Hope in the Dark

Read Psalm 89:35-37; Isaiah 9:6-7; Matthew 1:18-21

Key verses: “‘She will give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’ Now all of this took place so that what the Lord had spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled” (Matthew 1:21-22).

“Hope,” said Thomas Smail, “has to do with God’s promises that are still future and hidden, just as faith has to do with God’s promises that are here and now. To the person who has believed for today but has not seen the answer come today, there comes the call to hope. Hope says, ‘Tomorrow also is God’s. Enough has happened already to assure you that the rest is on the way.’”

We are people of hope because we are part of the big story that God is writing. And enough has happened already in that story to assure us that the rest is on the way!

That does not mean that it is always easy to hope, especially when we walk through dark times and all hope seems lost….

Psalm 89 is a prayer of lament, mourning the loss of David’s dynasty. This psalm was probably written as a response to the Exile, when the Southern Kingdom of Israel was invaded and taken into captivity by the Babylonians.

The psalmist reminded God of his promise: “By my own holiness I’ve sworn one thing: I will not lie to David. His dynasty will last forever. His throne will be like the sun, always before me. It will be securely established forever; like the moon, a faithful witness in the sky” (Psalm 89:35-37).

The events of the Exile seemed to mock God’s promise. The psalmist and his fellow Israelites were called to hope at a time when all hope seemed lost.

God’s promise to David contained a greater promise—the promise of a Messiah. Isaiah the prophet foresaw the fulfillment of that messianic hope: “A child is born to us, a son is given to us, and authority will be on his shoulders, He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6-7).
Centuries after the Exile, after the prophecy of Isaiah and of other Old Testament prophets, Jesus Christ is born. In Christ, a descendant of King David, God keeps his promise to establish an eternal kingdom: “She will give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’ Now all of this took place so what the Lord had spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled” (Matthew 1:21-22).

We are people of hope because we are part of God’s big story. And enough has already happened in that story to assure us that the rest is on the way!

In a few weeks, we will celebrate the event that, so far, is the climax of God’s story—the resurrection of Jesus. Our hope is “a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). We are people of hope because, if our God could raise Jesus from the dead, there is nothing God cannot do for us!

Yet, our hope doesn’t end with the resurrection. We live in hope of Christ’s promised return, when he will inaugurate a new heaven and a new earth:

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away….I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making all things new!’” (Revelation 21:1-5).

The big story that God is writing is a story of never-ending hope. As God’s people, we are part of that great story, so we are people of hope. Even when we walk in darkness, when hope seems lost, we remember that we’re part of God’s story. Enough has already happened in that story to assure us that the rest is on the way. Tomorrow also is God’s!

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