

Deuteronomy010108-041011
Bridge of Hope
April 10, 2011

“The Call of Hope”

Today we are going to shift our thoughts from the book of Matthew. We will come back to our study of Matthew a little later on this summer. But today we are starting a short series that will go through the end of this month as we enjoy the Easter season. I love Easter; it is one of my favorite days of the year. This time of year for me is filled with life and joy and hope. It places our attention on Jesus' love for us. And when I embrace His love for me and for you, my heart is confronted with the issue of hope. The Gospel brings hope!

Now the interesting thing about hope is that people work really hard at repelling it. It is almost as if they are afraid of hope. And so I began to think about this and wondered why would we be so fearful of hope? Why would we be willing to live in the restraints of apathy? It is interesting because we live in a world that rejects the call to hope.

I don't think this is the way that Christians are supposed to live, but far too often when talking with people I discover that it isn't any different at all. Even mature and seasoned disciples of Jesus have struggles with hope. This needs to change. I think that the reason most of us, Christian or not, struggle with hope is because of things like hurt and disappointment. We have times when we hoped for something and it didn't happen the way that we thought it should. And that hurts us deeply. We opt for apathy because it seems to be void of the pain of disappointment. So I decided that the best way to introduce this subject for this Easter season was to look at what the Bible says about it. Here are a just couple of scriptures about the Call of Hope:

Romans 15:13 (NIV) *May **the God of hope** fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that **you may overflow with hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Ephesians 1:18-19 (NIV) *I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that **you may know the hope to which he has called you**, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.*

Do you see just how important hope is? As a Christian you and I are called to hope. Today, we extend the call of hope as we share what God is speaking to our family. Let me take just a moment to set the background so we more fully appreciate the thoughts we will share from it.

Moses, a great leader, has been out in the wilderness wandering around for the past 40 years. What this means is that this group of people have heard about the Promised Land and how wonderful it is for just about all their life. The stories have been told over and over again. But the reality of their lives has been in the wilderness. It is pretty hard to maintain hope in such circumstances. As a leader, the last thing you want to do is raise any expectations that won't be fulfilled. And as a leader, you remember all too well when you came to this point with the parents of these people and you remember how they responded. This is how Moses steps up to talk to the people of Israel. What I am saying is that the call of hope is not easy for any of

us. It isn't easy to share and it isn't always easy to embrace. But it is crucial that when God sends out His call of hope that we do share and embrace it.

Let's get started with the text through which the Holy Spirit directed my thoughts.

Deuteronomy 1:1-8 (NIV) *These are the words Moses spoke to all Israel in the desert east of the Jordan — that is, in the Arabah — opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth and Dizahab. (It takes eleven days to go from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea by the Mount Seir road.)*

In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses proclaimed to the Israelites all that the LORD had commanded him concerning them. This was after he had defeated Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, and at Edrei had defeated Og king of Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth.

East of the Jordan in the territory of Moab, Moses began to expound this law, saying:

The LORD our God said to us at Horeb, "You have stayed long enough at this mountain. Break camp and advance into the hill country of the Amorites; go to all the neighboring peoples in the Arabah, in the mountains, in the western foothills, in the Negev and along the coast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the Euphrates. See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land that the LORD swore he would give to your fathers — to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — and to their descendants after them."

Here are the specific thoughts that were impressed upon my heart to share:

- It's TIME - In the 40th year on the 1st day of 11th month**
 - The Israelites had been at this exact same place 40 years earlier and they failed in the ability to let hope in God lead them.**
 - Their failure cost them as they didn't have faith in God to provide for them.
 - And they wandered around in the desert for 40 years until the entire generation died; a generation who didn't follow after hope in God.
 - Moses had plenty of reasons for why it might just be easier to finish his life and die rather than to try and rally the people to embrace hope once again.**
 - Do you know what I mean?
 - But in the 40th year of wandering he does what God says and presents the message of hope once again.
 - He calls them to hope in God, he calls them to the Promise Land.
 - It would have been easy to let go of the promise during the 40 years of wandering.**
 - How many times have we done the same thing, let go of God's promise?
 - And when the time finally arrived and God put things in motion and it was time to once again be presented with the hope of the Promise Land, Moses lead the way by stepping up in faith and presenting the hope of God.
 - It hasn't been 40 years for Bridge of Hope, but we have been in a holding pattern for some time.**
 - And today I feel like Moses saying that in the 40th year on the 1st day of the 11th month the time has come to embrace the hope of God's promises.

2. **It's STARTED** - After he had defeated

- The time spent in the wilderness was about much more than simply waiting for people to die, a people who had refused to place their hope in God.
- During this time Moses lead the campaign and some battles were won, they didn't sit idle for the entire 40 years just surviving.
 - They had taken a portion of the promise that was the east side of the Jordan.
 - In fact, Moses had already given this part of the land to some of the tribes of Israel.
- They had advanced, they had learned. During this 40 years of wandering the people who now stood before Moses had grown up learning about the provision of God.
 - They had experienced what hope can do as it came in small doses.
 - God had allowed them to see that He could do what He said He would do.
- The very thing that had kept them from entering into the Promise Land before was now something that they believed could be done. They had
 - learned that God was able.
 - discovered that they needed God in order to advance.
 - found that hope requires faith, trust, and even some patience at times.
 - learned that hope meant they must live in obedience to God.
- While many do not say so, the reality is that the 40 years of wandering created the character and heart in a people who no longer looked back to Egypt, but looked forward to the promise of their God.
- We have taken some ground and experienced so much advancement.
 - It amazes me when I think about what has happened.
 - But we have not moved across the Jordan to the fullness of God's promise.
 - Hope calls us to trust God and take Him at His word.
 - Hope calls and we respond with love and obedience.
 - We do not let fear, disappointment, or hurt of the past keep us from living in the hope that Jesus gives us.
 - We live in the hope of the Gospel and have seen the enemy defeated.
 - Now we are called to hope once again, so that the full promise of God can be fulfilled.

3. **GOD SPOKE** - The Lord our God said to us at Horeb

- Moses was not bringing something new to the people; he was calling them to the hope found in God through the message he had brought them before.
 - He was calling them to what God had said, a promise that was yet to be fulfilled, a promise looking for a people who would place their hope in God.
- Listen to the awesomeness of this promise once again in **Deuteronomy 1:6-8** (NIV) *"You have stayed long enough at this mountain. Break camp and advance See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land that the LORD swore he would give to your fathers — to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — and to their descendants after them."*
- By reminding them of the original promise that God made with them, he was calling them to do what their parents had failed to do.
 - And in doing this he makes it clear that this promise was for them as much as it was for their parents. God had made this promise to them.

- How would this people respond? How had the 40 years and 10 months changed them? Were they a people ready to move with the hope of God's promise? Questions that were now about to be answered.
- I can't help but believe that Moses approached this time with a bit of anxiety.
 - He had been here before and watched how the people so quickly gave up.
 - And now, once again, God uses him to extend the call of hope and Moses is found obeying, even though he knows he will never enter into the Promise Land.
 - This is profound; it is the way of hope.
- It isn't just any message that we put before us and hope to have happen.
 - It is the message that was given to us when we stood before God and began the transformation of this family.
 - It is more about a call to hope found in Jesus than it is about anything else.
 - It is the call to this group to be a bridge of hope to the greater Youngstown-Warren area and to the world.
 - Will we be willing to trust Jesus? Are we willing to embrace the call of hope that is so beyond us that we can't do it ourselves? Can we walk in the faith that it takes to live in hope, to move into the Promise Land?
 - These are good questions that need to be answered.
- It is what He spoke to us at our Mt Horeb and is His promise to us.

Conclusion: God has called on us to pastor the greater Youngstown-Warren area, He has sent us out to be missionaries to our area of the world. Jesus has called us to care for and lead and speak on His behalf. He has called us to share the gospel story and to teach people how to know Him.

It is an awesome call to live the mission. It will require us to do more than gather together and talk about what it might be like one day; it will require us to move into areas we haven't moved into before. This call will mean that we step forward and take land that we have been afraid to take before. We will be called upon to step up and share Jesus when we feared to do so before. This call will again require us to give of our resources and lives.

It is the call of hope to live in community with one another in deeper levels of relationship than we did in the past. It is the call of hope to live a life of worship in everything we do and to come together each week to celebrate the goodness of our God. It is a call of hope to live the mission, to share the Gospel every day and in every situation where God directs our steps.

In closing today I want to simply share a text from a little later in the book of Deuteronomy. It just seems the best way to end this talk is to share what God spoke to the people of Israel and what I believe He is speaking to us.

Deuteronomy 8:1-9 (NIV) *Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land that the LORD promised on oath to your forefathers. Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*

Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.

Observe the commands of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and revering him. For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land — a land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills.