

Zechariah 8  
Feilding Baptist  
27.7.25

*Call to Worship*

Welcome to worship with Feilding Baptist Church!

I read these words this week

Titus 3:3-7 NLT

3 Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other. 4 But—

When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, 5 he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.[a] 6 He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. 7 Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life.

These words make me want to worship!

Let's pray

Father, these words are so good! Before we behaved, you revealed your kindness and love! You washed away the wrongs and through Jesus, poured out the Holy Spirit on us, how awesome! Through your grace and mercy we can have confidence in life to come, in eternal life. Father, thank you all that you have done for us. Holy Spirit, please bless this time together, and this space, in Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

*Message - Hope on a Plate*

We work with God to achieve the desires of Christian hope

The future is not always rosy. Sometimes there are things before us that we'd rather not face. But here in Zechariah 8, the future is very positive, and brings much hope.

Pausing to think about hope, name some things you are hoping for?

When it comes to things that we hope for, how many of these just fall into our lap? Like, if I hope to go to Australia next year, how will that hope come about?

As we read chapter eight from Zechariah, that follows literally last week's chapter, but flows from the application from verses nine and ten; administering true justice, showing mercy and compassion, not oppressing anyone, or plotting evil against each other. Ah, before you think, oh dear, we've heard all this before, look for the five areas of hope the people have in chapter eight. And how they're going to get there. Sometimes their actions bring about what they're hoping for. Hope isn't always served on a plate. Let's read;

Zechariah 8 (NIV - UK)  
The Lord promises to bless Jerusalem

1 The word of the Lord Almighty came to me.

2 This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'I am very jealous for Zion; I am burning with jealousy for her.'

3 This is what the Lord says: 'I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the Faithful City, and the mountain of the Lord Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain.'

4 This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each of them with cane in hand because of their age. 5 The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there.'

6 This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'It may seem marvellous to the remnant of this people at that time, but will it seem marvellous to me?' declares the Lord Almighty.

7 This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'I will save my people from the countries of the east and the west. 8 I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem; they will be my people, and I will be faithful and righteous to them as their God.'

9 This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Now hear these words, "Let your hands be strong so that the temple may be built." This is also what the prophets said who were present when the foundation was laid for the house of the Lord Almighty. 10 Before that time there were no wages for people or hire for animals. No one could go about their business safely because of their enemies, since I had turned everyone against their neighbour. 11 But now I will not deal with the remnant of this people as I did in the past,' declares the Lord Almighty.

12 'The seed will grow well, the vine will yield its fruit, the ground will produce its crops, and the heavens will drop their dew. I will give all these things as an inheritance to the remnant of this people. 13 Just as you, Judah and Israel, have been a curse[a] among the nations, so I will save you, and you will be a blessing.[b] Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong.'

14 This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Just as I had determined to bring disaster on you and showed no pity when your ancestors angered me,' says the Lord Almighty, 15 'so now I have determined to do good again to Jerusalem and Judah. Do not be afraid. 16 These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to each other, and render true and sound judgment in your courts; 17 do not plot evil against each other, and do not love to swear falsely. I hate all this,' declares the Lord.

18 The word of the Lord Almighty came to me.

19 This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'The fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months will become joyful and glad occasions and happy festivals for Judah. Therefore love truth and peace.'

20 This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Many peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come, 21 and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, "Let us go at once to entreat the Lord and seek the Lord Almighty. I myself am going." 22 And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the Lord Almighty and to entreat him.'

23 This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'In those days ten people from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, "Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you."'

#### Footnotes

Zechariah 8:13 That is, your name has been used in cursing (see Jer. 29:23); or, you have been regarded as under a curse.

Zechariah 8:13 Or and your name will be used in blessings (see Gen. 48:20); or and you will be seen as blessed

#### *v1-5 Harmony and Peace in the City*

Here we have Zion, or the city of Jerusalem, devastated from the invasion of the Babylonians seventy years earlier, broken, and almost beyond repair. This was no insurance job. You couldn't call Babylon back to repair their damage. Babylon was no more.

In the first verses, God affirms the place and the people. They are not on their own. God is with them, is passionate for them. What looks hopeless will not be. In fact, old people will again sit in the city square on their walkers. And they will watch children safely playing football. Here we have peace and joy mixed in with hope. Good times are to come. Is it too marvellous or impossible? Yes, looking at the unbuilt temple and broken city walls, it must have looked overwhelming. But God affirms, this isn't impossible. This is a dream to work towards. This is not hopeless.

We look at our world today, with pollution, and evil, and damage to the natural world, and it can look pretty hopeless too. But we read in the Bible that God will restore the earth, renew the earth. Hardly too hard for a God who created the earth. This is our hope. One day we will live in a time without evil, without selfishness and greed, being able to sit and enjoy each other's company in a clean and fresh environment. This is our hope for eternal life.

#### *v7-11 God's faithfulness and righteousness*

In verse seven, God says, I will save my people. We can be God's children. Don't reject God! And God's children will be saved from the east and the west. Oh, the countries of the east at the west. This is strange, why not the south and the north? And didn't Babylon only come from the east? What about Egypt from the south? Think about when we talk about east and west together. This is an expression that includes the whole earth, no one missing.

And how will they get there? The magnificent v8, for me the key verse in the chapter. God will bring them back. They are brought back because of God is true or faithful, and righteous. God is reliable, God is faithful.

Righteous, is interesting, and English loses the original significance.

How do you define righteousness? The understanding of God's righteousness in Hebrew and Greek is very similar. It has the character of a verb, rather than a noun. What righteousness has come to mean today, in our English world, is God's moral purity. A noun. This is miles away from what is a very important concept. God's righteousness has two elements, forgiveness and justice. This is where we get the concept of rectification. God's righteousness is about restoring things to how they were intended to be, before evil mucked things up. Making right, what is wrong.

And that plays out in justice too. Throughout the Old Testament God is described as a God of justice. This isn't a bad thing! God's justice is about restoring, not punishing (retributive). Which is why we get all upset about injustice, we want to put it right. When we are outraged on behalf of the voiceless and oppressed, and take action, we are doing the work of God. We are reflecting God.

What's that verse in Amos, let justice flow, and righteousness like a never failing stream (Amos 5:24). These are things, these are characteristics of God that we can be grateful for, and pray for, look for.

So here in v8, faithfulness of God, justice of God, forgiveness of God. Isn't this so well summed up in Jesus 500 years later!

Why would God do this for us? Have we done anything to deserve or earn God's favour?

This week I was reading about Abraham. He is held up as an amazing man of faith. The covenant God made with Abraham continues to give us hope (Genesis 12:1-3). But what should give us even more hope, is that Abraham was just an old man with no human potential. He was too old to have children, and so was Sarah. He wasn't even circumcised. But God chose Abraham. This is massive! This is all about God's favour, God's grace, and righteousness.

God also chooses us before we do anything to earn God's favour.

*v12 God's blessing of abundance*

God's blessing comes with the dew and the rain, with crops and food to eat, v12. And like in verse nine, where strong hands are to be a part of hope, of rebuilding the temple, here in v13 strong hands are to bring blessing. Do not be afraid in v13 is repeated at the end of v15, like a lead in to the things God expects of the people He has blessed, speak the truth, render sound judgement, don't plot evil against each other (v17).

We have a responsibility in bringing hope.

*v19 Mourning replaced with joy*

There is further hope in v19, where the fasts of the past, the times of mourning and remembering are replaced with feasts of celebration and joy!

*v22-3 People of all nations seek the Lord*

And finally, is it significant that, v23, the people of the world are grasping the hem of a Jew. Not the Jews, just a Jew. Who do you imagine this might be? Of course they wouldn't have called this person Jesus back in Zechariah's time, they would have thought of this person as the Messiah. It looks very like what actually happened, people from all over the world, grasping the hem of Jesus in submission and following.

How are the people of Jerusalem to respond to this? By being compassionate and hospitable. The same for churches around the world. Let us also be compassionate and hospitable so that people might come to know Jesus, to also grasp His hem, and follow Him. And have hope. Together.

Check out Psalm 48 and note the links to Zechariah 8