I hope it doesn’t rain this weekend. I hope my boss is impressed with my work. I hope I get that big promotion. I hope I can retire when I want to. I hope my kids are well behaved. I hope they do well in school. I hope they turn out to be good people. I hope the Cubs win the world series again in my lifetime.

The things that we hope for are often things that may or may not happen, especially that last one. When you think of what you hope for, what do those things look like? Is it for more money, more power or a better position, more time with your family, more time to relax, the day when you can finally retire? Are your hopes of an earthly nature or an eternal nature?

If you’re a fan of Scy Fy, you probably recognize this guy. For those of you who don’t, this is the eleventh Doctor Who. In the show, he travels through time saving the world from all the dangerous things out there. Most of the time the odds are impossibly low that he will succeed, but somehow he always does. In one episode he says, “My experience is that there is, surprisingly, always hope.”

My question for you today is this: is that really true? Is there really always hope? There’s a lot of TV magic behind the kind of hope that Doctor Who has. Somehow he always pulls off the daring rescue in an episode or two.

Real life doesn’t always work that way. Sometimes you can’t find a job after a layoff and the bills begin to pile up. Sometimes it seems like there is no fixing the relationships that are so broken. Sometimes drugs or alcohol have a grip on your life so tight that it seems like it will never break. Sometimes depression slowly pulls you further and further down. Sometimes it seems like there is not a lot of hope to be had in this world.

Webster’s defines hope as cherishing a desire with anticipation. It’s something you want to happen. One definition of the word hope is a feeling or an anticipation that things will somehow be better. That describes something that is utterly missing in much of our world. Many people are pessimistic about whether our country will ever be united again, whether the threat of terrorism will ever be over, whether they will be able to have a stable job and support their family. Despite what Doctor Who has to say, our world is very often a hopeless place.

Here’s the thing: hope is only as strong as the one who can make that hope happen. The problem with the hope of the world, the reason it is missing in many cases, is because the hope of the world relies on people. That’s true whether that hope relies on other people or yourself.

Hoping for people to be good and kind to one another depends upon people. Hoping for unity depends upon people. Hoping for financial stability depends upon people. Hoping for things of this world depends upon people of this world. If you haven’t noticed, people are fickle. They are unreliable and prone to doing the wrong thing. The only thing you can rely upon with people is that if you depend upon them if you place your hope in people, they will let you down at some point.

The Greeks understood that the nature of most people’s hope was subjective. It was dependent upon people or factors out of their control. At best it was a shot in the dark.

The biblical idea of hope is very different. It’s different not because of the people who have hope are different, but because the one they place their hope in is different. The biblical idea of hope has its foundation in the trustworthiness of God to keep his promises. God’s trustworthiness and his promises are what our entire faith is based on. If God were not trustworthy to keep his promises we would be fools to even follow him.

As you read the Bible you will see God again and again making promises to his people, making covenants with them. You will not find one promise that God made to his people that he did not fulfill. He didn’t always do it on their time, and he won’t always do it on our time. But as we look back through biblical history, we see how God kept every promise he made.

Our hope is based on the promises of a God who has never let a promise or a covenant go unfulfilled. He’s not about to start now. He will keep the promises he has made to us, and that means that our hope is more than just a subjective wishful thinking that things will somehow be better than they are now. Our hope is assured because we have a God who is trustworthy and keeps his promise to us.

The Bible speaks of hope a lot. In fact, if you look in the English Standard Version, the word hope appears 84 times in the Old Testament and 84 times in the New Testament. Hope is something that spans all of biblical history because our God is a God of hope.

Hope didn’t start when Jesus came to earth, it started from the moment God stepped in to begin directing people toward redemption. Jesus is the culmination of that redemption. But it started when God promised Eve that her offspring would crush the head of the serpent. Since that moment God has been working to redeem all of creation, which culminated in the sacrifice of Jesus.

The Bible uses all kinds of words to talk about hope, and they all bring a little different meaning to the idea. The Hebrew word קָוָה (*qawah*) means to wait or look with eager expectation. The word יָחַל (*yachal*) speaks of waiting for something to happen with confident expectation. The word שֵׂבֶר (*sever*) means to wait or to hope.

With all of these words, when you combine them with the idea of hoping in God, trusting in God, or making God the foundation of our hope, then you no longer have the possibility that what you are hoping for will not happen. These words bring the idea of God’s people enduring patiently in confident hope that God will act for his people’s salvation.

God was the one Israel put their hope in for their deliverance and provision here on earth and the one they hoped in for their ultimate salvation. God made Abraham’s descendants into a great nation just like he promised he would. God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt in a way that made it clear that God was the one responsible for their salvation.

When the Israelites finally got to the Promised land God was the one who fought their battles for them. He was the one who drove out the Canaanites so the people of Israel could enter the land God had prepared for them. God established them in their new homeland.

When the Israelites turned away from God they were sent into exile in Babylon. He sent the prophet Jeremiah to tell the people what was going to happen to them. He told them that they would be the servants of Babylon for seventy years because of their disobedience. But at the end of that seventy years, he would restore them to their home. That’s when Jeremiah tells them this prophecy that you have no doubt heard many times, but perhaps not in the context it was given.

**Jeremiah 29:10–13 ESV — 10** “For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. **11** For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. **12** Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. **13** You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

You may have heard people use these verses to inspire students about to go off to college or someone looking for a new job. That’s not the context here. God was about to punish his people for abandoning him and worshiping other gods. But even with their betrayal he wasn’t done with them yet. He still had plans for them. He still had good things in store for them. He had a plan to restore them and deliver them. That’s what I love so much about the God we serve, the God we read about in the Bible. He punishes and disciplines when he needs to, but there is always hope with God.

This week at the prayer night we began by offering praises before we made our requests of God. Many of our praises were centered on what God has given us: good weather, family, an abundance of resources. But one of our praises simply praised God for who he was, and more specifically who he was to us. The praise was that God never gives up on us. That’s exactly what Jeremiah was telling the Israelites. God is a God of justice and discipline, but he does not give up on his people. He is a God of hope.

Throughout the Old Testament prophets spoke of a Messiah who would one day come to deliver the people of Israel from their afflictions. He wasn’t here to deliver them from their political afflictions as they thought. They had a much more serious problem that they needed deliverance from.

Jesus came to deliver people and bring salvation from our sin that threatens us for all eternity, not just for our time here on earth. Jesus came to bring hope to mankind for all eternity, not just a specific nation for a short period of history. When Jesus came, he became the hope not just of the Israelites, but for every tribe, tongue, and nation.

In the New Testament we see a shift only in that Jesus is mentioned over and over again as our hope. The word that is used for hope in the New Testament is the word έλπίς (elpis) which speaks of our trust, confidence, and expectation of what is sure to come. The kind of hope that the New Testament speaks of is not a subjective ‘I sure hope it happens one day’ kind of thing. The hope of the New Testament is an assurance. It is a promise that we can count on.

Sometimes this word έλπίς (elpis) can be used in a negative sense, as the expectation of something evil. There is a Greek historian who used this word to speak of a soldier’s expectation of the enemy’s barrage of arrows as they faced off in battle. He didn’t know when it would come, but he was sure that it would. The New Testament never uses this word in a negative sense like that, but the certitude that comes with it is the same.

What we hope for is the promise of Jesus that he will return and that he is preparing a place for us to be with him for eternity. He promised us eternal life if we put our trust and our faith, our hope, in him. There is nothing that can take that hope away from us and we don’t have to fear that it might not happen. The God who made those promises to us in the New Testament is the same God who kept every promise he ever made in the Old Testament. We can be sure and certain that our God will do what he says.

Paul speaks often about the hope that we have in Jesus.

**Romans 15:13 ESV — 13** May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

**Romans 5:2–11 ESV — 2** Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

In 1 Corinthians he talks about the assurance we have in the resurrection of Jesus, and how important our hope is.

**1 Corinthians 15:17–22 ESV — 17** And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. **18** Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. **19** If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. **20** But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. **21** For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. **22** For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

You see, our entire hope hinges on the truth of the resurrection of Jesus and the certainty that he will do what he said he will do. If Jesus didn’t walk out of the tomb, then nothing we do is worth anything. Paul says we are to be pitied above all people because we would be believing and hoping in a lie. But the truth of Jesus’ resurrection makes all the difference in the world. He has indeed been raised from the dead, and because of that we can be sure in our promise of resurrection and eternal life with Jesus.

That foundation for our hope is even solid through the most trying circumstances we face. As Paul faced the many trials and persecutions he went through in his life as an Apostle, he wrote to the Corinthians to stand firm in their faith and their hope in the face of the same kind of suffering.

**2 Corinthians 1:7–10 ESV — 7** Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort. **8** For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. **9** Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. **10** He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.

See without Jesus, I think Doctor Who is wrong. There is not always hope, in fact, there is no hope at all. But with Jesus we have an unshakable hope that nothing can take away from us. The hope that we have can never be shaken, it can never be moved. The one who secures and ensures our hope is the most steadfast foundation we could have.

But this series is not just about love, grace, faith, and hope. It’s about how God is reckless in all of those things in his pursuit of us. He risks so much in coming after us because he loves us so desperately. How is God reckless in the hope he offers?

**Romans 8:24 ESV — 24** For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?

The hope we have is a sure and certain expectation of something that God has promised he will do. But God risked that we would reject the hope that he offers us because it is not tangible. Hope means we are waiting for something we have not yet seen. God risked that we would get tired of waiting for the unseen and invest ourselves instead in what we can see and hear and feel.

I don’t know if you have noticed this, but we live in a world full of people who want instant gratification. Most of us have lived through global phenomenon of the beginning of the internet. When I was a kid and we wanted to know something, we went to the shelf full of encyclopedias in the living room.

Now when we want to know something, we pull out our cellphone and have the answer in seconds. We’re quickly getting to the point where we can just ask the creepy little speaker that’s always listening to us and we get an answer like we’re on the Starship Enterprise. If shipping takes more than a couple days we’re disappointed. If our favorite TV show or movie doesn’t load right away on Netflix or Hulu we’re upset.

In a society that wants everything right now, it’s easy to see how hoping for something you can’t see is difficult. It’s easy to give up on waiting for the thing that has taken over 2000 years to happen when Amazon gets you whatever you want the next day. God risked that we would let that obsession with having things on our timetable pull us away from the hope that he offers us in Jesus Christ.

We have to look past the difficulty of waiting for what was promised and look instead to the faithfulness of the one who made the promise. We have to live our lives in eager expectation of what God has promised us is coming.

When we live as people who have that kind of unshakable hope that Paul spoke of, then people will notice. It will change the way that we think and the way we act. People will notice that we live differently, we behave differently, and we react differently to our circumstances.

**1 Thessalonians 4:13 ESV — 13** But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

You will see the effects of the kind of hope we have in Christ most clearly when a loved one dies. The difference between a funeral of a Christian and that of a non-believer are drastically different. The funerals I’ve officiated for unbelievers are miserable occasions. They have no hope, they have no joy, all they have is grief and sadness over a loved one they will never see again.

The funeral of a believer is very different. In fact, most of the time we don’t even call them funerals. We call them celebrations of life instead because we are celebrating that person’s life here on earth that led them to a relationship with Jesus. That means that they are celebrating their eternal life with him now. The only thing to mourn at the funeral of a Christian is that we will miss them for a time. They are gone from our earthly lives. There is certainly still grief, but that grief is tempered by the hope that we have in Christ for that person and for ourselves.

Paul was speaking to a church that was not acting as if it had any hope. The church in Thessalonica was absorbing the beliefs of the culture around them. They believed their loved ones who were dead when Christ returned would not be saved. They were grieving for their loved ones like people who have no hope. They had no hope of ever seeing them, no hope of ever being with their loved ones again.

Paul corrected that in the church in Thessalonica because the hope we have in Christ is one of the most important parts of the Gospel. Without the hope of eternal life with Jesus our faith wouldn’t be worth a whole lot. That hope is also one of the strongest witnesses we have to the world around us. Peter tells us:

**1 Peter 3:15 (ESV) — 15** …in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

Peter assumes that the hope we have in Christ is going to be obvious to the people around us. The hope that we have should be a very visible thing in our daily lives. It should be noticeable in the way we live, the way we talk, and the way we react to things like death. It’s a big deal when we who have that kind of hope act as if we have none.

The hope we have in Christ should radically change us, and how we live. If we are living as people with that kind of hope we will stick out like a sore thumb in a world that has none. If people can’t see that hope in you, something is missing. We can’t keep our hope to ourselves. We have to live as people who have an unshakable hope so that the world can see what it means to trust in Jesus.

Jesus died on a cross so we could be free of our sin, so that we would be able to enjoy eternal life. He rose again from the grave and beat sin and death once and for all. Now we wait for his return as he prepares a place for us to spend eternity with him. But even though the wait is long there is nothing that will keep him from returning. Jesus is all our hope.

I’m going to ask the worship team to come back up now. While they are playing this next song, you have an opportunity to make a respond to the reckless love and reckless hope of God.

If you have never accepted Jesus as your Savior, if you have never had the kind of hope we’ve been talking about this morning, this is your chance to make that decision. If you feel like hope is something that has been missing in your life, don’t put it off any longer.

If you are a believer in Jesus and you have never been baptized before, we invite you to come and do that today as well.

If you are looking for a church family to belong to, we would love to have you come and be a part of Agape. The hope that we have is most powerful when we share it with other believers. We invite you to join in fellowship with our church this morning.

If you have questions or concerns about any of those decisions, just come talk to me, or Rod, or one of our elders. We’ll be standing at the doors as you leave today.