

Hope for God's Glorious Freedom

 **liberated like creation (vv.18-22)**

 **waiting patiently (vv.23-25)**

In the Name of Christ Jesus our living Hope, dearly redeemed children of God:

A recent Russell Crowe movie, *Noah*, “received generally positive reviews from critics and grossed over \$359 million worldwide.” (Wikipedia) But apparently its message missed was not salvation but environmentalism. Man’s fallen reason cannot figure out catastrophe, suffering, nature without God’s Word. Another environmentalist, Harrison Ford bought a Wyoming ranch some years ago. “I was raised by a couple of Lefties,” he said. “My parents did not practice any organized religion, although my father was raised Roman Catholic and my mother was Jewish. But there was always an ethical context to our lives, a very strong notion of individual moral responsibility.... I have a sense of awe, a sense that nature is so complex and fascinating that it’s as close as I’ve come to understanding the notion of divinity....”¹

Christians naturally take care of creation to honor the Creator. But modern environmentalism is its own religion according to them. It substitutes science, human observation and opinion, for God’s Word. It denies a personal God, especially the Creator who shares His thoughts in the Bible. It mocks the Biblical Flood as mere myth and entertainment. It decides personal “ethics” by opinion and appetite. It has no hope of eternity, except like Eastern *nirvana* – literally, “blown out” into nothingness. It fits well with *Star Wars* (Harrison Ford as Han Solo): “May the Force be with you.” It makes me all the more grateful to know the God of the Bible who calls us today to **Hope for God’s Glorious Freedom...**

 **liberated like creation (vv.18-22)**

If all we take from these observations is prideful condemnation of unbelief, how are we any better than the Pharisees of Jesus’ day? Too often our heads are bowed with sadness and hard work to support yourself and your family. Persecution comes from letting your light shine as a Christian, while worry can keep you up all night. It’s not hard to figure out that suffering is real.

The Lord’s Apostle Paul suffered too, but he kept adding up. God opened heaven to him to share an awesome computation with us. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write: ***“I reckon that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”*** Put all your troubles in this life on one side of a balance scale, and then try to put heaven’s glories on the other. You can’t find a scale big enough for the glories of heaven. In fact, if you could go there now and look back on life’s little day, you’d cry, “I’d suffer that a thousand times to get to this place!” But be glad, my friend. You only have to do this once. ***“Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.”*** (Hebrews 9:27 NIV84)

Judgment by whom? “Mother Earth,” angry enough to send a flood? Or the Savior God who used the Flood to save His Church and now sends mini-floods of Baptism to cleanse our souls? God’s rainbow reminds us that God will never destroy the earth with water again. Next time: fire. But in God’s Word we also see heaven at the end of the rainbow. Note Paul’s description: ***“The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”***

¹ Harrison Ford in *Parade Magazine*, July 7, 2002, pp. 4f.

When God first created Adam and Eve, they rebelled in the Garden of Eden. So the LORD God said to Adam, **“Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”**” (Genesis 3:17–19 NIV84)

Creation has been suffering death and decay ever since. My friends and I came upon a dead cat while playing one summer. I never smelled anything worse until a high school classmate pulled a dead lamb from its mother to save her. Three days dead, it came out in pieces. Because Adam sinned, our Creator gives us constant reminders that **“the wages of sin is death.”** (Romans 6:23) If we could hear plants and animals talking², we would know how creation longs for the Day when it will be clear who belongs to God by faith in Jesus. There will be glorious freedom then because God’s Son will finally reign with the Father for all eternity. **Liberated like creation, we now Hope for God’s Glorious Freedom...**

waiting patiently (vv.23-25)

“Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.” Patience is like a pack mule putting one foot in front of the other all the way up and out of the Grand Canyon, staying under the load until the Master takes it off.

The Israelites were commanded to give the first sheaf of grain or bunch of grapes to God as “Thanks!” to the Creator. But **firstfruits** also express trust for more to come. I like to write my first check to God for this reason: thanks and trust. The Holy Spirit is a **firstfruit** Gift from God, on deposit with more to come. Whenever you sing God’s praises in church or in your heart, this down payment appears. The Holy Spirit shows Himself in Christian congregations like ours when God’s children of all ages tell friends about Jesus and give time caring for God’s land and His house. Everything good we think or do for our neighbor thanking God comes from the **firstfruits of the Spirit** on deposit in our hearts.

But far more is coming. We’re adopted by God in Baptism, but not home yet. Soon these bodies will be raised for paradise – no more sickness, sorrow, death or pain. Christ will glorify our bodies like His. This hope rekindles our faith day by day for heaven’s joyful reunion with believing loved ones, home with God at last. **“Forever with the Lord...”** (1 Thessalonians 4:17) What a glorious hope we have.

Christian hope is one of three things that last forever. In the Great Love Chapter (1 Corinthians 13), we asked our professor how this can be: **“Now these three remain: faith, hope and love.”** Perfect **love** and **faith** forever with the Lord, we understand. But **hope**? **“Who hopes for what he already has?”** Why keep hoping in heaven? Dr. Becker answered, “Hope is the eager expectation of good from God, infinite in imagination. Around every corner a new surprise. We will never exhaust heaven’s wonder.”

Don’t fret when the rich and famous make millions mocking God and His Word. He gives them the lesser blessings passing away with earth. To His humble children confessing sin and rejoicing in God’s forgiveness our heavenly Father gives living **Hope** in His own Son Jesus, now exalted in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords. God kept His promise to send His Son to suffer and die; He will surely be faithful when the last trumpet sounds to create the new heaven and the new earth as promised. The next time someone says to you, “Save the planet!” tell them, “You’re too late. God the Creator already saved the planet, **“for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** (John 3:16) Hope in Him! Amen.

² Luther’s *Postil*.” Baker Book House, re-printed 1988, Vol. VIII, pp. 103f.
For the study behind this sermon or for copies email m.cordes@comast.net .
You can also call: 651-484-1169. Hear the sermon at www.wels.us/newlife .