

HOPE IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD, WEEK 3!

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

OVERVIEW

This is the third week of our sermon series “Hope in an Upside Down World!” Pastor Hurmon is confronting the biggest challenge we all face: finding hope and purpose in our daily walk with God. This has never felt harder than it does right now. The abnormal now seems to be normal. Pain and suffering seem to be a part of our daily experience. Many things that usually give us hope have been stolen away. And what little hope remains feels like it’s leaking. Because of this, we are now in the same situation that Paul was in 2,000 years ago! He was imprisoned as an innocent man, writing to fellow Christians who faced wave after wave of violence. Like us, they were losing hope. And like us, they needed to hear the God-given truth that Paul shared. Be bold for Christ, no matter what circumstances you’re in. Honor Him in whatever way you can today.

KEY POINTS

- 1) **We must reject the victim mentality.** The world is unfair. A global pandemic is bad enough. We are also reeling under the weight of an economic crisis, the reckoning of systemic racism, and raging wildfires. We are surrounded by suffering, confusion, and fear. It feels like hope is leaking out of our lives. Pastor Hurmon warned us against a profound shift in our identity from someone who can do all things through Christ to someone who is in a permanent state of “nobodyness.” There is no circumstance that is stronger than God. There is always a way to honor Him, even if it is only our “righteous character” as Paul writes in [Philippians 1:11 \(NLT\)](#).
- 2) **Jesus followers are all in a state of becoming.** Paul wasn’t perfect and he didn’t expect anyone else to be perfect either. [Philippians 1:9 \(NLT\)](#) prays that we will “keep on growing in knowledge and understanding.” That applies at all stages of life, and in every circumstance. We are always becoming. This is how God deals with us; we are works in progress. Each day can be full of growth, even during a global pandemic.
- 3) **Ask the questions that will help us find sustainable hope.** Pastor Hurmon asked our church four difficult questions. He knows that we may not have good answers. What matters is to keep asking them.
 - a. **Are we focused on what really matters?** Paul wanted his life to honor God whether he lived or died. He zoomed out from the daily concerns of a broken world and tried to see his life the way that God sees it.
 - b. **Is God our instrument in life, or are we God’s instrument?** It’s okay to be concerned about our own lives. We all start out that way. But our hearts can change during that daily process of becoming. We can replace our priorities with God’s.
 - c. **Who is our spiritual mentor?** We all need guidance when facing hard decisions. God often works through other people to help us choose the path that leads to peace and life. For example, Elisha relied heavily on Elijah. Who is your Elijah?
 - d. **What’s our criteria for a successful — i.e. well-lived — life?** Pastor Hurmon shared a personal goal. He wants to be able to look back at the end of his life and say “I did the best that I could to bring honor to God.” That is his single biggest concern as he navigates life.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians as a prisoner. And he was writing to a group of Christians who were being violently persecuted. Like us, they faced an upside down world. But Paul didn’t allow them to despair or adopt a victim mentality. Instead wrote to them with a message of hope, love, and life. Can you identify with both their struggle and their hope?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - The most important part of today’s message was about the process of becoming. We start wherever we are. Pastor Hurmon reminded us that God may not be #1 on our list of daily priorities, but He should be on there somewhere! Be honest with yourself. Where is God on your list? What’s above Him that maybe shouldn’t be? Do you desire God to rise to His rightful place in your priority list?
- 3) **DO** - This week’s affirmation is “I choose to be God’s instrument!” Reread the passage of [II Corinthians 5:15 \(NLT\)](#). Paul specifically tells us that we must start living for God, not ourselves. Pray to God for clarity about one single way you can be His instrument this week. Listen for His answer and follow through!