

Sermon: Hope in the Face of Poverty

How do we hold onto hope when the world feels unfair? How do we keep trusting in God's goodness when we see poverty, inequality, and suffering? Today, as we continue our Lenten journey, we reflect on the theme of poverty and the call to be people of hope—hope that is active, hope that shares, and hope that believes things can change.

Our Lent course reminds us that hope is not simply about waiting for a better future; it is about choosing to trust in God's promises and living in a way that brings those promises to life.

Hope is woven into the overarching story of Scripture—from the promises made to Abraham, to the provision in the wilderness, to the prophets calling for justice, and ultimately to Jesus proclaiming the Kingdom of God. God's story is one of hope breaking into human

suffering, offering a future rooted in the love and faithfulness of God.

The passage from Deuteronomy presents God's vision for a world without poverty: "There need be no poor people among you." But just a few verses later, we hear the reality: "There will always be poor people in the land."

This tension runs throughout Scripture. God provides abundantly—manna in the wilderness the Year of Jubilee as a reset for economic justice, and the prophetic call to defend the cause of the poor. But human sin—greed, oppression, and systemic injustice—creates barriers to that provision.

In response, God calls people to generosity: "Be openhanded toward your fellow people who are poor and needy."

But is the reality of the poverty and the realisation that there will always be poor amongst a contradiction?

Not at all. It is a challenge—a call to action.

Biblical hope is not passive optimism but active participation in God's work.

God provides abundantly, but human systems, greed, and injustice create poverty. Hope, in this context, is not passive; it is a commitment to generosity, a commitment to act in faith.

Our Lent course reminds us that God's provision is for all and enough for all, and it is our part in acting out in faith to ensure that no one is left behind or excluded.

Hope moves us to generosity, to an open-handed way of living that reflects God's own

abundant love. When we share what we have, we become part of God's provision for others.

Jesus begins his ministry with a powerful declaration:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor."

These words from Isaiah 61 frame Jesus' mission—not just to comfort, but to enact real change. They are revolutionary.

Jesus embodies God's restorative hope, healing the sick, feeding the hungry (Mark 6:30-44), and breaking down social barriers (John 4:7-26).

Jesus proclaimed a kingdom where the oppressed are set free, where the broken-hearted are healed, and where those who are marginalized are given dignity.

But notice what happens in the verses after this passage—his audience in the synagogue turns against him.

Yet, this message is met with resistance. The people of Nazareth, expecting a Messiah who would favour them, reject Jesus when he proclaims that God's blessings extend to outsiders as well. The blessing of God extends to those who we don't think are deserving of it.

This is the challenge of hope—it calls us beyond self-interest to a vision where all are restored.

The overarching biblical story affirms this hope:

- Amos envisions a future where justice rolls like a river (Amos 5:24).
- Jesus teaches that the Kingdom of God belongs to the poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3).
- Revelation promises a renewed creation where suffering and poverty are no more (Revelation 21:1-4).

Hope is uncomfortable because it demands change. It demands that we confront systems of inequality and be part of God's transforming work.

Our Lent course challenges us to see hope not just as something we hold onto for ourselves but as something we offer to the world. Jesus embodied hope through his actions—feeding the hungry, healing the sick, and standing with the outcasts. We, too, are called to live as bearers of hope, standing against systems that

perpetuate poverty and injustice, and living out Christ's call to love our neighbour.

Hope is not wishful thinking; it is action. Hope looks at poverty and says, "This is not how the world should be." Hope moves us to challenge injustice, to give generously, and to work for change.

As our Lent course reminds us, true hope is rooted in the knowledge that God is already at work in the world. We are invited to join in that work, to embody this hope—to be the hands and feet of Christ in a world that needs healing.

And we can only do this with confidence if we trust in the promise of the kingdom of God, even when the world feels broken.

The world can feel unfair. Poverty can seem overwhelming. But our faith calls us to hold onto hope—not a naïve hope that ignores reality, but a courageous hope that believes things can change. As we share what we have, as we challenge injustice, and as we trust in God's abundance, we live out the good news that Jesus proclaimed. May we be people of hope—hope that is active, hope that shares, and hope that believes in God's goodness. Amen.