. Now we watch and we wait. Over time we lose confidence. Over time we face disease, we struggle to love one another, we meet wars and famines and plagues and horrors, and we start to wonder, where did this beautiful promise go? God sends hope. Beautiful hope.

I'm using Isaiah as a stand-in for all the Prophets. God sent hope through the prophets. Over and over again, they offer beautiful, powerful visions of the preferred future. Pictures that capture our hearts and nurture our cherished anticipation of a good future. We don't have to roll over and give up to the forces of darkness and destruction. We don't have to start polishing up our German and swastika cross-stitching skills. God gives us a different vision of the future. A vision we can cherish anticipating. A future we can hold out for, and plod on toward, and take just one more step, just one more day, and

never, never, never give up. It gives us hope. In Christian terms, biblical terms, Hope expects what Faith believes.

“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn” (Isaiah 51:1). Sometimes the greatest encouragement we can receive is when we look back down the road, through the rearview mirror. We might see something that gives us hope. God was faithful then. We made it through then. We found strength then. We had hope. Look to the rock from which you were cut. “Look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was only one man, and I blessed him and made him many” (Isaiah 51:2). Look to Abraham and Sarah. Together they walked through the challenges. They made it through the rough patches. They made mistakes and did bold things and carried on, and God was gracious to them. Look there. The past makes a difference to the present, and it points us into the future: “The Lord will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing” (Isaiah 51:3). The Lord will surely. That’s future. That’s future hope. Investment firms like to say, “past performance is not a guarantee of future profits.” Well, with God, God is consistent and true, faithful and unwavering. Past performance is a guarantee of future results. The Lord will surely.

Then comes an important point. The most important, really. Isaiah reveals that God is personally, intimately, passionately involved in this endeavor. In the next three verses, the word “my” is

used nine times. “Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: Instruction will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations. My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations. The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail” (Isaiah 51:4-6). My people. My nation. My righteousness. My justice. My salvation. My arm. My, my, my! God is involved. It’s personal. When God is involved, we have hope.

In the great story, there are also villains. There are opponents. There are discouragers. “Hear me, you who know what is right, you people who have taken my instruction to heart: Do not fear the reproach of mere mortals or be terrified by their insults. For the moth will eat them up like a garment; the worm will devour them like wool. But my righteousness will last forever, my salvation through all generations” (Isaiah 51:7-8). Don’t let the insults touch you. Why worry so much about something that won’t last? The moths will eat that stuff up. Don’t let anyone throw shade on your hope. You know the reason for the hope that is within you. You know the ground of your confidence and peace. You know why you smile and lift your head. Christ has risen from the grave! You know the basis for your cherished anticipation of the future. God’s promises are assured. Christ is risen. You

have received the Holy Spirit, a seal and guarantor. Don’t apologize for your hope, and don’t let anyone throw shade on your light of hope—it is the light of the risen Lord Jesus Christ.



Now, Hope expects what Faith believes. What do we mean by that? The ground of hope. It isn't just optimism. Like Desmond Tutu said, I'm not an optimist. I'm a prisoner of hope. I don't just see the glass half full, I am constrained, I'm a prisoner, I belong to, a sure and certain vision of the future good God has coming. Hope expects what faith believes. "Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn" (Isaiah 51:1). What is that rock? It's faith. Abraham, remember, had faith. "Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). Faith is the rock in this instance. Just like in Matthew 16 when Peter made his confession of faith, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," and Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matthew 16:17-18). We will never surrender! But the rock isn't Peter himself. He's still a little shaky to build a church on. We men and women are all too shaky to build a church on. But it's the confession of faith in Jesus—that's the solid rock. That's the firm foundation. Jesus Christ, Messiah, Son of the Living God, and the power to believe in Him granted by the Holy Spirit. That's the rock. The rock is this belief, this faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

Hope expects what Faith believes. Faith, it believes. But when the waves come, when the storms blow in, when time passes and the cherished future vision has still not been realized, what will keep us moving forward? Hope. John Calvin said it best: "Hope is nothing more than the expectation of those things which faith previously believes to have been truly promised by God. Thus, faith believes that God is true; hope expects that in due season he will manifest his truth. Faith believes that he is our Father; hope

expects that he will always act the part of a Father towards us. Faith believes that eternal life has been given to us; hope expects that it will one day be revealed. Faith is the foundation on which hope rests; hope nourishes and sustains faith. For as no man can expect anything from God without previously believing his promises, so, on the other hand, the weakness of our faith, which might grow weary and fall away, must be supported and cherished by patient hope and expectation." Hope expects what Faith believes and helps us carry on.

When you are at the end of the rope, when you are just about to give up, you can find beautiful hope from God. Like a ray of sunshine through the cloud. Like a bird landing nearby that seems to say, you're not alone. For me, I remember so many times I have been traveling and looked up to see Orion, that constellation, in the night sky. It's something God seems to use to just encourage me, remind me I'm not alone. Hope. It's beautiful. We hope in a Lord who is involved, personally. My people. My nation. My righteousness. My salvation. My arm. My own arm. My arm. That's not the only place Isaiah talks about the arm of the Lord. "He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm achieved salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him" (Isaiah 59:16). His own arm. The beginning of Isaiah 53, a chapter we call the song of the suffering Servant, it starts like this: "Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" (Isaiah 53:1). To whom has it been revealed? The arm of the Lord is Jesus. He achieved salvation, He brought righteousness, He brings justice. Jesus. The arm of the Lord. In Him we believe and by His own strength He establishes beautiful hope.

