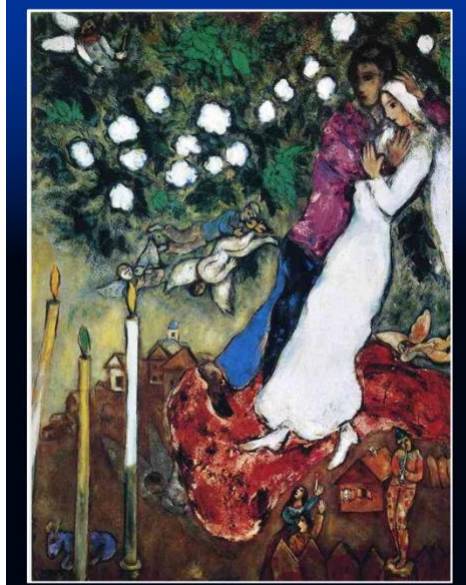


What Are You Hoping For?

Isaiah 54:1-3

Brian Morgan



Marc Chagall, *The Three Candles*, 1938-1940

Background

What role does hope play in your life? Do you ever allow yourself to dream? Do you believe God has a glorious future for you? If you are honest, I'm sure many of us would admit that it didn't take long for the idealistic dreams of youth to be dashed upon the unforgiving bedrock of reality. Perhaps you've lost your ability to dream. "What are you hoping for?" now strikes the cynical cord of despair – "why" hope at all? Who dares hope against hope? In chapter 54, the prophet Isaiah resurrects Israel's hope in the darkest days of her history, when the land was devastated and desecrated and her children taken into exile. Come and see how God's people, once battered and beaten break forth into resounding jubilation.

Sermon Text: Isa 54:1-3 (ESV)

- ¹ *"Sing, O barren one, who did not bear;
break forth into singing and cry aloud,
you who have not been in labor!
For the children of the desolate one will be more
than the children of her who is married," says the Lord.*
- ² *"Enlarge the place of your tent,
and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out;
do not hold back; lengthen your cords
and strengthen your stakes.*
- ³ *For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left,
and your offspring will possess the nations
and will people the desolate cities..."*

Discussion Questions

1. Preparation

- a. What is one thing you hoped to talk about today/tonight?
- b. What question(s) did you come away with from the sermon?
- c. What stands out to you the most from this sermon?

2. Sunday questions (pick 3?)

- a. What role does hope play in your life? Do you ever allow yourself to dream? What do you really long for?
- b. How have your longings changed or deepened over time?
- c. What are the two promises God promised Abraham and fulfilled in Jesus?
 - The gift of:
 - The gift of:
- d. Think of a time when you have experienced disappointment, loss, or a sense of abandonment? Does Israel's complaint resonate with you?
But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me." (Isa 49:14)
- e. What areas of your life might the label "barren," "unfulfilled," or "desolate" apply to?
 - *barren* (infertile, unable to conceive life, efforts wasted)
 - *unfulfilled* (never having had the opportunities I longed for)
 - *desolate* (ravaged, overrun, shunned by others)
- f. Have you seen God work through any of these areas of weakness to produce fruit in your life and the lives of others? How?
- g. What are the four necessary steps to renewing hope (like kindling a fire)?
 - The only lasting **foundation of hope** is...
 - The way to **ignite hope** is...
 - The way to **nurture and fuel hope** is...
 - I need to **embrace hope** by...
- h. Of those four steps, which ones are you deficient in?
- i. What practical steps can you take today to renew your hope?
- j. From Isaiah's vision, what are the visible signs that someone is living with renewed hope?
- k. Before retiring tonight, read Isaiah 49:14-23. What stirs you as you read this vision again?