

2014_11_09 Pentecost 22
Ascension Lutheran Church, Batavia IL
Pastor David Pfeiffer

Hope Comes with a Shout!

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

INI

Grace and peace to you in Christ Jesus, Who we can be certain will come, because He has come, so that He might come to bring us hope today. Amen.

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

¹³ But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

This is the word of the Lord.

Hope Comes with a Shout!

1. It is the certainty of a shout that is coming
2. It is based on a shout from the past
3. It brings a shout which changes our lives today

We pray, O Lord, make us ready, aware, and hopeful of Your return. Amen.

By the word of the Lord, dear fellow redeemed,

What makes us shout? Anger? Sorrow? Urgency?

We want to shout in anger, "Not fair" We are fed up with the way things turned. God had no right. Or maybe we want to shout in sorrow, "Why, Lord?" An emptiness is left in our lives that we think will never be filled. Or maybe we want to shout in urgency,

“Watch out!” Danger is imminent. If we would only do things differently, we can change things; we can control things. What makes us want to shout?

Is it anger? We are so fed up with the way things turned out. We should have done things differently. But they had no right. It makes us want to shout in frustration! Is it sorrow? There is nothing left in us. It has all been taken from us. Why? It makes us want to shout with longing cries! Is it urgency? Danger is imminent. If we don't do something, there is no telling what will happen. Things are on the brink of disaster. It makes us want to shout: “watch out!” What makes us shout?

There was something in the wind that made us want to shout that day. It was more than the bitter winds and piercing rain that howled across the open fields highway 30 just south of Aurora. The cars lined the driveway of the cemetery – but the wind and rain were so bitter that most people stayed in their cars. There was a bitterness that pierced us all that day. It didn't just make you want to stay in your car, it made you want to drive away – far away.

It was just a year and a half ago when we said good bye to Jeff. A year and a half, and some of us can still feel the bitter void where the wind is howling.

It makes us want to shout. To shout in anger, “Not fair” We are fed up with the way things turned. God had no right. It makes us want to shout in sorrow, “Why, Lord?” An emptiness is left in our lives that we think will never be filled. It makes us want to shout in urgency, “Watch out!” Death is imminent. If we would only do things differently, we can change things; we can control things. It all makes us want to shout.

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

Hope. Hope is the certainty of what God will do in the future, based on what God has done in the past, which changes the way we live today. You have been born into it. As Peter writes: “He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” There is another shout and it changes everything. For Christians, this is a hope that comes in the midst of all the shouting; but it shouts louder. A shout in the future, a shout from the past, it changes things for us today.

Hope comes with a shout!

1. It is the certainty of a shout that is coming

A shout changes everything. He will descend with a shout and everything will change.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye – there is a shout and a trumpet. A shout rings forth so you can even feel it and the blast of the trumpet rumbles like thunder. He speaks with the voice of an archangel, powerful, and clear. Jesus comes on the clouds of heaven, in a way that we can hardly imagine – every eye can see Him, even those who pierced Him. There are not two returns of Jesus as some Millennialists claim. But this is the one and only final coming of our Lord; the one in which He raises all the dead and gives to you and all who believe eternal life.

He shouts in triumph: “Come forth!” And the hearts of all people are awakened so that they see Him. Some to everlasting terror. Some to everlasting joy.

For some, this shout terrifies. For those virgins in our parable who were not ready for His long delay, there is frantic confusion and despair; for they gave up on His promises and forgot about His Word.

For those of whom Amos had written, there is terror even greater. It was a day they thought would bring them good. They thought it would bring light. They have done so much for the Lord. And look how He’s blessed them. They live in haughty houses; they plant valuable vineyards; they come to church and offer their worship as if it that is what makes things right. But the Lord knows their ways. They hate the one who speaks uprightly; who preaches rightly about sin and the call to repentance. They take bribes; they afflict those who are righteous. They tread down the poor and drink of the spoils. They hide their sins away in dark corners and follow the self-expressions of the world. They pretend the Lord is with them. They cry “peace! peace!” when there is no peace. And when He descends, His shout changes everything. As Amos writes, “It will be darkness, and not light. It will be as though a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him.”

But to you it is not darkness; it is light – because you are certain of the shout that is coming. The fulfillment of all for which you wait. His shout awakens you and all who believe that Jesus died and rose again. And with a word He changes everything: “Come forth.”

From His cross He looked the darkness of death in the face and shouted: “It is finished.” From His grace, He calls forth a new creation. He snatches you from the destruction that is coming upon all sin; all that angers us, all that saddens us, all that brings us urgency, is buried in His coming and you rise to new life, to be with Him forever. You are changed. Jeff is changed. For this mortal shall put on immortality and this

corruption will put on incorruption. Then will be brought to pass the saying: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

To Jesus, it could be a whisper. But for our sakes it is a shout. He needs nothing more than a whisper; for death is nothing more than sleep to Him who is Lord of life. Death has no mastery over him. At the last trumpet, He descends with a voice that raises the dead to life. Hope comes with the certainty of a shout that is coming.

2. It is based on a shout from the past

A shout will change everything. In fact, a shout has changed everything. Hope is the certainty of what God will do in the future, based on what He has done in the past. Hope comes with a shout from the past.

Do you get the sense that Martha wanted to shout? Mary and Martha sent Jesus word almost a week ago. What reason would He have to delay so long? He's come to the aid of so many others – strangers even. Did He not love Lazarus like a brother? Did He not love her? Anger? ... She is fed up with the way things turned. Jesus had no right to help so many others, but not her brother. Sorrow? Nothing left. He was taken from us too soon. The distress is more than she can bear. Urgency? Death is imminent. She must do something; things are on the brink of disaster; what can we do to stop it from happening?

Jesus needs to come. But He didn't come. And now their brother is dead, for over four he's been decomposing, rotting and stinking in the grave. When Martha goes out to meet Jesus, it is as if she's ready to shout! "If you had been here, my brother would not have died."

But Jesus delays on purpose. Before he reaches Bethany where he finds Mary and Martha, He tells his disciples. "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe."

Jesus needs to come. And He has come. But Martha, have you no hope? Do you not see this one you call Lord is more than another Rabbi? You cannot control death. You cannot change it. You cannot tell death what to do anymore than you can tell God what to do. And it does take everything from us. It is a distress that is more than we can bear. It is imminent, and no matter what you might do – to protect those you love or yourself; you can't stop it. No matter how you might shout.

I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. That you may believe that I am the resurrection and the life. And he cried with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth!"

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

Hope comes with a shout. Hope comes shouting at death, and death cannot bear it. Hope looses the bound body of Lazarus and looses the pains of death. For Jesus' shout is not like ours. Death cannot withstand Him. When He gives Himself willingly into our anger, our sadness, our urgent confusion, He offers the only life that was not deserving of death and so He shouts at death and changes everything. We can be certain that He will come with a shout, for He has come shouting: "O death, where is thy sting?" This Jesus God has raised up and made both Lord and Christ.

Hope comes with a shout from the past.

3. It brings a shout which changes our lives today

A shout changes everything. Or does it? What has changed? Our lives seem to go on unchanged. What does it matter what will happen when the Lord returns? What does it matter what He did 2000 years ago for Lazarus? What does it matter to me today? No matter how we shout – at the world, at sin, at our problems, at death, at God – nothing seems to change.

There was something in the wind that made us want to shout. It was more than the bitter winds and piercing rain that howled across the open fields highway 30 just south of Aurora. It was so bitter out, that most people stayed in their cars. And the bitterness pierced us all that day. Not only did it make you want to stay in your car, it made you want to drive away – far away. It makes you want to shout.

It makes us want to shout.

Do you want to shout in anger, "Not fair." How have things turned out in your life. It is it exactly what you imagined your life to be? We sometimes figure God owes us something different, something better. We want to shout. But He says, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there."

It makes us want to shout. To shout in anger, "Not fair" We are fed up with the way things turned. God had no right. It makes us want to shout in sorrow, "Why, Lord?" An emptiness is left in our lives that we think will never be filled. It makes us want to shout in urgency, "Watch out!" Death is imminent. If we would only do things differently, we can change things; we can control things. It all makes us want to shout.

Do you want to shout in sorrow, "Why Lord?" What has been taken from you? What is your emptiness that you think cannot be filled. We want to shout; but Jesus says, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there."

Do you want to shout in urgency, "Watch out!"? Why has Jesus delayed in responding? If He had been here sooner, things would be different. We must take things into our own hands; we must take control. We want to shout.

I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. That you may believe that I am the resurrection and the life. And he cries with a loud voice: "Hope come forth!"

And when the fight is fierce, the warfare long,
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong. Allelujah!

There is another shout and it changes everything. For Christians, this is a hope that comes in the midst of all the shouting; but it shouts louder. It is the distant triumph song – a shout which comes on the last day, which echoes from a day gone by, which shouts in our lives today.

Yes, "comfort one another with these words." As we hear these words of our text, the distant triumph song comes closer. It steals on our ears. This voice which descends from heaven on the last day, which brought Lazarus from the dead, comes closer and closer to us. It brings a shout of triumph which changes the way we live today. And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong. Allelujah!

We will get angry; we will sorrow; we will get caught up in false sense of control. But now we shout a new shout. We shout these words: "He has died. He is risen. He is coming again." Shout at anger: He is risen! Shout to your sorrows: He is risen! Shout in urgency: He is risen! Shout at the devil; Shout at your sins! Shout at death: Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again! And with this shout, God awakens our hearts, even as He will awaken all who sleep in Jesus. For on that last day, His voice

will bring together all saints in heaven and on earth – Jeff, Lazarus, you – into One New Creation – a shout which changes everything.

There was something in the wind that made us want to shout that day when placed Jeff's body in the ground. It was more than the bitter winds and piercing rain that howled across the open fields. Death howled across that field. Death with all its ugliness howled at us.

So I shouted. As I stood by the graveside death was howling across that field – the wind and rain were so loud, in fact, that I had to shout the words at the top of my lungs so the people just feet away could hear me. And do you know what words I shouted at Jeff's committal service? The words of our text. We need to keep on shouting these words of comfort. "Jeffrey sleeps, but Jesus comes that He may awaken him."

And so I will end by opening those pages of the committal service. I open the pages, still wrinkled from the rain that day. And may these words which I shouted at the committal of Jeffrey Cameron, be committed to your hearts as you commit yourselves to the Lord always...

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

¹³ But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.