

Go and Tell

by Chris Famisaran

Let's begin. Father in Heaven, we thank you for the opportunity, Lord, to once again gather together and especially on this very particular Sabbath. Lord, our Easter weekend Sabbath open our hearts and our minds. In Jesus name, Amen.

Last month Annie Eisner wrote in an article for Relevant magazine, Hope's Google Spike Desperate or Devout. And she writes, over the last roughly five years, one of the most searched terms on Google has been the word hope. It's been asked of through political upheavals, technological breakthroughs, and also perhaps how can I make more money online? And yet, as she writes, if Google is the oracle of our collective consciousness, then we're not just looking for the best oat milk latte nearest we're looking for something deeper. Ok, what does it mean? Are people feeling more hopeful or are they frantically grasping for it? The data doesn't tell us whether we're inspired or empty handed, only that we're looking for meaning in a crisis ridden age. The past few years haven't exactly been a breeding ground for unbridled optimism. If anything, they felt a slow motion apocalypse set to a TikTok soundtrack. Climate anxiety Check. Economic uncertainty Check. Social media fueled existential dread. Triple check. And yet through it all, people have consistently typed "hope" into a search bar for as if it was a lifeline. Historically, searches for spiritual and existential concepts tend to spike in the moments of crisis. In 2008, the prayer was searched through a dip. During the financial collapse. In March of 2020, faith trended as the word collectively realized that we had no idea what we were doing. People look for meaning when the world stops making sense, but the ongoing years long trend of searching for hope suggests something different. This isn't just a reaction to one specific disaster, it's a constant underlying hum of uncertainty, a long term condition rather than a momentary outcry. Right now the story seems more like a desire for something bigger, steadier and more trustworthy than the shifting realities of

modern life today. I want to go to Scripture. I want to find and look for hope. And there is hope in the Word of God. Amen.

So let's go to I want to those of you who are maybe joining us for the first time, or if you're online, go ahead and take a screenshot of these are the particular verses that I want to look to today. Hopefully we can get through all of them.

But before we get to that point, I want to ask you what is the darkest day that you have ever experienced? Have you experienced a dark day? I think that it's fair to say that all of us at some point have experienced a dark and troublesome day, maybe days, maybe weeks, maybe years. And it's hard to come out of that darkness. And today, what I want you to be leaving with is a sense of hope. One of the common phrases that we hear is we live in unprecedented times. And somebody jokes, I want to go back to precedented times.

Do you remember... now I'm dating myself, you know, years ago, maybe it's just perspective, but 30 years ago, did we have unprecedented times every other day? Yeah, it did. But when you're a kid, it felt much. It didn't feel like the world was on fire every day. So I wish we could go back to, quote, precedented times, but life is not that way. Basilhum writes, the great gift of Easter is hope, Christian hope, which makes us have that confidence in God, in his ultimate triumph, and in his goodness and love, which nothing can shake. When you look around, is there much hope around you? Do you try to find hope or is it easier to slip into the negativity and the pessimism and the cynicism? I try to argue, I'm just being practical, but really it's a more positive form of cynicism. Some will say that there's plenty of hope out there, and others will counter that this is a time to be alive. And then there are others who are going through personal struggles and we have no idea what they are going through. Maybe they're afraid to say anything for fear of being seen as weak or cowardly or being a burden. We have many friends, and maybe even ourselves, who are dealing with mental health issues of crises. We're stressed, we're scared, we're feeling uncertain. Amongst many things of our health. Can we go to bed at a proper time and wake up? Or do we sit and lie in a bed or a lazy boy just

hoping that we can get some sleep before the sun rises and we have to go back to work. I can't seem to lose weight. All these physical issues that are popping up, maybe, perhaps you have relationships that are strained, your marriage, you're feeling uncertain. Do I even want to still be with this person? Maybe you have a strained relationship with your child, you're not able to talk. Maybe it's a co worker, the idea of stress, work, stability or instability, rising costs and inflation scattered about across the news.

So today, again, it is my prayer that we leave with hope and confidence now, before we can talk about the end. I want to go back to the beginning. So let's actually go to Luke chapter two. Okay, Luke chapter two. And I wanted to start at verse seven, but just kidding, we're actually going to start at verse four. Okay, Luke chapter two, verse four. Why are we going to the beginning? We'll come to that. Luke chapter two, verse four. We all there. Okay. So it says in verse four. So Joseph went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem, the town of David, because he longed, he belonged to the house in the line of David. He went there to register with Mary who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a what? A child. And while they were there, the time came for a baby to be born and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped them in cloth, placed them in a manger because there was no guest room available for them.

We see this man and woman who are forced to go back because the emperor decided, I want to know how many people are in my kingdom. They got to go all the way back Bethlehem, because that's where the family was from. And here we see a father, his young wife, new baby boy. And as was common, she wrapped in verse seven, she gives birth and she wraps him in cloths and places him in a manger. This idea of a baby being wrapped and as it says in other versions, swaddling clothes. And here we see that this baby, as we know as Jesus, shows that he came into this world with humility and a common humanity. Swaddling or wrapping the baby was a common practice here for the newborns, making Jesus appear as if he's just a normal person, he's not special. He didn't come to this world with great acclaim, quietly, maybe even secretly. And yet it also shows how Jesus had to depend on Mary and Joseph.

He could identify with those fellow human beings that have come through. And the swaddling clothes, it doesn't signify that they're poor, even though they probably were not rich. But it's just that he grew up as a normal child in a sense, even though he was the Son of God. The swaddling clothes also are an indication to his future sacrifice. Swaddling clothes were seen as a foreshadowing of Jesus later life for his burial and his crucifixion. And it suggests even that Jesus life from birth to death, he was already destined to die. Some scholars also write that swallowing was also similar to the way newborn lambs who were to go to the temple to be sacrificed were also wrapped, further potentially pointing towards Jesus role as the Lamb of God.

Lastly, we also see that the Angels. When they spoke to the shepherds in great glory, the angel told the shepherds that there would be a newborn baby wrapped in swaddling clothes as a sign. It was here that they could help identify who Jesus was, indicating that this newborn was different than other newborns.

And lastly, some scholars also indicate that the shepherds were also Levitical shepherds who raised lambs for sacrifice. And the swaddling reminded them of the practice. So swaddling clothes, they are a powerful symbol that communicates Jesus humility, His common humanity, and ultimately his destiny, destination to ultimately save the world from death. Amen. Now, Jesus born swaddling clothes.

Let's go now to Luke chapter 24. Luke chapter 24. Okay. And starting at verse one, Luke 24, let's also paint a picture as well. This is Sunday morning. We know that Jesus had died on Friday. How would you feel if your best friend, your leader, your rabbi, your teacher, your mentor, was unfairly arrested, placed in front of a fake trial, and coerced the government to kill him? Friday, he dies. He was known as the Messiah. What was the Messiah supposed to do? He was supposed to come down in power and glory and free his people from the oppression, and he dies. How would you feel? While Jesus is quietly and calmly resting on Sabbath, the disciples are anxiously together, wondering what is next. Are they sad? Are they potentially depressed? More

than likely. And then something amazing happens. Sunday, on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the land, from the tomb. But when they entered, they didn't find the body of the Lord Jesus again. How would these ladies feel? Their best friend, their confidant, their teacher, their leader, had disappeared. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. And in their fright, the women bowed down with their faces to the ground. But the men said to them, why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here. He has what? He has risen. Praise the Lord. Right? And then they remembered his words. I love this when it says they remembered his words. Because they didn't always get it right the first time. Amen. They didn't always get it right the first time. Even those who were closest to Jesus. Verse 9. When they came back to the tomb, when they came back from the tomb, they told all of these things to the eleven, meaning the disciples, Jesus closest disciples, and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, the mother of James, and all the Others who were with them told this to the apostles, but they didn't. What? They didn't believe in the women because their words seemed to sound like, what nonsense. However, Peter. Peter, however, got up and he ran to the tomb and bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves. And he went away wondering to himself what had happened.

Now, there was a concern here that what had happened? Had Jesus body been stolen? It seems kind of preposterous because if you read other parts of Scripture, what did the leaders of those who had opposed Jesus do? They wanted to make sure that there were guards standing outside of Jesus tomb because what if he did rise again and he were to come back? That would be trouble for them. And yet he's gone. Not several years ago, a couple months ago, I was scrolling through YouTube and there was a video that said, Brad Pitt kidnapped. Of course, I had to click on that. And I had forgotten that Brad Pitt had played a prank on many several unsuspecting people. He. There was this particular show that I will not name, can probably figure out what it was, but

he said, hey, I want to pull a prank. And so they decided to go to Pink's Hot Dogs in LA, stand out. He would just be hanging out, and all of a sudden a van would just throw the door open. They would grab him, throw him in the car and then drive off. You'd think, ha, ha, that's funny. And the poor unsuspecting customers standing there were like, they see this kidnapping in process. And some of. Some of them actually tried to help, but then they were pushed and shoved away and they get in. Now, what they didn't know was that the producers of the show had already contacted the LAPD and said, @ this time, you're going to hear these calls. Please ignore them. And at that time, the LAPD went along with it. Can you imagine that happening now? That's not gonna happen anymore, right? And it's, you know, it's kind of a funny joke. Hey, you know Brad Pitt, biggest star, one of the biggest stars at the time and still is, but definitely had a lot of notoriety back then. This poor guy, he basically says Brad Pitt was in line and he was just kidnapped and thrown into a van. I'm really not kidding, okay? He fully believed that Brad Pitt had been abducted.

And this was the thought of the disciples. Where had Jesus gone? Didn't make sense. All of this is actually to say that why, why would just linen and a cloth be nicely wrapped and separated, as it says in John 20, I want to Point out that this is actually confirmation that the linen and the cloth are confirmation of Jesus resurrection. If you're going to try to steal somebody, you don't just leave the clothes behind. Amen. You just grab them and you go. Especially if there was a soldier or soldiers outside. Let's also keep in perspective.

Okay, so we see that in the beginning Jesus is wrapped in swaddling clothes and in the tomb when he exits, the disciples find linen and a cloth. Is it possible and fair to say that these two examples bookend Jesus ministry here on earth? In the beginning he came as a very quiet little newborn. And for one of his final responses is to see that the linen that covered him was neatly folded and the cloth separated. As it Sundays in John 20, Jesus had risen. And I'm not going to discount the crucifixion. Okay, I'm not discounting that. But it would have all been a moot point if Jesus had not risen on Sunday. Amen. The resurrection of Jesus is victory over death, as was promised very in the very

beginning of John 3. Sorry, Genesis 3:15, where God basically says, I'm going to defeat you and is fulfilled in this very point where Jesus arose.

Let's go to John 20, John 20, John 20, starting at verse one. And there's similarities here compared to Luke. It says early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been recovered, removed from the entrance. And so she goes back to Simon Peter and the other disciples, the one whom Jesus loved and said they have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we don't know where they have put him. What do Peter and the beloved disciple are also probably known as John Dew. They ran straight to the tomb, right? John of course, had to throw a little shade that he got there first. He bent over. Verse 5, it says he bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there, but did not go in. Then Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen there as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus head. The clock was still lying in its place, separate, not together, not thrown apart, but separate. And finally the other disciple who had reached the tomb first went also inside. He saw and believed it. And they didn't understand the scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

So we see that in Luke's account, Mary and a few other ladies are Mentioned John's account. It just only mentions Mary. But the point is they fear what has happened to their beloved Jesus. Let's continue on verse 11. Now, Mary stood outside the tomb crying. And as she went, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white where Jesus body had been. One one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, woman, why are you crying? They've taken my Lord away, and I don't know where they have put him. At this, she turned around and she saw Jesus standing there. But she didn't realize that it was Jesus. And Jesus asks her, woman, why are you crying? Who is it that you're looking for? And thinking that he was a gardener, she said, sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him.

Can you hear? Can you feel perhaps the anguish that is in her heart? Her hope has been dashed. Where is he? It's taken a blow. And then Jesus said to her, Mary. She turned around and cried out in Aramaic, rabbenai, which means teacher. Jesus said, don't hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them I have ascended to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God. And Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news. I have seen the Lord. And she told them he had said these things to her.

What I love about this, What's significant about this, this part of the story. Who is the first person that Jesus tells to go and tell the others that I have risen? Mary, a woman, historically and scholarly, some say, had quite a reputation. And not the positive kind of reputation, a woman at that. Unfortunately, women did not have equal rights. They were considered as less than. And Jesus flips the script I love as well. In John 4, who does Jesus reveal himself to? A Samaritan woman. And after talking with her, because we recently studied this, what does she do? She goes to her whole family and friends and tells them, I have found the Messiah. Two instances, two characters who have challenging paths. And God uses them to spread the Gospel to tell the others that I have risen.

What can we take from this? The Gospel message is for all. The Gospel message is for all. For you, for me, for Gustavo, for Philip, for Annette, for Bill, for all of us. All of the Gospels in some way share this idea as well. You've heard the story. Now who are you going to share it with? Who are you going to share it with? I'd like to invite Ben to come on up here for a Second, and in your reflection, who do you rub shoulders with that you can pray for over the next 40 days? As you entered the sanctuary, you were given a card. Okay? I want you to pull that card out.

And if we accidentally, maybe missed anybody, raise your hands. Tomas or one of our deacons can come by. And if you're missing a pen as well, we have a few extra pens, so raise your hand.

I want you to think of somebody who you can pray for. And I don't want you to choose your Uncle Roger or your best friend from fifth grade. I want you to choose somebody that you are in regular contact with that you rub shoulders that you see regularly. And I want you to pray for them over the next 40 days, okay? Simply just pray for them. Pray that they can come to know Jesus.

Now, 40 days may go by and you're not going to hear anything different. What do I want you to do then? Do I want you to give up? No, you keep praying for them. It might be 40 days, it might be 40 years, it might be 400 years. Keep praying for them. And as you do so, okay, as you do so, as you pray for your chosen person, periodically check in on them. We've spent six weeks on relationships. Listen to them, care for them, respect them, trust them, try to be a positive, healthy influence and help to lead them to Jesus. Can you do that? And if you're scared to death, I don't know what to say sometimes I'm scared, believe me, because I have no idea where conversations go sometimes. But I want to give you an opportunity to live a faith experience all trust that God will give you the words of wisdom. And maybe you don't even need to say anything. All you need to do is be faithful and be loving and kind and just maybe they might say, what can I know about you that makes you so different, that gives you hope in a world that is chaotic and have an opportunity, opportunity to go and tell them of how Jesus has changed your life. And just maybe they may want to know more about who this Jesus is. Can you do that? Can you do that? So take time. Think about, reflect. Who is somebody that you want to pray for? Okay? Pray for them in all aspects of their life. Their family, their work, their interests, their problems. You don't need to know what they are, but just pray for them.

I'm going to give you a moment to reflect on this because I don't want you to take this lightly. I want you to take this seriously. Who is somebody that you can pray for? Maybe it needs to be somebody that you are, you're at odds with. You can't pray for somebody with hostility. Amen. I'm gonna pray for my co worker. I'll tell you what, you start praying for that person, you pray for your enemy. More than likely, I hope and pray that God is going to change your heart and help you to see them for who they are as a child of God. And just maybe

you'll understand the backstory, that maybe they just need to be loved, they need to be appreciated, they need to be listened to, to. Maybe they're having a hard day at work, they're stressed, they're sick, they just received a diagnosis, their child is struggling in school. Maybe they're at odds with their spouse and they're looking to get a divorce. Who knows what it could be? Because in the end, how many of us really, truly know each other and all of our challenges that we face, we may know to some degree, probably at a surface level, but we're scared because. Because we want to be vulnerable. We don't want to be vulnerable. We don't want to show a sense of that we're fallible. But guess what? We are. We're human. And I pray that as a church, we will come together in love, care for one another, pray for one another and listen.

So pray for this person over the next 40 days and see where God takes this. Have faith. Just maybe God will work a miracle in your life. And if so, I want you to share that story right here. Amen.

So with that Father in heaven, Lord, I pray be with our church and on this special momentous Sabbath, God, thank you for all that you have done for us, that you came into this world as a humble newborn, swaddled in clothes, and yet you grew up, you lived among the people, you talked with them, spoke with them, you joked, you comforted you healed and even challenged where needed to be. Help us, Lord, to be the faithful disciples you've called us to be. And may we be reminded of the promise that at the end, Lord, where we see that the linen and the cloth are neatly, separately laid down, we can find hope. That in the tomb, what would seem to be hopeless, we found great hope, just as Mary did. Give us courage, give us wisdom. And over the next 40 days, Lord, as we pray for our particular person, God, help us to be able to listen, to care, to respect, to trust, to be trustworthy. May we positively influence that person, Lord. And Lord, if possible, help us to lead that person to you. Help us to go with courage. And now may the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace. Thank you, Jesus, for all that you've done for us. This is our prayer. And all God's people said, amen.

Grace and peace.

My friends. Next week Bill's gonna come out and talk about angels. I will see you in two weeks. I'm gonna take a little time off. I love you. Go with God and pray for. Have a great Sabbath.