

Got Hope?
Series: Life to the Fullest
Psalm 130; Isaiah 40:28-31; Romans 5:1-5
April 19, 2009

I was surprised by how sad I was this week when I heard that Harry Kalas had died. I mean, I didn't really *know* Harry, I had never met him. But of course, in one sense, *every* Phillies fan knew Harry Kalas...maybe any baseball fan. On the day he died, one of the video clips I saw was of Harry leading the song, *High Hopes*, after the Phillies won the NL East Division Championship in 2007. "Just what makes that little old ant, think he'll move that rubber tree plant. Anyone knows an ant, can't, move a rubber tree plant. But he's got high hopes, he's got high hopes, he's got high apple pie in the sky hopes..." High hopes. High apple pie in the sky hopes. The ant's hopes are in himself. His ability by a sheer act of will to move that rubber tree plant. "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can." The Phillies' hopes are in their pitching and their hitting. What are your hopes in? What high hopes do you have today? What are you hoping for?

We began a series of messages last week on this life we have because of Jesus' resurrection. "I have come that they may have life," Jesus said, "and have it to the full, till it overflows, more and better life than you can ever imagine." That's what Resurrection Day is about: life. Life to the fullest. One of the qualities of 'life to the fullest' is hope. Now, I think we all know what hope is. We all have hopes – high and otherwise. The dictionary says that hope is: The feeling that what is wanted can be had OR that events will turn out for the best, as in: *I'll never give up the hope that the Phillies will win the World Series this year.* Hope may also be a person or thing in which one's expectations are centered, as in: *Cole Hamels is our only hope.* Hope can also be a verb, as in: *I hope the Phillies win the World Series this year.* A life without hope is not much of a life. Prov. 13:12 says this: Hope deferred makes the heart sick.

I don't know what high hopes you came in here with today, but I know all of us are hoping for something. Maybe you are hoping for healing – physical or relational or otherwise. Maybe you are hoping for a job or a spouse or a baby. Some of us are feeling hopeful today and maybe some, *hopeless*. But life-to-the-fullest hope is not based on a feeling, as our hopes so often are. And life-to-the-fullest hope is not uncertain at all, like our ordinary, everyday hopes about the weather or our health or the Phillies.

In the Bible, hope is a joyful and confident expectation which rests on the promises of God. That's why it's joyful and confident. Because it is based on the person and promises of God. Jeremiah 29:11, one of the very first verses I ever memorized: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Psalm 62:5: Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from Him. Lam. 3:21-23: Yet this I call to mind and therefore, I have hope: Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.

God gives hope, our hope comes from Him, and as we call to mind God's love and faithfulness, we have hope. Psalm 130:7: O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is

unfailing love and with Him is full redemption. He Himself will redeem Israel from all their sins. Isaiah 40:31: ...but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. To those who put their hope in Him, God promises love, and redemption, and strength to carry on. Oh, you better know the promises of God if you want to have hope.

Life-to-the-fullest hope is ‘high hope.’ The original Hebrew words for ‘hope’ in the Bible mean to wait or look for with eager expectation. It is an attitude of eager expectation that something will happen. Not that something *might* happen. Biblical hope is the confident expectation that something *will* happen, and that something will be good. Because life-to-the-fullest hope is hope in God. And God is good.

Psalm 25:3: No one whose hope is in You will ever be put to shame. Will ever be disappointed, will ever be embarrassed that they put their hope in God. Psalm 146:5: *Blessed* is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God...” I could go on and on, but you get the picture. If you want to be full of hope rather than full of despair, *hopeful* rather than *hopeless*, you need to put your hope in God, not in yourself or any other person. Not in the government, not in your education, your job, your money, or your golf handicap. Again in Lam. 3:25-26: The LORD is good to those whose hope is in Him, to the one who seeks Him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

In the Bible, hope involves waiting. In fact, “Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength” is also translated, “Those who wait for the LORD will renew their strength.” And again from Psalm 130:5: I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word I put my hope. Just because you put your hope in the Lord, does not mean that God acts instantly to provide whatever you are hoping for. When we put our hope in God we have to be willing to wait for God to act. Now, waiting for God is not just killing time. This kind of waiting is expectant waiting. When you wait expectantly for God to act, you wait confident that He is at work. “It is good to wait *quietly* for the salvation of the Lord,” Jeremiah wrote. When you put your hope in God, are you willing to wait for Him to act? Are you willing to wait quietly, with confident expectation, and not with resentful grumbling?

And while you wait for God to act in your present or your future, it’s helpful to remember how God has acted in the past. You see, hope that looks forward with confidence is based on looking back at God’s promises and God’s mighty acts. Because our hope is based on who God is, what God has promised to do, and what we know God has already done. The problem is that we so often feel *hopeless* about the future because we look back at *our* past. We don’t look back and remember and trust what *God* has promised, what God has done for us and others. We look back at what *we* have done, how things have worked in the past for us. And when we look at ourselves and the results of *our* past decisions, very often, that leads us to feel hopeless.

Listen: If you want to live a life of hope, you need to change the way you look back. You’ve got to stop looking back at what *you* have done in the past, and start looking back at God’s promises and what God has done in the past. Because when you do that, this is what you will find: You will find that God is faithful – every time. He never makes a promise He doesn’t keep. God promises never to leave you. He promises to bless you, to love you, protect you, live in you,

give you strength, forgive *all* your sins, meet *all* your needs, give you hope and a future, to work *all* things together for your good.

You don't have to take my word for it, you can look it up in *the* Word. The Bible says two main things about hope: Put your hope in God and put your hope in God's Word. *This* is dependable, *this* is reliable, *this* is true, *this* does not change like your feelings do. The promises of God are found in the Word of God. And that's why the psalmist so frequently says: Psalm 119:114: You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in Your word.

Romans 15:4: For everything that was written in the past [Paul is talking about the Scriptures] was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. The very purpose of the Scriptures is to encourage us so that we might have hope, so that as we look back at all that God has done for His people in the past, we might look forward expectantly and confidently to the good things God has promised us. The writer of Hebrews says this: Hebrews 10:23: Let us hold *unswervingly* to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful.

You see, hope is dependent on who God is, not on ourselves or our feelings or how things look to us. But you gotta hold unswervingly. You gotta decide. "*Put your hope in God.*" "*Put your hope in God's Word.*" It's a choice, a decision, it's intentional. You've gotta plant your feet and make a decision that you will not be moved. Make a decision today that you WILL put your hope in God, you WILL put your hope in His Word and you WILL wait confidently and expectantly to see what amazing things God will do in your situation. You will not just drift into hope. You gotta decide. To put your hope in God means that you are willing to wait, willing to endure, willing to hold on unswervingly to the confident expectation that God *is* always at work around you. And that He is at work for your *good*, that He is able to make all things work together *somehow* for good, whether it seems like it to you or not.

To put your hope in God's Word means that you live in the confident expectation that what God says is true – not just for everybody else, but for you. That God is who He says He is and that He will do what He says He will do. That God will keep His promises. Hope is impossible without faith. Heb. 11:1: Now faith is being sure of what we hope for... NLT: Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen. Hope is impossible without faith. Our faith – our confidence, our hope – is in God and in His Word. In His promises, in His mighty acts.

In this Easter season, we remember what God did in putting Jesus to death for our sins and then raising Him to life so we could live life-to-the-fullest forever in a relationship with Him. Romans 5:1-5. And hope does not disappoint us... Sometimes we are hoping for things that we do not really expect to happen. We call this "hoping against hope." We *hope* the cancer will be cured, but we don't really believe it will be. We *hope* life will get better, but in our heart of hearts we don't really believe it will. And so we feel *hopeless*, not *hopeful*. Sometimes we don't even allow ourselves to hope for these things because we don't want to "get our hopes up." We don't want to hope for something and then be disappointed. But the Bible says that hope – hope that is based on who God is and on what God has done – will *never* disappoint us: because God has poured out His love into our hearts....

Hope does not disappoint those who follow Jesus because our hope ultimately rests on God's love demonstrated by the cross and the resurrection. The reason our hope will never let us down is that God will never let us down. Listen: God decided long ago to love you, no matter what you do, in spite of what you do. God's love will never give up on you. His compassions never fail, they are new every morning. Great is *His* faithfulness. And *therefore*, we have hope. Not because *we* are faithful. Oh, if we're only hoping in ourselves – in our faithfulness, in our abilities, like the ant – we *will be* disappointed. We have hope – not because we are powerful, we are smart, we are successful. We have hope because of who God is.

Because God raised Jesus from the dead we know that God can do anything. That's what we said last week. The resurrection proves that God can do anything. Still. That means that God can do anything in *your* situation, no matter how unlikely or impossible it may seem to you. God can do anything. God can heal you or your loved one. *But if He doesn't*, He can give you the strength you need to endure, more than that even – to soar like the eagles. God can get you a new job. *But if He doesn't*, He can provide all that you need while you wait.

So put your hope in God. Because God is good and God is faithful and God is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, far above all we could ever ask, imagine, or think. Put your hope in God's Word because it contains the promises of God for you, and it is true and it will never steer you wrong or disappoint you. Our hope is not in ourselves. Our hope is not in hope. Our hope is in God. Our hope is in Jesus. Our hope *is* Jesus, because only in and through Jesus and faith in Him are we “justified” – made right with God. Only in and through faith in what Jesus did for us on the cross can we live in a relationship with God. Only in and through Jesus can we have life to the fullest.