

“Shaped Through Hope”

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Sermon Preached: Sunday 26th October 2025

Preacher: Pastor Jason Sander

Location: St Peter's Lutheran Church, Loxton

Sermon Text: [2 Timothy 4:6-8,16-18](#)

Well, my friends, grace, mercy and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

As I said at the start, we're finishing up our series of Gospel-Shaped Living and how Paul writes this letter, or two letters, to Timothy and instructing him how to lead within a congregation and to be a pastor of that congregation. And he starts off by encouraging him that it is the Gospel, that's the foundation, that we're shaped by the Gospel, that knowledge that we are loved by Christ, that we are forgiven.

And that shapes all Christians in our own ministry and how we live in this world. And then he's talked about how our prayer, we're shaped to pray as well from the Gospel, and then we're shaped for endurance, the Gospel gives us that endurance to keep on living in the faith. And that sort of touched on again today as well with hope, talked about contentment as well.

What else have we talked about? Anyone remember? What was that one, Jeff?

Courage, that's right. That's the other one too. So, today we're looking at how we're shaped through hope, the hope of the Gospel.

There was an athlete who had trained for years for the Olympic Games, for the Olympic Marathon. Every morning she was up before dawn, running in the rain, the wind, the heat, the cold, but none of it stopped her. Her legs ached, muscles burned, and some mornings she questioned whether it was actually all worth it.

But she kept going, because she could picture it, running that final stretch of the Olympics towards the finish line, the crowd on their feet, crossing the finish line at last, just accomplishing that feat in the Olympics. And so for her, every sacrifice, every early morning, every moment of pain was worth it, for that moment of joy, of completing the race. And that's what hope does.

It gives purpose to our perseverance as Christians. When we know what we're running toward, we can endure almost anything. And see, Paul, who's writing to Timothy, he knew that kind of hope.

But his finish line wasn't to receive a medal or to be greeted by a cheering crowd, it was meeting Jesus face to face. And so from this dark, dingy Roman prison cell near the end of his life, Paul writes not words of despair, but words of deep peace and confident hope for Timothy and the Church. And so Paul's life was shaped by the Gospel, and that Gospel has shaped him with hope.

I hope that even death itself can't destroy. Let me pray. Loving Father, as we gather here around your Word this morning, may your Holy Spirit transform us.

May your Holy Spirit grow us in knowledge of your Son, Jesus, and love for him, and service to others. Come, Holy Spirit, and may the words that I have prepared here speak to your people, and may they be pleasing to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Does anyone here like making candles at all? Doing homemade candles? Where you buy the wax, and you put your wick in, and you melt it and pour it in? Yeah? There was a lady who made candles as a hobby, a bit of a side business. And she loved that process of mixing the wax, even different colours, and putting different scents in as well, different smells, shaping each one by hand. And one evening she had lit one of her candles on the kitchen table, and she sat watching the candle flicker.

And she noticed something simple yet profound. As the candle gave its light, it was also giving itself. As the candle gave light, it was also giving itself away.

As the wax slowly melted and disappeared, this candle was being poured out. I say that because Paul looked at his own life like that candle, shining with Christ's light, even as his life burned away. But his life was not wasted.

It was spent on something beautiful. That's where Paul writes. He says, For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near.

And so he's not speaking with fear or regret, but with peace. His whole life, his energy, his love, his suffering, since that time he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, has been an offering to God. Paul gave his life for the gospel, and that's an inspiring story, but it's also challenging for us today.

Because as much as he's an inspiration to us, and as followers of Jesus, we all want to live like that. Here we find ourselves pulled in all these different directions, perhaps even hesitant to, living out our faith. There are times when our faith feels alive, when serving Christ brings joy, brings purpose.

There are other times when our faith perhaps feels weak, our prayers seem empty, our love grows cold. And see, the thing is, we long to live fully for God, but sometimes it just feels like we just have nothing left in us to pour out. We have nothing left to offer to God.

But that doesn't change who we are in Christ, because we have a God who's committed to us, who never walks away, who is constantly chasing after us, or running towards us, embracing us, like the prodigal son parable. And so when we're weary or distracted, he's calling out to us. He consistently calls out to us, and we can return to him again and again.

We give our lives to him in repentance and faith. We can return to the place where we know our identity was given, in our baptisms, when we were forgiven, where God spoke his

promise of love and faithfulness to us, or made part of his family. And see, the one who poured himself out for us on the cross, fills us afresh with his grace.

He pours his grace into us. And so Paul could face death without fear, because his hope was not in what he had done for Christ, but in what Christ had done for him. And that's the same hope that shapes our lives too.

Another question for you. Anyone here a Richmond AFL football supporter? Oh yeah! We have one. There was no one at the 8.30 service either, so it's pretty slim pickings, but they are a Melbourne team.

You know, for years, and I'm sorry for bringing this up, the Richmond footy club, they were a bit of a joke of the AFL, because they had season after season, which ended in disappointment. You know, clubs go through seasons, but Richmond was for a long time, just like Melbourne was for a bit there too. The fans knew the pain of getting close to winning, but falling short.

But then in 2017, after decades of frustration, everything changed. And they won that premiership. And their captain, Trent Cotchen at the time, he spoke later, he said, There were times when I doubted whether it was worth it.

But we kept showing up. Training, believing, trusting one another. And that made all the difference.

Perhaps that's what perseverance looks like. Not flashy, it's not easy. The daily choice just to show up, even when you're weary and discouraged.

I see Paul using that same image when he looks back on his life and he says, I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.

His faith wasn't about winning trophies or accolades, but it was about enduring for the sake of the gospel, trusting that Christ's victory was already his. And Paul isn't saying that he lived the perfect life, and for us, you know, Paul's life, we know that was far from the truth. But rather, he celebrates God's faithfulness to him.

He's saying, I didn't give up, not because I was strong, but because the Lord held me. He was strong for me. Makes me think of when he wrote to the Corinthians and he said, For when I am weak, then I am strong.

That understanding of how he learned to depend on Jesus' strength in his own life and ministry. You know, in our lives as followers of Jesus, the good fight isn't about competing against others. Part of the good fight is that daily perseverance of holding onto faith through struggles and weariness.

Holding onto it even in the moments of joy and achievement. We all face moments when we wonder if it's worth it. When discouragement sets in.

When our faith feels a bit fragile. When persevering is the last thing we want to do. When the race just seems too long.

But the gospel reminds us that we don't run alone. We don't run alone. Jesus has already run the race before us.

And for us as well. Before us and for us. He's already faced the cross.

He's already conquered death. He crossed the finish line with victory in his hands. When he overcame death.

And so now he runs with us. He strengthens us when we stumble. He lifts us up when we fall.

And that's gospel-shaped endurance. Not striving to prove ourselves. But trusting in the one who was already overcome.

And striving to be more like him. In the 2020 Olympics, there was an unknown runner named Perez. I'm going to probably say this wrong.

Jet, cheer, cheer. I'm sorry if I got that wrong. She's a Kenyan marathon runner, I believe.

And she crossed the finish line at the Tokyo Olympic Marathon. Collapsing into tears. She wasn't the favourite to win.

But years after quiet training and setbacks, she claimed the gold medal. I don't know if you remember that at all. But later she said, on reflection, she said, This was more than just a medal.

It was a gift from God for every hard day that I didn't give up. And I think Paul, as he writes, he looks towards a prize too. But it's a different kind of one.

He said, Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day. And not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. So this is not a crown of gold, but it's a crown of grace.

It's not earned by performance, but given by the righteous judge, who saves with his mercy. It's a gift for all who long for Jesus' appearing. And so that means the crown is waiting for you too.

Not because you've achieved perfection or tried to, but because you've trusted in the one who has Jesus. Because you are his beloved child through grace. And when that hope captures our hearts, it transforms how we can live out our faith today in the now.

We don't need to cling so tightly onto temporary things of this world. We can give generously. We can forgive freely.

We can love boldly. We can worship wholeheartedly. Because our lives are secure in Christ today and tomorrow.

There was a missionary who shared a story of being in prison for his faith in a foreign country. And he said the most challenging part, it wasn't the hunger, it wasn't the smells, it wasn't the isolation. It was actually the loneliness.

He felt forgotten by everyone. But one night as he quietly prayed in his cell, he sensed the presence of Jesus in a way he hadn't before. So close that it brought him to tears.

And he said, I was alone, but not alone. The Lord stood with me. It's that same assurance and reality that Paul speaks of when he says, but the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength.

The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. When Paul was alone in his cell, feeling perhaps abandoned, Christ didn't abandon him. Christ remained.

And that's the anchor of Paul's hope. Not the absence of trouble, but the presence of the Lord. So for Paul, he knew he might not be rescued from death.

He knew that he might not be rescued from death, but he would be rescued through it. He knew he'd be rescued through death. And the same promise is yours and mine.

Whatever trial you face, whatever fear grips your heart, the Lord stands by you too. He gives strength when yours runs out. He guards you when evil closes in.

And he'll bring you safely to his heavenly kingdom. That's gospel-shaped hope. Not wishful thinking, but confident trust in our Lord, who never leaves our side.

Hope isn't naive optimism. It's a deep confidence that no matter what happens, the Lord is faithful and he stands beside us, and our future is secure in him. It doesn't take away the struggle.

It transforms how we walk through it. So my friends, because of Jesus, we can pour out our lives because he poured his out for us. We can fight the good fight because he's already won the victory.

We can face death itself because he promises resurrection life. So whatever season you're in, whether your faith feels strong or weak, the same Lord who stood by Paul stands by you. He'll never leave you or forsake you.

And one day when your race is done, he will welcome you safely into his kingdom. For him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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