

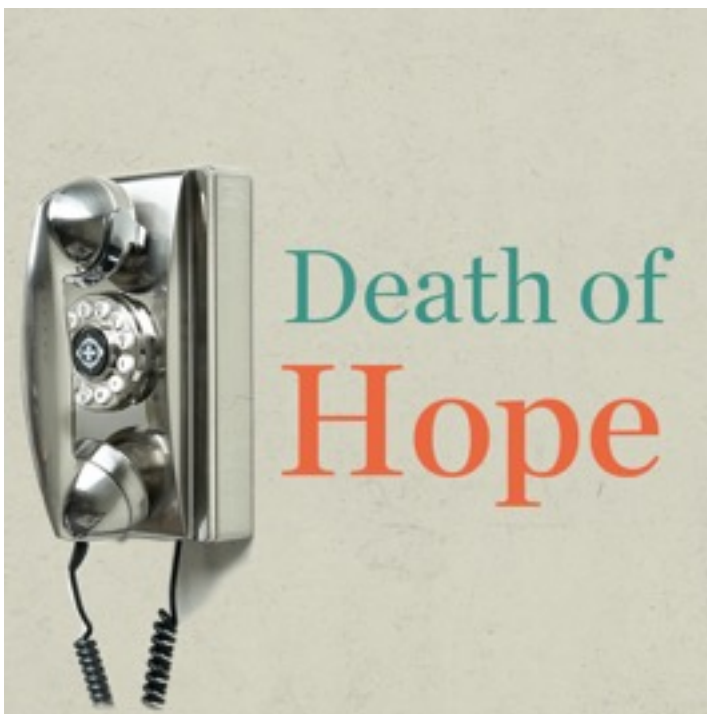


Lets Talk about Hope
“Death of Hope”
Courage Church
Detroit, MI
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We are in a series about Hope.

so, let talk about hope.

Today will probably be the heaviest message in this series, I will be doing a lot of teaching... Some of it may be a bit to follow, and if you miss anything, as always we will have it on our online campus and our mobile app.



We will be in the old testament a lot today, because we are talking about “The death of Hope.”

And Jesus death was prophesied over and over and over in the old testament, and before he came, the Hebrew people had their own system for justification. They had their own sacrificial system to wash away their sins, and, to them, possibly even more significantly, their guilt.

Their regret.

The things that they carried with them weighing them down.

But you see we are in a series right now about HOPE. and the beautiful thing about the Hope that is found in the death of Jesus Christ is that he said “it is finished.” - the work that was needed to be done in your life was already accomplished 2000 years ago on the cross of Calvary.

You don't need to feel hopeless anymore.

Because we are supposed to be image bearers of the Hope that is found in Christ Jesus. But how can you be a carrier of the hope of the world to the world, if you are weighed down by your own hopelessness?

Who you are in Christ is a really big deal.

Because who you are without him is a total mess.

Who I am without him is an ugly, complete mess.

Last week we talked all about the life of Hope. About how Jesus Christ came to establish a Kingdom and he wants you to be a part of it. Today, as we study his death, we are going to look at how it impacts what our life should look like in this earthly Kingdom that He established.

So if you would, open your bibles (or your Courage Church mobile app) to 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. Many of you know this is one of my favorite passages of scriptures in the whole bible. and I am hoping that this series

and particularly this message, helps you to understand why. But it is my belief that the entire gospel is sort of wrapped up, here.

“From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Prayer.

Several years ago, when Brooklyn was only a couple of months old and Milly was a little older than Fiona is right now, we decided to move from our apartment in Manhattan, to Rockaway Beach. I had always dreamed of living at the beach, and when I realized that in New York City, it's cheaper to live at the beach than it is in Upper Manhattan, we began looking for places to rent out there.

The problem was, the Rockaways were over an hour train ride from Manhattan, so when we went there to look at apartments, it was kind of an all day event. You couldn't just go, look at one apartment, and then go home. And I remember this one particular day so clearly even today, but it rained that day. In fact, it poured that day.

and the thing I remember the most is not the rain, even though there was a ton of it. The thing that I remember most is the way that my wife prepared for the rain.

Because Dawn knew that it was supposed to rain that day (I never check those things)... and so in anticipation of the rain, she packed all of us a change of clothes.

And when we got there and it was pouring out, and we were all soaking wet simply from walking the first block from the train to a store where we sought cover, I asked her... “if you knew it was going to rain, why would you fill the bags with a change of clothes, instead of just packing an umbrella?”

and she told me, “because this way we can go puddle jumping with Milly.”

and we walked about 30 blocks that day from the train to the house that we were looking at, Milly jumping in puddles all the way there just having a great time... and of course we had to change our clothes before we could go look at the apartment.

But I learned something from Dawn that day.

“Never miss an opportunity to jump in a puddle.”

And I tell my daughters this now. Every time we are walking up to school and they are in their rain gear, I try and remind them, “never miss a chance to jump in a puddle.”

Sometimes I have to stop them. I try and always let them jump in every puddle once at least... but on the way to school in the crosswalk where the crossing guard is, there is little dip that constantly fills with water and the girls always jump in it... and sometimes I find myself across the street and walking to the school only to turn back and find the girls still jumping in the puddle on the other side of the road.

but you see, Dawn went out of her way that day in the Rockaway's to create a moment with our daughter.

and now its a tradition. Puddle jumping is totally engrained into our kids hearts and minds.

and that may seem irrelevant to your life in this moment at this time. But I want it to compel you to ask yourself this question:

are you being intentional with how you live your life? With how you live hope? With how you demonstrate hope?

but really, before you can answer that question, first you need to answer this one:

Do you believe that God has a story that he is trying to tell with your life?

Because if you do believe that, then you have a reason to be intentional.

Let me give you the answer before we get into the explanation.

He does have a story he is trying to tell through you... Ephesians 2:10 says that we are his workmanship. Created in Christ Jesus for good works.... which God has prepared BEFOREHAND.”

Before the beginning of everything, God had already created a story that you are supposed to be a part of.

but then it says “that we should walk in them.”

there is something on our end that we are supposed to do to contribute to the story that Jesus is trying to write.

Dawn and I tell a lot of stories. Sometimes I feel like I tell more than I live, and I am trying really hard to work on that because if my life is more exciting on paper than it is in experience, then all that shows is that I know what things could be but I am not willing to work hard enough to actually experience them.

To actually experience life in the way that it actually is meant to be experienced.

But we tell a lot of stories. We have directed many music videos together, and short films, and we both do a lot of writing.

and so we know that great stories, especially narratives, they require several things, and one of the dominate characteristics of a great story is that somewhere along the line, someone changes. Usually, a character is one way, and, when faced with some sort of opposition that they have to

overcome, they have to figure out a way to do something different than what they are used to doing in order to overcome.

But the fact is, especially in real life, people don't want to change.

So what they do in the movies, and in other forms of storytelling, to make change feel realistic, is this... the way that they get a character to change is they have to create what is called an "inciting incident."

In Hollywood, an inciting incident is "A plot point in the first act which disturbs the life of the protagonist and sets them in pursuit of an objective."

It is something that forces them to change.

In Star Wars Episode 4, the inciting incident was when Princess Leia got captured right at the very beginning by Darth Vader and the Evil Empire, setting into motion the escape plan by Luke Skywalker and Han Solo.

It forced change.

In possibly the most influential movie of all time, the great "Dumb and Dumber" the inciting incident is when Mary Swanson, in the airport, sets her briefcase down filled with money because it is supposed to be a drop in exchange for her kidnapped husband's life.

But Lloyd, the limo driver doesn't realize that it is a drop, instead he thought that she accidentally left it in the airport and so he then made it his life's goal to now take this brief case to her in Aspen.

That was an inciting incident.

In real life... my hope and prayer for you is that all of you will one day have the opportunity to rescue a princess from an intergalactic space ship.

and that you will succeed in your mission.

Because if our church is full of people who have successfully completed missions like that, I am pretty sure reaching Detroit will be easier than I thought it was going to be.

But that may not be all of our stories.

In real life, one way to put it, is that great stories are always birthed out of great needs. One great way to figure out what the inciting incident needs to be in your life is to ask this question:

What breaks your heart?

What is the thing that you see every day that makes you say, over and over like a broken record... "SOMEBODY SHOULD DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT!"

Is it a broken adoption system?

Is it emancipated youth who are thrown into the world too soon with nothing?

I remember in LA for a while it was homeless families. Kids living on the street. "Somebody should do something about that."

So the dream center started a family floor.

What is it in your life? In your world??

and in case you haven't figured it out yet, you are SOMEBODY!

And maybe whatever it is that is breaking your heart is likely the very thing that God is trying to use as an inciting incident in your life to bring hope to a situation that seems like its hopeless.

Most of us who are familiar with the gospel, we have probably heard it be referred to as "The Greatest Story ever told."

well, the greatest story ever told was birthed out of a great need.

It was birthed out of a broken heart for a broken people... So Jesus Christ came in the flesh and completed the work on the cross paying the price for our sins. He came in the flesh, the bible says he was "fully God, and fully man." because the Son of God striped himself of his humanity, stepped off of his throne and came to earth as a servant... a vessel of hope to a world who didn't even know what hope was.

But what does the verse in 2 Corinthians 5 say? "From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer."

The thing that we once even regarded Christ as... flesh... now we regard NO ONE as.

That is incredibly significant.

We no longer define people by the things that they do here on this earth... the things that they do as flawed humans. Because we once regarded Christ in that way... which was easy to do because he was perfect... but now we don't. Now, things are different. Now, like it says a couple of verses later:

"we are ambassadors for Christ." - please note this, and we will get into this more next week... but we are ambassadors for a risen Christ. Not a Christ who is sitting dead in the ground somewhere. He is risen, and our RISEN king makes his appeal through us.

He makes his appeal through us!

So every finite moment of our lives, and our stories, should be a part of a much larger story that Jesus is writing...

There is a story that he is trying to tell. And it is a story of hope. And every time he fills your life with hope it should leak out from you and into Detroit and beyond. Acts 1:8 says that "we will be witnesses to be in Jerusalem, and in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth."

everything about our story, as Christians walking in the saving grace of Jesus Christ, should lead people to that one.

But before we can fully understand our story, first we have to understand his story.

And as you read through 2 Corinthians 5, you realize something. His story is right there.

2 Corinthians 5 is an account of Jesus handing us the story. The story is reconciliation.

But how do you reconcile people back to Jesus?

according to Paul, you do it merely by being an ambassador for Christ.

Carrying his story into every facet of your life.

and what is his story?

We read it already today. The whole thing can be summed up in the last verse in 2 Corinthians 5.

2 Corinthians 5:21.

“He made him who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf. That we might become the righteousness of God in him.”

How many of you know, there is so much to the gospel?

There are many facets of it.

The thing that makes the gospel so amazing, is the message is so easy for you, and so easy for me, because all we have to do is say yes to it. Christ did the hard part. He did the complicated part.

Paul says “we implore you, be reconciled to God.”

What is he saying?

He is saying, Christ did the heavy lifting. He did the hard part. He carried the heavy burden. He took everything that you should be held responsible for and instead he paid the price for those things. and all you need to do is be reconciled to him.

The message of the cross, I believe is the most powerful message in the entire world. It was the most spoken of and prophesied account throughout the Old Testament... Jesus fulfilled many prophecies and by doing so did an incredible work in all of our lives that day.

I think sometimes we downplay the significance and the widespread affect of what he did. Isaiah 53 speaks of a suffering servant who was pierced for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. Two very different things that were done to him to cover two very different problems in our lives... transgressions, those outward actions.. the sins... the thoughts that we actually acted out... he was pierced for those.

An iniquity is not an action... many times iniquity will turn into transgression, but an iniquity is an inward motivation. It is the desires of our heart that are no good... and for our inward motivations he was bruised... he bled inwardly for our inward motivation.

Its like when Jesus said, "You have heard it be said... anyone who commits murder..." - murder is a transgression.

then he says "But I say to you, anyone who hates his brother is liable to the fires of hell.." hate is an iniquity.

Both are sins, but they are different.

and for our inward motivations he was bruised... he bled inwardly for our inward motivation.

And for our outward actions he paid an outward price.

Right after that it says that upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace...

and then it says that “by his stripes, we are healed.”

We are talking about a wide range of things accomplished on the cross. In this one act Jesus wiped out all of the garbage in our earthly Kingdom, and that is why it is so significant that he is inviting us to participate in a new Kingdom. Because in the Kingdom of God, you have access to everything accomplished on the cross.

Before all that, it says “our griefs he Himself bore; our sorrows he carried.” (Isaiah 53:4)

It is something that goes beyond just our sins, and all the way to our peace, and even our healing.

The cross is literally the most hopeful act in human history because everything about it is what was necessary to fix our broken world.

and for us today, especially if you aren't really familiar with the old testament, it is hard to understand why Jesus had to be all of those things.

Why he had to physically die for our sins...

But you see (Romans 6:23) the bible says that “the wages of sin is death.” and it has always been that way. And in the old testament, even long before Isaiah, they knew this.

But before Jesus, every time people sinned, which, just like today, was ALL THE TIME... before Christ they had to wait until the Day of Atonement each year to truly put that sin behind them.

This is recorded in Leviticus 16, it is talking about the Day of Atonement, or YOM KIPPUR.

It is to this day regarded in Jewish culture as “the holiest day of the year.”

The reason that it was/is considered the holiest day of the year is because it was the day that sin was dealt with for all of the people, for the entire year.

Now keep in mind that where in Jewish culture they does not believe that Jesus is the Messiah, Christians believe that this entire scenario is a foreshadowing of what Jesus would accomplish for us on the cross. To me, it is so vividly clear, when you read Isaiah, and Leviticus, and the rest of the Old Testament and see the parallels to the new testament. and I will show you some of those today.

So what would happen in Leviticus was the high priest would act as a mediator between the sinful people and God. and they would bring before the priest two beautiful goats. Stainless, spotless goats. and they would cast lots for the goats, and one would be a sin offering, and the other would be a scape goat.

and the first goat the high priest would slaughter as a sin offering. He would be killed in place of the people... dying the death that the sinful people deserved to die, because the wages of sin is death and they were all guilty.

This act is called "Propitiation."

John puts it this way, in first John 4:10

"In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

That is what the word propitiation means... it essentially means "in place of"

When the high priest slaughtered the first goat, he was doing so on behalf of all of the sins of all of the people, and the goat was dying "in place of" the people.

The first goat was a replacement.

And of course we know from the gospel, that Jesus was our replacement. He died in our place. He was the first goat.

But for a lot of us, the gospel ends there.

The story ends there.

With Jesus Christ being brutally killed because of our selfishness, and our crimes, and our immoralities. Because somebody has to be.

But I don't believe that the gospel actually ends there.

Because on the day of atonement, there were *two* goats.

The other goat, a lot of bibles call "the scape goat." - more than any other, I love what the ESV does though. There are a couple of times that I have found in the ESV, where the translators get to a word, and instead of trying to translate the Hebrew into English terms that we can understand, they just plop the Hebrew word right in there. Possibly because no one English word can do justice for what is being said. That is what they do here. For the second goat, the Hebrew word is "Azazel" so the ESV translation will say things like it says in Leviticus 16:10 -

the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the Lord to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to **Azazel**.

it almost feels like the same word is being used in two different ways in this verse. The lot fell FOR Azazel. and it was sent away TO AZAZEL.

That is actually the Hebrew, and it means "taken away, or take him away."

So here is the deal. The first goat is killed. He is the sacrifice. He is the gospel that a lot of us have been taught all of our lives. and it is the gospel. But its only part of it.

The second goat, the scape goat or the "Azazel" was not slaughtered.

What would happen with the Azazel, was the high priest would lay both of his hands on this goat, and he would confess all of the sins of all of the people, INTO the goat.

and then he would release the goat into the wilderness. And the bible literally says that the goat then carries the sins of the people away, into the wilderness.

Forever.

Leviticus 16:22 is in my belief, one of the most powerful verses in all of the bible:

“The goat bore upon itself all of their iniquities to a land not inhabited.”

to a place that they can never be brought up again.

The theological term is “expiation” - when something is “expiated” it is “taken away.”

We know that Jesus was the fulfillment of Yom Kippur. We know that because of what he did, we don't have to sacrifice animals anymore. We know it would really really really weird to do anything like that now. Because Jesus died once and for all, for everything.

But this second goat, it changes things. Because its telling us that not only did Jesus die in place of us and the death we should die for our sins, but he also actually took our sins away. and if he took them, where did they go.

and of course that brings us back again to the beginning. 2 Cor. 5:21 -

“He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ.”

Hebrews puts it this way in Hebrews 12:2 “with the joy set before him, Christ endured the cross... despised the shame, and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

We did a whole teaching on Joy and we talked about this verse and the line that says “with the joy set before him...” it is not saying that he had joy about going to the cross... it is saying that we are his joy... we mean everything to him, we are worth it, to him! So, With us, the ones he was saving, set before him, he endured everything that the cross came with, but in addition to all of that, he despised our shame.

and I have tried to be prayerful this weekend about the best way to describe this to you. Because I don't want to get too graphic and I don't want to make anybody too incredibly uncomfortable, and I also don't believe there is any good in reminding you of the things you have done that you are not proud of... but the truth is, the gospel isn't comfortable. and the things in your mind that you haven't let go of are the areas of your life that you need Jesus to work in the most. Those are the areas that this message matters the most in.

What Jesus went through was the farthest thing from comfort.

But think about who you were when you were your worst.

Think about the things that you did that you know are wrong. The things that the moment you did them, you felt shame.

Deep shame. Regret.

I know that there have been times in my life, that I have just exploded with a thousand words that look nothing like Jesus, in a tone that does not sound like Jesus, and I've cut people to the core by using my words as destructive weapons against them.

I've done so many things that I know were wrong. Things that have hurt others.

and what happens to me in those moments, is as soon as I am able to get away from them, BAM. I am hit with something in my gut. The only way I can describe it is a weight. A heaviness that I feel like could bury me.

Because I truly do care about people, and when I let them down or even worse, when I cut them down, or bring them down, it weighs on me.

Have you ever *felt* guilty?

and notice I say felt... I know that you have *been* guilty. I know that apart from Christ you *are* guilty. But for a moment I want you to search your feelings.

Well, when I read things like Hebrews 12:2 and I think about moments like that in my life... the pages of my story that I hope nobody ever reads... that I wish I could just rip out and throw into the fireplace...

and then I read that Christ despised my shame... I can't help but wonder...

did he feel the weight of this? Of the things that I've done that I want no one to see?

I know he died in place of this... but did he feel the weight of this?

and as I think about the second goat who carried the sins on himself and I think about not only the death that Jesus died because of me but of the weight that I put on him while he was dying... and literally I start to break.

and because my mind is pretty screwed up I begin to think about even worse things... about crimes that by most human standards would be considered much much worse than anything that I have done.

Like people who kidnap little kids and then raise them up only to sell them into sex slavery.

and people who kill other people. and rape other people. and take away someones entire future in one selfish moment... and the things that I naturally would consider to be the worst of the worst awful sins that we all know exist but try to not talk about very much.

Because when you think about Hope, you don't think about those things.

Nobody likes to think about those things.

but I wonder in my mind and in my heart... do the people who do those things... those horrible things... do they do them with a clear conscience?

Or do they feel the weight?

Like I feel when I know my life is not right.

I can't imagine how heavy it would be.

and I think there is probably both. There are some people who do bad things and they feel it, and they regret it and they know its wrong and it weighs on them, and there are others who, because of how much evil is in them, they have become overtaken by it and how hard their heart has become they can without any thought at all do those things.

But Jesus Christ, at any rate, was the righteousness of God... so he literally had to of felt it. He felt the weight of the things he did not do.

Because he was perfect, and yet was willing to take on all of these things on our behalf. He let himself become stained after living a stainless life.

Can you imagine what that would do to *your* mind?

You see, there is something bigger about the gospel then just a guy who died in your place.

Dying for someone is a huge deal. But Jesus is not the only one who has ever done that. There are martyrs throughout history who have died for their faith... Like William Tyndale who we talked about two weeks ago. He was killed for spreading the gospel. He was an amazing man.

But he was not Jesus.

Simon Peter, The Rock that Jesus built his church on, was killed for his faith. Many believe he was crucified upside down because he did not

believe that he was worthy to die the same type of death as Jesus. Peter changed the world, and he died for Jesus.

But he was not Jesus.

there are many others that have died for their family members, that have taken the place of someone that they loved to spare that persons life... people that have given up their lives for their friends...

those are acts of grace and those people should be honored because there is great honor in that.

But only Jesus can do this. Only God can be sinless, and yet can be sin. He did not just die for us.

Think about that. See if your mind doesn't explode, or at least your heart doesn't break....

Jesus, dying on the cross... being murdered.

Dying for the people that were killing him.

and at the exact same moment carrying the weight of what they were doing to him.

and feeling it all.

and then there is this: Before Jesus was killed, Johns gospel records in John 19, that Pilate sought to release Jesus, but the crowd opposed him adamantly.

And so this crowd, that Jesus was dying for while carrying the weight of everything that they did and everything they were doing now, they began chanting something.

They began chanting (John 19:15) "take him away. take him away." and its only after saying that, that they said "Crucify Him." which is the part that we always quote. But its only part of it.

Take.
Him.
Away.

Azazel.

and this is just me, but I can't help but wonder if there was nothing more difficult for Jesus than the role he had to take on of the second goat. Of Azazel.

Because that is the part in the bible when it says that God had to forsake Jesus, because he can't be in the presence of sin. If there wasn't a presence of sin on our perfect savior in that moment, then God could have stayed with him the whole time. But he didn't. He had to forsake him. So now all of the sudden the perfect, sinless life that Christ lived is stained, and thus and forsaken by His Father... he is carrying this unbelievable weight on him. He is carrying our sin away from us, forever.

and for the first time in his life, he is truly all alone.

It utterly breaks my heart when I think about it because the first thing I do is I think about how I put him there...

but at the same time, when I understand the grace of God, it gets me so excited because essentially what Jesus was doing on that cross was he was taking our stories, and he was making them HIS story.

He literally took everything on himself.

Basically this is what happens:

We write these horrible stories, all throughout our lives, and then all of the sudden Jesus comes in and says "you know what, I am going to take that story and I am going to make it a new story, I am going to rip out all of the pages of all of the junk that you did that you should never have done, but you did..."

and here... here is a new book. An open book. A clean slate. A blank canvas. The pages are empty.

Write a better story.

and nowhere else will you ever find a hope like that besides by the blood of Jesus Christ.

But he didn't just tell us to write a better story.. he actually gave us the story we are supposed to write.

(Matthew 28:18)

“Go therefore into all the world and make disciples of ALL nations.”

Now if you would just go with me for a moment to this scenario.

The disciples who are there for this getting this commission, previously, they had walked with Jesus. They had spent years with him, they witnessed first hand his incredible ministry...

He rose people from the dead.

He performed a lot of miracles that made it pretty clear that he was God. Then, not long after that, they watched him be murdered. He was taken away, and murdered. And then they put him in a tomb.

and then even when the tomb was empty, there was a bit of uncertainty there.

Luke's gospel says that Peter ran to the tomb and he found it empty and he saw Jesus' clothes there and so he went home marveling. As if he was surprised that Jesus was not there...

What was it going to take for them to understand?

So then Jesus reveals himself to them, they see the nail piercings in his hand... they basically need every bit of information possible before they

actually comprehend what was happening... and then finally they realize without a doubt that Jesus is God.

Nothing else was ever enough, but the resurrection. Which is where we are going next week.

but these men had an inciting incident.

An unbelievable life changing moment... the kind you can never turn back from... and not long after, the Holy Spirit came upon them and they went out and they changed the world with it!

Saul had an unbelievable inciting incident.

This evil man is persecuting Christians and everywhere he goes, left and right he is persecuting the church and all of the sudden he is traveling and Jesus literally overtakes him and the bible says that Saul is knocked to the ground and then Jesus says to him "Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

Notice this: He didn't ask "why are you persecuting the church?" or "Why are you persecuting Christians?"

Why did he word it like that?

Because Christians were telling Jesus' story. Sometimes with their words. And sometimes with their lives.

Christians are Christ's ambassadors.

The only way that hope was going into the world was through its ambassadors, and Saul was persecuting them.

But Jesus didn't just grab ahold of Saul so that he could ask him "Why are you persecuting me?"

no. no.

He was literally stirring something up in him. He was doing something in the life of Saul.

He was changing his name.

From Saul, to Paul.

He was changing the man that was going to change the world.

and he did. Paul went on to write half of the new testament and just live the gospel.

He turned the world upside down!

Because the TRUE story of the cross changed everything in his life, and the moment it became real to him was the moment he decided “my life is not my own.” He realized, “the way I am living is not worthy of the type of death Jesus died... I need to change. Now!”

What about you?

Are you living your life in a manner that is worthy of the type of death that the King of the universe died on your behalf?

Or do you keep looking back on your past and constantly disqualifying yourself from any sort of future because you don't think you are worthy.

One of the things that is so amazing about Yom Kippur, and everything recorded in Leviticus, is that even in the Old Testament, long before Jesus Christ came and brought us a Hope that will endure forever...

We still had this day. Once a year.

One day a year in which God said, “it is time to move on.”

It is time to take the past regrets, the guilt you feel, the shame you feel, the anger you feel...

it is time to move beyond that and into a brand new day.

you can't carry the previous years baggage into the new year. When Azazel left, he took the sins with him. And he is not coming back.

and then Jesus came and basically said "that was a great system... it worked... but I give you a new system... and you don't have to wait for Yom Kippur every year anymore. We can take care of this right here and right now."

Remember, 2 Corinthians 5 says "in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them" - we are ambassadors of that.

we don't count your trespasses against you.
God certainly does not count your trespasses against you.

So why are you still holding on so tightly to them?

The bible is so clear:

"If **anyone** is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

If anyone is in Christ, he is full of hope.

Life is just way too short to waste it in the past, when you could be jumping in puddles. When you could be spending it on people, and on moments that matter for eternity. When it could be spent finding needs and filling them, and living a life worth the price that Jesus paid for you.

And I don't know what inciting incident God is using to trigger it in your life, but don't run away from it. He has something he is trying to do in you. If you have lived without hope for so long, he wants to be your hope, right here, and right now.

so many of us spend our lives searching for our hope... But you have to hear me in this place today... Hope has found you.

Hope is reaching out to you.

Earlier I quoted Hebrews 12:2 for you. I said it several times... we said, "Christ, with the joy set before him endured the cross, and despised our shame..."

He took it. He took it all. He accomplished everything. But do you know what it says at the beginning of that verse? You have probably heard it a million times.

it says "Look to Jesus, the author and the perfecter of our faith... who with the joy set before him (with us set before him), endured the cross (on our behalf), despised the shame (so we wouldn't have to), and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

He is the author and the perfecter.

It has always been his story.

you and I we get to be ambassadors of it.

We get to fill the pages, with the stories of our life.

And that is why your story matters.