

# Be Hopeful

"Follow Me to the End" Series, May 10 & 11, 2025 | Mark 13:24-27

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Hope is what we want.

**Ronald Reagan became President of the United States because he offered the country hope.**

In the 1970s, society was torn apart over race, sex, and war.

Inflation was out of control; confidence in government was low.

Americans were hungry for hope, and Reagan talked about letting freedom breathe.

Invoking the Pilgrims, he called our country a "shining city on a hill" over and over again.

The night before the election he said about this country: "... at last the sleeping giant stirs ..."¹

And many of us believed him. We felt the hope we longed for, and he won by a landslide.

**News of the Great Tribulation sounds like a message that drains all hope.**

Last week I briefly described the Great Tribulation at the end of history.

I mentioned the Antichrist and God's wrath and told you that history ends in a catastrophe.

That picture of the future can make hope sound like a candle flickering in the wind.

**However, Jesus follows it with what feels almost like a movie trailer about the next chapter—His Return.**

Our Scripture reading today was very brief. In it, Jesus gave just a few details about His Return.

Jesus isn't giving us an epic-length movie-like vision of the end of history.

He's giving us a trailer—setting up the main characters, the conflict, and the stakes.

He does answer the biggest question—does this all end well for God's people?

But here in Mark, Jesus doesn't answer all of our questions about the end.

He really doesn't WANT to answer all of our questions. He calls us to have faith. And hope.

**Hope must be real to matter; hope is more than a one-word slogan.**

Hope is more than a one-word slogan.

It's more than positive thinking or faith in progress.

Hope is tangible. Specific. Personal. That's the hope that Jesus offers.

**Jesus' Return offers hope. Real hope.**

Jesus promises to be with us Himself.

He promises Resurrection, first for those that belong to Him, and then for Creation itself.

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¹ <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/election-eve-address-vision-america>

He promises to rule and defeat evil finally and forever.  
It all starts with Jesus' Return.

### Jesus will return in glory and victory.

**Mark 13:24-25 tells us that creation will respond to the movement of the Creator:**

***"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken."***

This happens after or at the end of the tribulation.

Jesus gives signs that we will have seen before. During the tribulation, on two separate occasions, the Revelation tells us that the sun and moon were darkened and stars fell. Each time, what happens is more profound.

It's a sign that judgment is falling on evil. As **Joel 2:31** says:

***"The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes."***

But it is a sign to God's people that concrete hope is on the way.

Creation is responding to the fact that Jesus is on the move. This response stretches all the way to Heaven. Remember, Heaven, too, is created by God. Heaven responds as creation to the movement of its Creator!

**Mark 13:26 adds that Jesus will return on clouds of power and glory:**

***"And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory."***

Everyone alive will see Jesus coming.

He is riding on clouds of power and glory. It's a sign that Jesus is fully God.

It's what the prophet saw in **Daniel 7:13-14**:

***"I saw in the night visions,  
and behold, with the clouds of heaven  
there came one like a son of man,  
and he came to the Ancient of Days  
and was presented before him.  
And to him was given dominion  
and glory and a kingdom ..."***

This is the Son of God, God Himself coming in full divine power and full divine glory. There is no doubt about His identity or His ability to judge and save.

**A great victory will sit in the background.**

Between Revelation chapters 16 and 20, history and tribulation both climax in a great struggle.

The forces of evil rally to oppose God's people, and God pours out His wrath on them.

And Jesus returns. **Revelation 19:11** describes Him as a rider on a white horse:

***Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.***

He leads the forces loyal to God and the armies of heaven.

**Revelation 19:15** shows Him ready for battle:

***From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.***

**Revelation 19:21** is just one passage that tells us that the victory is complete:

***And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse ...***

This may be a different picture of Jesus than you have had in your mind's eye before.

**Jacob Bell reminds us that it is possible to see someone we think we know in a whole new light.**

Bell went to prison in 1996 for burglary. He served 20 years and was released.

Six years after his release, he found himself in the news again. This time for saving lives.

First, he saved a drowning swimmer at a local lake where he was fishing.

A few months later, he spotted a car that was on fire and upside down by the side of the road. A man was inside the car. Bell broke the window and pulled him to safety. He felt for a pulse but found none and started CPR. He then found a pulse and got the man breathing.

Saving two lives made Jacob Bell think about himself differently. It gave him new confidence.

And it made the community think about him differently.<sup>2</sup> Now he's a hero.

We really can start to see in a new light people we've known our whole lives.

### **How does Jesus' returning in glory and victory redraw your picture of Him?**

Some of us think of Jesus predominantly as the Good Shepherd or Loving Lord.

Some of us think of Him as the Suffering Servant or Lamb of God.

At least once a year, we get to think of Him as the Risen Christ.

But do we also think of Him as the Returning King, victorious in battle against evil?

This too is an important way to see Jesus because this is the ground from which hope springs.

Jesus will gather us from the corners of creation.

**Mark 13:27** shows us that Jesus will gather us from the corners of creation:

***And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.***

The four winds represent the four cardinal directions: north, south, east, and west. Jesus will gather "His elect" from these four directions. These are the figurative corners of Earth.

In some ways, being scattered to the four corners of Earth is judgment.

**Zechariah 2:6** says:

***Up! Up! Flee from the land of the north, declares the LORD. For I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heavens, declares the LORD. That's judgment.***

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<sup>2</sup> <https://people.com/texas-man-who-spent-20-years-in-prison-saves-2-lives-in-6-weeks-8737032>

In other ways, to say that God's people are scattered to the four corners of earth represents the fact that in the future, there will be believers from every nation, tribe, and tongue on earth. God's people are spread across the four corners of creation.

And God even includes those who are in heaven. There is no place where God's people can be that He can't and won't find them.

### **Classic views of the end times disagree about the order of raptures and resurrections.**

Some views of the end times teach that Jesus will return at the beginning of the Tribulation period and rapture the Church. Jesus will secretly appear. The dead in Christ will rise, the living will be changed, and they will meet Jesus in the air and go to Heaven for the Tribulation. During the Tribulation, many from Israel will come to faith in Christ. New saints will be made.

There is one view that Jesus will rapture the Church at the midpoint of the Tribulation.

Other views of the end times teach that Jesus will return at the end of the Tribulation, and resurrection will begin then.

These disagreements are important. But that doesn't mean they should divide us. These different positions are all held by Bible-believing, Jesus-loving Christians. And what we all hold in common is more important than that which divides us.

### **We ALL believe that when Jesus returns, the righteous will ALL stand together.**

The Old Testament saints who believed in Jesus, even though they had not seen Him, will be there when Jesus returns publicly.

The Church will be there, too.

So will those from Israel who believe in Jesus as the end approaches.

We will all be alive and standing together when Jesus returns publicly.

That's important. That unites us. That says something important about Jesus!

### **We see it by analogy in the way Alexander Graham Bell tried desperately to save President Garfield.**

Most of us know Bell for the invention of the telephone, but he invented other things.

On July 2, 1881, President Garfield was shot. The shooter was apprehended, and Garfield was taken to the White House with the bullet still in him. Doctors tried to get the bullet out of him.

Three weeks passed. No bullet.

Alexander Graham Bell had an idea. He thought he could take an idea he had seen elsewhere and use it to create a metal detector that could find the bullet.

He and an assistant went to Washington, created a prototype, and tested it successfully.

He was ready to scan the President. Garfield was fading. Bell had to work quickly.

The first time he tried, the scan didn't work. Garfield's metal bedframe fooled the machine.

Bell recalibrated his machine and tried again. The second time failed, too. The doctors had pointed him to the wrong spot to scan.

On September 19, 1881, the President died. But it wasn't because Bell didn't try and try and try again.<sup>3</sup> Bell tried desperately to save him. This was the President of the United States!

### **If Jesus will go to the corners of creation to get you, how much does He value you?**

If you belong to Him, nothing will stop Jesus from having you with Him forever.

What we read here about the end is consistent with who we know Jesus to be.

He is the Shepherd who searches for one lost sheep when ninety-nine are safe.

He is like a homeowner who searches for a lost coin despite having nine others.

He is like a parent who searches for a lost child.

You are that lost sheep. You are that lost coin. You are that lost child.

Jesus will move heaven and earth to find you. That's how much He loves you.

### **That's real hope!**

#### **Real hope is much more than wishful thinking.**

Real hope is not a campaign slogan.

Real hope is not positive thinking about the future or faith in progress.

Wishful thinking amounts to little more than pixie dust.

#### **Real hope is personal.**

Our hope is in God. **Psalm 42:5** says:

***Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God ...***

Our hope is grounded in God's character, specifically His goodness.

Our hope springs from God's plan—the way He has been faithful in the past, which means that He will always keep His promises in the future.

#### **Real hope is a powerful thread running through God's Story from Creation to Conclusion.**

Creation starts with hope. In the beginning, God made the world and everything in it. He made us to have a relationship with Him. We have hope for whatever is to come because we are loved by God from the beginning.

When we sinned, we broke our relationship with God. We broke ourselves and the world. Hope could have died. On our own, there was no hope. But God still loves us and still has a plan. Hope was alive!

God sent Jesus. The Son of God took on our sin, died to pay the price for our sin, and rose again victorious over sin, death, and evil. Hope was alive! And Jesus ascended into Heaven where He is building the future.

Now, if we accept the forgiveness for our sin that God offers, we can be made new. The image of Christ is shaped again in us. We are filled with the Holy Spirit so that we can work and wait faithfully for Jesus to return.

When Jesus returns, our hope will become sight. We will see Jesus face to face. He will defeat evil. We will be resurrected if we are His. And we will live forever with Him. That's hope!

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/the-tragedy-and-triumph-of-president-james-a-garfield-and-alexander-graham-bell.htm>

**There are moments when I feel like I can almost see Jesus breaking through with the dawn.**

This stuff that we're talking about is very real to me. I can almost see it.

The house we owned in Minnesota had a large picture window facing east. I'd sit in a chair by that window to study my Bible and pray every morning.

Frequently, the sun would be rising in the east as I was praying. I could feel the sunshine beating down on my face. And there were times I could almost picture Jesus stepping through the veil between heaven and earth to come again, like the sunrise on my face.

Oh, how I long for that moment. I'm ready for it. I'm ready for Him to come again.

Not because life is miserable. But because eternity is going to be amazing. I long to be made whole as I will be in eternity. I long for the world as it is to become the world as it should be. I long for there to be no more suffering or mourning or crying or pain.

And I long to see Jesus' face to face. God is good, and I am made to be with Him. I LONG to be with Him. Forever. That's my hope. That's real hope.

**Which provides a stronger foundation for your life: real hope or wishful thinking?**

Hope fuels life today and tomorrow.

**Hope helps us to keep doing what God has created and called us to do.**

God has created you and me for a purpose. Or purposes.

He created all of us to bring Him glory—to worship Him, to connect with one another, to serve people in His name, and to share Him with others. He created us—all of us—to cultivate disciples and advance the Gospel of Jesus.

He created You to live a very particular life. To bring Him glory and advance the Gospel in unique ways.

But our sin-nature, temptation, and hardship are constantly fighting against us—wanting us to stop. To give up. **Don't give up!** Hope gives us a vision that keeps us going.

**Hope enables us to endure any trial we face because we know that suffering will end.**

We all face discouragement, difficulty, and even danger at times in this fallen world.

Some trials come for a season and go—like a job change or a health crisis.

Other trials are things we walk with for a lifetime—like a limp or a hurt we can't forget.

Many of you are hurting. Some of you are facing trials right now that won't last. And some of you are carrying pain that will stay with you as long as you live this life.

Trials shape us in powerful ways here and now, but trials are not permanent.

In eternity, we will lay down all our burdens. There will be no more mourning or suffering or crying or pain because this old order that causes all of that will have passed away.

Trials and suffering are temporary, no matter how long they last.

And knowing that trials and suffering will end helps us to face them now.

**Hope empowers us to respond as Christ's ambassadors, even when the world is coming apart.**

We can react like citizens of the kingdoms of this world—worrying and lashing out in anger.  
Or we can represent Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God the way an ambassador represents a foreign country—we can make King Jesus’ values and ways clear by what we say and do.  
We can respond with peace, with faith, with the Good News about Jesus, and with practical love that makes God’s love tangible.  
Hope means that the way we respond doesn’t depend on circumstances but on eternity.

### **Sophia embodies hope.**

Sophia’s earliest memory is of crying inside a locked supply room. At just 3 years old, her mother had sold her as a temporary child laborer.

When she was four, her mother sold her to a Muslim imam in Bangkok and never came back. For years, Sophia lived as a slave-cooking, cleaning, and sleeping in a tiny room locked from the outside like a cage. She endured beatings and days without food or water as punishment. By age 25, she had two daughters by the imam, both taken from her at birth.

In her despair, she began hearing a gentle voice: “It’s okay. Just stay alive.” She didn’t know whose voice it was, but it was comforting. Powerful, and gentle. One night, this voice urged her to escape through her window. She fled.

Life after escape brought new hardships. She contracted HIV and returned to Bangkok deathly ill. She cried out to any god who would listen. An American friend visited and encouraged Sophia to invite Jesus to be her Savior. She cried out to Jesus, asking to be saved.

When doctors gave up hope, her relatives placed her in a small house to die. For six weeks, she survived on only water, but the voice remained: “Live!”

She finally realized this voice had been Jesus all along. Miraculously, she began to heal. Christians took her in and helped her to recover. She gave her life to Jesus during that season.

After her recovery and seminary training, God called her to ministry back to the very Muslim neighborhood where she’d been enslaved: “Go back. Learn to forgive and love them.”

Eight years later, the dying imam asked for her forgiveness. He asked her to bring him bread and coffee. How could she? But she remembered Jesus’ command to forgive enemies. When she brought him bread and coffee, “the chains fell from her heart.”

The imam returned her daughters to her. Today, Sophia runs an anti-trafficking ministry.<sup>4</sup> Hope fuels her new life.

### **May hope fuel your life.**

May hope constantly remind you that Jesus our Lord is the Returning King.

May hope give you the strength every day to do what God has created and called you to do.

May hope help you to see beyond today and trials.

May hope empower you to respond as an ambassador of the Kingdom of God.

May hope fuel your today and propel you toward tomorrow.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/2025/03/sold-slavery-thailand-muslim-jesus-free/>