

HOPE IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD!

Scripture used: [Philippians 1:20 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

As we begin a new sermon series, Pastor Hurmon wants us to acknowledge the tragic reality of the global situation. Beyond the COVID-19 lockdown and economic crisis, there is so much that is not as it should be - including the political divide and systemic racism. The abnormal has become normal. For many of us, the immediate crisis spurred us to respond or to find a way to cope. Now, however, it has become clear that this upside down world will be our reality for quite some time, possibly years. Despite all this, there is reason for hope!

KEY POINTS

- 1) **We are living in an upside down world, causing hope to leak out of our lives.** Normally in times of crisis, we experience unprecedented unity. After 9/11 the entire Congress stood together and sang “God Bless America.” Now the partisan divide seems to be tearing the country apart. Normally in times of crisis, people demonstrate unprecedented love. During Hurricane Katrina people flew from across the country to lend a hand. Now people are screaming at each other because of the decision to wear a mask. Normally churches are a sanctuary for people who want to gather in worship. Now we have to close our buildings and instead find other ways to worship. All this combines to threaten our hope — meaning “to desire with expectation of obtainment or fulfillment — at a time when we need it most.
- 2) **Our dreams will be turned upside down in three different ways.** Human history and our own experiences are full of examples when things get turned upside down. St Paul experienced all of these, since his original plan from [Romans 1:13 \(NIV\)](#) was completely destroyed. Yet in his faith he found hope. This is different from normal hope, which requires specific circumstances or emotions. We need to discover Paul’s secret to this sustainable hope that rests on God no matter what happens!
 - a. **We are asked to surrender our dreams.** Pastor Hurmon used the example of his wife Dr. Rhonda. She loves working directly with patients, but God called her to a leadership position at the hospital. This required much more work in administration but is having a huge impact on the community. She is now fulfilling a larger part of God’s plan.
 - b. **Once accomplished, our dreams do not fulfill us.** Alexander the Great is a legendary figure. He defeated army after army, finally conquering all the major societies in the western world. This was his goal, but when he finished the last battle he wept. He reached the pinnacle of an almost impossible goal and felt no joy or satisfaction.
 - c. **A broken world breaks our dreams.** People suffer from accidents, illnesses, and loss every day. None of us can predict what will happen to us, but we all know that we will deal with tragedy.
- 3) **We must have a vision that is greater than our dreams.** Pastor Hurmon told the story of British runner Eric Liddell. A son of missionaries and a devout Christian, he set many records in the 100 meter dash. In the 1924 Olympics he refused to race on Sundays, instead competing in the 400 meter dash on another day. Before that race, another Jesus follower handed him a note with [Samuel 2:30 \(NIV\)](#) reminding him that God honors those who honor Him. He won the race and continued to live an extraordinary life of putting God first. He died doing missionary work in China, and his last words summarized a message of hope in an upside down world: surrender. Surrender to God, and find a place in His vision for the world.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Everyone struggles with dreams turned upside down. The difference is how we react. What is the current state of your dreams (intact, threatened, upside down)? How are you choosing to react?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - St. Paul wanted to arrive in Rome as a free man, traveling to synagogues and churches preaching the Gospel. Instead he showed up as a prisoner in chains, but he did not despair. His life could bring honor to God no matter the circumstances. Do we believe this about ourselves? What circumstances have been hardest for us to persevere through? Are we truly living to please God?
- 3) **DO** - This week’s affirmation is “I will honor God with my life in every circumstance!” Pray to God asking for guidance about what this means in your specific situation. Invite others to join NBCC’s Gatherings. Many people struggling during this pandemic would love the opportunity to hear a message of hope in the comfort of their home!