

## HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

1<sup>st</sup> reading / 3<sup>rd</sup> portion – Revelation 19-20

2<sup>nd</sup> reading / 1<sup>st</sup> portion – 1 Samuel 11-12

INTRODUCTION: All of us were once living in the captivity of sins and during that time our lives were totally hopeless. We did not know where we were going nor what our purpose on earth was. But through the Gospel our hope was renewed, and our lives became purposeful. This is because we now know what God has laid ahead of us the hope of salvation. And therefore, we have nothing to be worried about anymore.

That same situation is what transpires when we read 1 Sam 11:1-9.

The threats of Nahash to the men of Jabesh must have made their hearts tremble. They must have started to lose their hope for the future as seen in verse 3. I will be reading from the ESV translation this morning.

1 Sam 11:3 - *3 The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Give us seven days' respite that we may send messengers through all the territory of Israel. Then, if there is no one to save us, we will give ourselves up to you."*

But our merciful God would not let them diminish.

He called out Saul who gathered men throughout Israel and together they sent back a message. It was a message of hope and a message of deliverance and salvation to the men of Jabesh. And they were indeed glad because the message renewed their hope.

1 Sam 11:5-9 - *5 Now, behold, Saul was coming from the field behind the oxen. And Saul said, "What is wrong with the people, that they are weeping?" So they told him the news of the men of Jabesh. 6 And the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul when he heard these words, and his anger was greatly kindled. 7 He took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces and sent them throughout all the territory of Israel by the hand of the messengers, saying, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen!" Then the dread of the Lord fell upon the people, and they came out as one man. 8 When he mustered them at Bezek, the people of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand. 9 And they said to the messengers who had come, "Thus shall you say to the men of Jabesh-gilead: 'Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you shall have salvation.'" When the messengers came and told the men of Jabesh, they were glad.*

And just like the men of Jabesh, there are still so many people out there today who are still living in the dark. These are people who are suffering from critical diseases, hunger, depression, wars and a countless number of other terrible situations which makes them lose hope for the future or see no meaning in life.

We are therefore, you and I, called just like Saul to reach out to them and share with them the good news about the hope of salvation that has been revealed to us through the Gospel of Jesus Christ our savior because it pleases God for us to do so.

In Chapter 12 of 1st Samuel, which speaks of Samuel's farewell after many years of service, he asks all of Israel to testify against him if he has done any act of injustice towards them as a servant of God.

1 Sam 12:2-3 - *2 And now, behold, the king walks before you, and I am old and gray; and behold, my sons are with you. I have walked before you from my youth until this day. 3 Here I am; testify against me before the Lord and before his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Or whose donkey have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? Testify against me and I will restore it to you."*

Israel went on and justified him to be free of any blame throughout his work.

1 Sam 12:4-5 - *4 They said, "You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man's hand." 5 And he said to them, "The Lord is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand." And they said, "He is witness."*

Here Samuel acts as a good example to all of us as God's servants that our service should be just and transparent because that's what boosts our confidence that we are indeed the inheritors of God's Kingdom.

When we read 2nd Timothy 4:6-8 Paul shows us the confidence that comes with being righteous before God.

*6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*

It gives us courage to face even the most difficult situations in our lives. This is because we are very sure that God is by our side and if God is by our side none can be against us. See Rom 8:31:

*31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?*

In verses 6-12 of 1st Samuel 12, Samuel explains to Israel the mighty deeds of God for His chosen nation and how they ended up forgetting Him and even asking for a king that they could see instead of God Himself. In the same manner, we have also been made the children of the Most High through Jesus Christ. But we cannot boast that we have been totally transformed. We do stumble in one way or another but that should not make us lose hope for the future as the Holy Scriptures still give us hope.

*1 Sam 12:20-22 - 20 And Samuel said to the people, "Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart. 21 And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty. 22 For the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself.*

God will not forsake us. He is even inviting us all to His great offer of mercy. We even see this in today's second portion reading:

*Isaiah 55:1 - Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

Finally, our last reading of the day gives us assurance concerning our hope that we will reign on earth as king-priests, ruling over the ordinary mortal people who are alive on earth at the time of Christ's return.

*Rev 20:4 - 4 Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

After knowing all of this, which other promises or motivations should we need? The Holy Scriptures have already revealed to us all things that God has prepared for His faithful servants. It's therefore upon you and me to choose whether to remain faithful to Him and become inheritors of these great promises or neglect them and die forever.

Let's close by reading Matthew 25:31-34:

*31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

God bless you