



Sermon Transcription • Abbotsford

November 11/12 2017 - Greg Harris

Hope in Suffering Part 1: Glory is Coming - (Romans 8:18-27)

[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

As has been mentioned already, yesterday was Remembrance Day. A Canadian soldier, and a doctor, whose name was Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, in December 8, 1915 he wrote, these now famous words for Canadians:

"In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place: and in the sky
The larks still bravely singing fly
scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead: Short days ago,
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved: and now we lie
In Flanders fields."

A friend of mine, who works at Columbia Bible College down the road, his named Dave Warkentin, and he wrote these words:

"Central to how I remember as a Christian is lament - lament that war blasts us with the reality of the world as it shouldn't be. As we honour the sacrifice of veterans, we mourn the fact that such a practice even exists."

The human experience is one of suffering, and the Christian life is one of suffering. So, by God's providence, with all of the things going on in our culture and in our calendar and in our city - by God's providence, we are studying Romans 8. We are going to be looking at verses 8-27 and here is the one big idea I want us to have in our mind as we are looking at this text. The big idea is this: We can have hope in the midst of suffering because glory is coming. We can have hope in the midst of suffering because glory is coming. So, let's read our passage and then we'll study it in a bit more detail. Romans 8 starting in verse 18, says this:

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be



revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God."

This is God's word to us. So our big idea is that we can have hope in the midst of suffering because glory is coming and with the rest of our time we are going to be thinking through those three big words. We are going to be thinking through what glory is, what suffering is, and what hope is. We are going to see how this passage talks about glory, suffering, and hope. So first let's look at "glory".

[Glory]

What do we mean when we say that "Glory is coming," that "Glory awaits"? Romans 8:18,

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us... [And in verse 23, Paul says,] Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies."

So, Paul is saying that the glory that awaits us is that something that will be revealed in us and, namely, that our bodies themselves will receive redemption, that they'll be resurrected. Our future glory will include redeemed, resurrected bodies. So, now the question is, what does that mean? What is that going to look like? Well, we have a great little preview of what the resurrected body of the believer in Jesus looks like in Luke 24. So, in Luke 24 what's happening is Jesus has lived his life and his ministry, he's died on the cross for the sins of humanity, and he's risen again from the grave, but the disciples don't all know, yet, that he is risen from the grave. So, they are all very dejected and depressed and upset because they think that Jesus is still dead. There are two disciples in particular who are travelling on a road to Emmaus and they are talking and they're grieving and they're sorrowing over the loss of Jesus. He appears out of nowhere and joins them on the road and is asking what they are talking about. They say, "We're talking about Jesus, who we all thought was the Messiah." And Jesus, the resurrected Jesus, who they don't recognize yet, tells them, "Well, the Messiah was supposed to die and rise again." And he starts explaining all of scripture to them saying how it points to this ministry of the Messiah who would die and rise again for the salvation of the world and they don't recognize him still. Eventually, he starts eating a meal with them and it says their eyes were opened to see that this was Jesus. As they are debriefing this amazing experience, they rush off



to go tell the eleven apostles, who haven't seen the resurrected Jesus yet, and they go to the apostles. Luke 24:36-42,

“While they were still talking about this, [their experience with Jesus on the road to Emmaus] Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. [As you would if you saw Jesus, who you thought was dead.] He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.’ When he had said this, he showed to them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, ‘Do you have anything here to eat?’ They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.”

See, the resurrected Jesus is a picture, a preview, of what the resurrected state will be like for all believers in Jesus. He is recognizable as being the same person he was before the resurrection. He'll say, “Look, it's me. It's not a different person. It's me.” The resurrected believer is going to be the same as you are today, just perfect. But, it's the same you that's resurrected. And it's not like you're this translucent ghost going “Wooo,” you're like flesh and bones, man. You can touch people and hug them and they can feel your hands. You can see your physical body. You can talk with people. You can eat fish, hopefully things besides fish. You can eat. You can talk. You can touch. It's life. It's your body - just perfect. But, it's not just our bodies that will be resurrected in the glory yet to come. This passage tells us that it's actually creation itself will be renewed. Romans 8 starting verse 19,

“For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed [to have their resurrected bodies]. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, [creation didn't do anything wrong] but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”

Here's what Paul's saying: In the same way that the same people receive a resurrected, renewed, redeemed state, creation itself will receive that same kind of glory - it will be renewed, it will be resurrected, it will be redeemed. Same creation, just perfect. See, this world's not going anywhere. We're not spending an eternity on the clouds in Heaven. We are spending an eternity on a renewed, redeemed, resurrected earth. You need to think about that for a second because you look at Mount Baker when the snow just fell on it and the sun comes up in the morning and you see the majesty of those mountains and you think, “That's breathtaking.” But, you haven't seen anything yet. See, that's Baker in it's state of being bound to decay, but Baker will be redeemed, it will be renewed. Mountains will be more glorious. Trees will stand stronger. Rivers will rush faster. Lions and lambs, the Scriptures tell us, will be able to lie down beside each other without any harm because everything is functioning the way it should in the created order. You might even be able to have a pet dog and not have an allergic reaction [laughter] because all aspects of creation will be renewed and redeemed. It will be just like now, but perfect. It's not just that we'll have new bodies and living on a new earth that's perfect,



but we're actually going to have stuff to do. It says in Romans 8 that we're going to be heirs with Christ. Romans 8:16-17 says,

“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ...”

Here’s what Paul is saying: Look, if part of our salvation is an adoption into the family of God, then what that means is we are now part of God’s family to the extent that we are heirs of His family. What God owns, we are heirs to. So, in the ancient world, if you were the heir of your dad’s business—let’s say your dad had a business of metal fabrication, and his big job was to make little metal statues of anything that people wanted but, let’s say, he mostly made little statues of the Caesar of Rome at the time of the empire. So, he has this metal fabrication business. You, as his son or daughter, are an heir to his business. So, when your father passes away, you now, as the heir, receive all of the wealth and rewards that come with the business, but also all of the work and all of the responsibility. That’s what it means to be an heir. It means you inherit what’s been given to you. See, to be an heir of God and a co-heir with Christ means that there will be not just an eternal reward - there will be - but there’s also going to be an eternal responsibility, to be rulers and stewards over the newly redeemed, recreated creation. This job status, this job description, of being a ruler and steward over the created world isn’t actually a new job description for humanity, it’s actually the original job description of humanity. Genesis 1 in verse 26, when it is describing the creation of humanity, it says this,

“Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, [well, what does that mean? To be made in the image of God?] so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’ Then God said, ‘I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.’ And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good...”

See, sometimes we wonder to ourselves, “What does it mean to be made in the image of God?”. Well, that’s a great topic for you to consider, but, from this text, one of the primary things that it means to be made in the image of God is that it means that humanity is to be rulers over the created order. We are to be the ones who have stewardship and control and to use the created order in ways that are going to be good for creation and bring glory to God. That’s what it means to be an image bearer is to be a ruler over the created order. What it means to be an heir is to be a ruler over what you’ve been given stewardship of.



So, here's what I want us to see: Our future - in our resurrected bodies, in a resurrected creation - is going to be very busy, but it's going to be glorious. See, work is not part of the fall. We were made to work, it's just that the fall frustrated our work. We were made to farm, we just weren't meant to deal with the thorns. So, in the new creation, in the new glory that is yet to come, our future is going to be busy taking care of all areas of life and society. As heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, we will be in charge of ruling the arts and the academics and agriculture and architecture and athletics and every area of life in society, we will be in charge of ruling over and stewarding for the glory of God - in our perfect bodies, in a perfect world, forever. It will be life, just perfect. See, when I was young I didn't want to go to Heaven, I dreaded it. It seemed really boring to me. I liked my friends. I liked video games. I liked movies. I liked playing street hockey. I liked doing all kinds of... I liked eating lots of good food. I liked pizza. I liked hotdogs. I liked everything that life had to give me in terms of the joys of life and I didn't want to go to Heaven where I'd just be like, "Blah. I don't know. What do you even do? Just not be dead?" But, look, the picture of Heaven is one of life, life that we know, but life perfected and to the full, for an eternity. If this is true, that our eternal state is life, but life perfect and to the full, then what that means is that bucket lists don't make a lot of sense in Christianity. Here's why: If we live our whole lives as Christians to make money, to save money, so we can spend it on a really nice car or go on a really nice vacation because we have to get the most out of this life now, we don't really understand our future hope. See, if you're going to spend all of your money travelling now, you could wait and travel to New Zealand in the new creation and it will be better. So, just from a straight stewardship perspective, you could save your money and spend it on some other things. We'll get to enjoy other cultures. We'll get to eat good food. Look, I'm not saying there is anything wrong with a vacation or buying a car that you want, that's not what I'm saying. What I am saying is, if we live our life with the perspective that I have to drip everything out of this life now for my personal joy, we miss the point of Christianity. Our life now is to be a blessing to others, to get the gospel out, so people have hope in the midst of a broken world, so that they have a hope of the glory that is yet to come where they will get to enjoy life to the full, perfectly. You'll get to travel. You'll get to eat in Nepal. You'll get to do all the things that you want to do, it will just be perfect. It will be better. It will be life, just to the full. There's going to be feasts without fasting. There's going to be friendships without fights. There is going to be joy without jealousy. It's going to be life, perfectly. Perfect life. See, we can have hope in the midst of suffering because glory is coming.

[Suffering]

But, secondly, let's think a little bit about our state now, which is suffering. Paul writes in Romans 8:18,

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time."

See, the human experience, and life as we know it, is one of suffering. The Christian life is one of suffering. Earlier in Romans 8, Paul wrote in verse 16-18, he says,



“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”

See, the normal Christian life is one of suffering. We should expect it. Christianity is not a happy, clappy, naive world view. It’s not walking through life saying, “Everything’s great and awesome and all of life is a blessing. Isn’t everything amazing?” No, Christianity is a worldview that knows that the world that we live in now is not as it should be. We know it’s broken. We know it’s broken because we see things like what happened last week in a really small town in Texas called Sutherland Springs where this small town of about 500 people had a church of about 50-60 people. A gunman comes in and kills 26 of the people. The building is beyond repair and the church is completely shook by the horrific events that took place. We think to ourselves, when we hear that news, “Man, it shouldn’t be like that.” But we also think to ourselves, “I’m not that surprised.” Like, you were horrified when you heard the news, but were you surprised? Probably not because you know suffering is just part of what happens in life. It shouldn’t be that way, but it is. You know because of your cancer diagnosis. You know because you lost your spouse. You know because you live with a debilitating disease or a degenerative disease or your loved ones do. You know that suffering is the experience of your life and suffering doesn’t care how old you are. It doesn’t look at the birth certificate and ask how old you are.

This past week, my wife and I were at children’s hospital. Every year... when my son was younger, he had some health issues and he still has some developmental issues, but we go back yearly for some yearly doctor trips to check in with some neurologists and other people. We’re walking through the newly built, renovated, BC Children’s Hospital and I’m like, “This place is awesome!” And then my next thought is, “It’s horrific that we need it.” Because suffering doesn’t ask how old you are. It will come. It’s the normal part of the human experience. It’s the normal part of the Christian life; like being bullied in school. Not being invited to the parties. Not having people come to the party that you hosted. Suffering doesn’t care how old you are, it just comes. As Christians, we’re not happy, clappy people who are naive to how the world really is. We recognize that the world is broken, it isn’t the way it should be and we expect suffering. Look, because that’s all true, this is one of the main reasons why, as a teaching team, we get frustrated that there are people out there that, in the name of Christianity, spread messages that are very unchristian in terms of its worldview. People like Joel Osteen, who say that you’re life now should be your best life. He wrote a book in the early 2000’s called *Your Best Life Now* where he says there is seven steps to living up to your full potential. His seven steps are to enlarge your vision, develop a healthy self-image, discover the power of your thoughts and words, let go of the past, find strength through adversity, live to give, and choose to be happy. He tells you at the end of his book, “If you do these things, God will take you places you’ve never dreamed of, and you will be living your best life now!” The worldview that says, “That because you’re an heir of God and a co-heir with Christ, that means you should experience all the blessings in your life now”... that’s not Christianity. Christianity is the worldview that we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ *if* we suffer with Christ. Then we will get the glory with Christ. There’s a big “if” there. It’s the suffering of the normal Christian life. That’s part of the “if”. We should expect suffering. Look, I’m not saying that



everything Joel Osteen says is terrible. What I am saying, though, is his viewpoint, a substantial part of his message, is that “If you just think positively, good things will happen to you! Try hard, good things will happen to you. If you want a better car, take care of your little crappy car, clean it up, you’ll get a beautiful one!” That’s not Christianity. That’s some weird, North American “let’s slap God on top of it and call it religion” - that’s not the message of the Bible. Paul says, “You are co-heirs with Christ, you will receive the inheritance yet to come if, indeed, we share in Christ’s sufferings.” The world that we live in is one of suffering. Our community is suffering. You are suffering. We can’t just name and claim our way out of it, that’s not the hope that we’ve been given. Glory is coming, but for now, we suffer. And yet, because glory is coming, we suffer, but we suffer with hope.

[Hope]

So, third, let’s talk about hope. Romans 8:22,

“We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”

See, the Christian perspective in the midst of suffering is one of hope because even though we know we don’t have glory yet, we know that one day we will. Hope is living in the midst of two worlds. It’s knowing that suffering and brokenness is normal in our world today and normal for the Christian life. We also know that all of the hurts will be healed when resurrection life begins, that’s hope. Hope is not the lack of pain and suffering. Hope is a disposition in the midst of pain and suffering. The world is not as it should be, but we know it will not always be like this.

There are two images that Paul uses to help us understand hope. The first image is that of firstfruits. In verse 23 he says we ourselves have the firstfruits of the Spirit. So, firstfruits, what is Paul addressing here? He’s talk about... let’s imagine you’re a berry farmer, which in this town isn’t a very big stretch, okay? So, you’re a berry farmer and you need to see if you’re fields are ready to be harvested, if the berries are ready to be picked, so you can make your jam and your pies and all the stuff that you make with it, right? So you send you son out everyday to go see and test to see if the berries are ready to be picked and everyday he comes back with no berries in his hands. But one day, your son returns with a handful of beautiful BC blueberries. Those are the firstfruits. He has the blueberries in his hand, they are there to eat and touch and enjoy and yet we know the whole harvest is still out there ready to come. See, this is what Paul is saying is that the Holy Spirit is the firstfruits of the glory yet to come. We have him. He is in our life. He is real and he works and he moves and he encourages us. He’s real, but he’s just the beginning. We know that the rest is still yet to come. The Spirit is the firstfruits of the life yet to come. What this is helpful for us in thinking through is that, in the same way, every blessing that we experience is just a foretaste of the glory yet to come. So every season of peace that we live in now as a city or as a country, every season of peace that you have, is a foretaste of the eternal peace that is going to be. See, right now we need police officers to keep the peace, but we won’t need them then. Peace won’t need to be kept, peace will just be. See, right now, we have joys that we



experience, little tastes and blessings in our lives, that are good to call blessings and, yet, all of them are just a foretaste of what is yet to come.

I don't know if you enjoy the visits to Costco. I don't. Costco is a terrible place because you go in thinking, "I'm going to get a bag of veggie straws for my son," and you leave and you've spent \$500. And you don't know what happened and now you are poor. What I know of people who enjoy Costco is that one of the main reasons they enjoy Costco is they love the sample table, right? They love going through and picking up the samples and eating it and they do this for hours. They think it's a great way to spend their time. I think they're crazy. They'll go through once, through the samples, eat them, and then they'll change their sweater and get the glasses with the little moustache and go through again. See, that's a helpful image for us, I think, about what it looks like to live our life now. Don't get me wrong. There are blessings in your life that you'll get to experience. There are good things, but those good things are just a little taste at the sample table. There's a whole feast yet to come. But what we do is we often compare our lives with other people's lives and we think, "God doesn't love me because I have less samples to taste than that person does. They seem to have way more samples than I do. I just have have little bits here and there so God must not actually love me because if God loved me I'd experience the blessing. That's what Osteen tells me. That's what the Christian bookstore and the books and the magazines and everything they're telling me that 'you'll know God loves you because of all of the stuff you have.'" That's not Christianity. Every good thing you experience now is just a foretaste, a sample, of what is yet to come. We know God loves us because He sent His son for us to die for us, to be risen for us, to promise us a new life where glory will be.

That church that I was talking about in Texas—in Sutherland Springs First Baptist Church, where the gunman came in and killed 26 people—the pastor of that church, this morning, is going to be leading a service. His daughter, Annabelle, was one of the people that was killed and yet he's going to be preaching this morning. Why would you preach if your daughter was just killed by a gunman? You preach because you have hope. You preach because you know that life isn't the way it should be. Life is hard, it's full of suffering, horrific suffering. And yet, it won't always be like this. We have hope of glory yet to come. See, the pastor will preach because he knows that hope is only available through the person of Jesus Christ. He'll preach because he knows that hope is only accessed by your faith in Jesus Christ. He'll preach because he knows that even though it's horrific now, it won't always be so.

That's the second image Paul uses when he is talking about hope, right? This image of a childbirth. That creation is groaning as in the midst of childbirth. Childbirth is a terrible experience for so many people. Why do you woman keep having babies, though, even after they tell their horror stories of labour? It's because of the joy at the end of the labour. Paul's saying, "Look, it's worth it, the suffering is worth it, because of the joy that is yet to come on the other side." Because look, hope isn't the absence of suffering. Hope is the disposition for the Christian in the midst of suffering. We can have hope in the midst of suffering because glory is coming.

Let me pray for us.

Father, I'm thankful for your word. I'm thankful for the truth that it is. I pray that, by your Spirit, you would encourage us where we need it, you would challenge us where we need it. Father, you know



that we live in a broken world. You know the hurts and the pains that we're walking through, and yet you also know that this is not the end of the story. Father, for my friends here that don't yet know you, I pray that you would work in their hearts so that they would trust in Jesus for their salvation, that they would have hope in the midst of their pain and suffering. For the rest of us in our seasons of joy and of pain, would you help us have the hope of glory in our minds knowing that our true home is yet to come. So come, Lord Jesus. We pray this in your name and for your fame, Amen.