



## Lean in – There is More

Message by Pastor Andrew Kulasingham 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Hi Again. And welcome to another week together. Thank you for the encouraging feedback I received from many of you regarding the last sermon. The phrase “duration neglect” seemed to resonate with some of you.

If you recall the sermon last week, I mentioned Psychologist Daniel Kahneman and his ideas around how we may have a distorted sense of reality based on our past experiences. In his research, he discovered that people tend to summarise their various experiences based on the highs and lows, rather than looking at the entirety of their life experiences. I suggested that instead of us making decisions based on our experiences alone, we look at God’s track record. When looking at our past (which in reality that’s where all our present decisions are drawing knowledge from), why don’t we factor in God’s faithfulness into the equation.

I’ve been sitting with this thought this whole week. If Kahneman’s idea of “duration neglect” is right, I wanted to look at how the fathers of the faith went beyond their past experiences in order to blaze new trails, new breakthroughs and new encounters with God. For example, how did Noah even respond to God’s instructions to build an ark.

“Build an ark? For what?”

“I’m sending rain?”

“Say what? What’s rain?”

“Water from the sky.”

“Water from the sky? What’s that?”

How do you even fathom something you have never seen or experienced in your life? Not even your forefathers during their lives. Absolutely no knowledge base to draw from to make your decision. Yet Noah went ahead and obeyed God. That’s faith. When there’s nothing to base your decision on, accept God and His word.

That’s what I want to talk about today. The text for my message this morning is in the book of Hebrews chapter six and we’ll start from verse eleven onwards.

Hebrews 6:11-12 (NKJV)

**And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.**

Just a quick comment on the immediate context of this Scripture. The author of Hebrews is concerned about the possibility of the readers slipping back to their old ways of thinking and being. In chapter 5, he has been talking about the need for Christians to

keep growing in maturity, by feeding on the solid food of the Word of God. In chapter six, he goes on to encourage them to go beyond the elementary principles of Christ and go on to perfection. If you look at some of the topics he calls elementary, many Christians today may not even have an inclination of what they are about.

What I want you to see though, is the person he seems to describe as one who is a believer of Christ. Take a look at Hebrews 6:4-5

**For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away,**

As I said, he is expressing his concern for someone who has experienced the Christian life and then fallen away. His idea of the Christian life is what I'm interested this morning.

He first speaks of "being enlightened". Someone who has been made to see. All of us can remember that amazing day when our eyes were opened to see. Enlightened about our sin, and our need for a Saviour. Enlightened about Christ and His redemptive work on the cross. We were enlightened by the Gospel and we received Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour.

The Apostle then goes on to say that the next step the person who is enlightened moves on to is becoming a partaker of the Holy Spirit. We are filled with God's very breath in the person of the Holy Spirit. This person's growth is then seen in the way he or she devours the good word of God.

Most of us are comfortable up to this point. Imagine a new believer being told this is how you need to see yourself mature in your walk with God: now that you have seen the light as it were, you now need to receive the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is going to teach you all things through the Word of God. I'm sure we will all be happy with that.

But the book of Hebrews adds one more component of the Christian faith journey. The author says that the Christian also tastes the power of the age to come. The word "taste" (in Greek, *geuomai*) means to experience. The early church had the mindset that every Christian must not just remain enlightened but must be experiencing the Holy Spirit, and grow, and feed and experience the Word of God and then go beyond these experiences and taste, experience the power of the age to come.

The Bible separates time into the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ. So from Adam to John the Baptist, the people of God looked for the coming of the Messiah Jesus Christ. When Christ came he ushered in the age to come by declaring the Kingdom of God is at hand. He then spoke of a second coming. It is then when he returns that he will usher in the age to come.

So now all believers look to the second coming of Jesus Christ. But through the coming of the Holy Spirit, God has given every believer access to the powers of the Age to Come. That was the teaching and mindset of the early church. You grow into maturity, where you learn how to pull down Heavenly resources from the Age to Come into the Present Age.

That's how you preach the Gospel. That's why Paul cried out in Romans **"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation."**

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the Gospel of power. May I suggest that this is the reason why the early church saw more healings, deliverance and miracles than we are seeing today. They had the mindset that it was their birthright and their obligation to reach out beyond the natural present age, lean forward and taste (experience) the Power of the Age to Come.

How many of us truly believe that? How many of us believe that it is our birthright to access the power of the Age to Come? How many of us believe that our mandate to preach the Gospel carries with it resources that are not of this age?

In his classic thesis "The Gospel of the Kingdom", George E Ladd gives a clear distinction between the two ages. I quote: "When we ask what Scripture teaches about the character of these two ages, we find a sharp contrast. This Age is dominated by evil, wickedness, and rebellion against the will of God, while The Age to Come is the age of the kingdom of God."

You see friends, every Christian lives in this in-between. Between This Age and The Age to Come. Between the kingdoms of this world and the kingdom of God. Between the already and the not yet. Between promise and fulfilment. We have a choice – to accept This Age and everything that comes with it, or lean in and reach for a taste of the power of the Age to Come.

So how do I lean in? Back to our text this morning.

The Apostle to the Hebrews entreats us this way:

Hebrews 6:11-12 (NKJV) **And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.**

Diligence – it's the Greek word "*spoudē*", which means speed with eagerness, making haste in our earnestness. The Apostle is saying hurry up, get excited about this, get eager to move hurriedly towards this.

Towards what? What are we diligently moving towards? What are we making haste to? To the full assurance of hope until the end. You see, the enemy cannot really do any permanent damage to me anymore. He has lost his power of death over me. But what he does is – he utilises the tools of This Age at his disposal – sickness (he attacks my health), poverty (he attacks my finances), division and disunity (he attacks my relationships). He looks for opportunity in our vulnerability, our weakness, our brokenness in order to rob us of hope.

You see, hope is the essential ingredient of faith. This same apostle will later define faith as "the substance of things hoped for". In other words, you must have something you are hoping for, in order for your faith to give substance to it.

Let me say that again. You must have something you are hoping for, in order for your faith to give substance to it. Hope is the raw material your faith can work with. I say this all the time in church and I will say it again today – you cannot do hope alone. The church is a group of people doing hope together.

We need each other, to do hope together. I thank God Rhena and I have a wonderful, older and much wiser couple we do hope together with. We try and meet them at least every fortnight and over a cup of tea we do hope together.

I have a dear friend in this city who is close to me like a brother; I do hope with him regularly. We are in different worlds. He is a businessman and I a pastor. I have nothing to offer him in terms of his business but we both offer encouragement and diligently work towards the assuring each other of the hope we have in Christ Jesus.

I have a friend in Australia who studied with me in Bible School. We regularly speak to each other over the phone and encourage one another to pursue this quest for the power of the age to come. I have a father in the faith, who prays for me and speaks courage into me and my ministry all the way from Phoenix, Arizona.

The Apostle calls us into a life of diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end. You are still breathing – right? Take heart brother – if you are hearing this podcast you are still breathing. So it is not the end yet. Don't let your diagnosis decide that; don't let your financial situation discourage you; don't allow that broken relationship to define you; don't let your failures prevent you. You are still breathing – then this is not the time be discouraged. It is the time to be diligent – to make haste – to speed up this earnest desire to move towards hope.

Who are you doing faith with? Can you name them? You can't do hope with a stranger. Thank God for great sermons on TV and online. Thank God for the Bill Johnsons, the Joyce Myers, the Charles Stanleys who offer us great encouragement through their ministries. But if you only do hope with strangers who do not know you personally, it will not sustain you in times of discouragement. You need more than that. Don't do hope alone. Get connected, get personal, be available and make yourself available to do hope with others. And hurry up about that.

The second thing the Apostle says is in the form of a warning: do not become sluggish. Discouragement leads to disengagement. When we lose hope we tend to become tired and weary; we have a tendency to give up and stop pursuing the more that God has for us.

As a young man, one of the first few Christian books I read was John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress". There is a part in the story where Christian is tired and weary in his journey. He rests at a resting place for the weary sojourner. He inevitably goes to sleep. When he wakes up he hurries along his journey but discovers he has lost his roll, this resource that is the source of comfort and encouragement to him. He desperately back tracks to look for his roll. He finds it at the place he dozed off to sleep.

And this is what the narrator of the story says, "Thus, therefore, he now went on bewailing his sinful sleep, saying, O wretched man that I am that I should sleep in the daytime! That I should sleep in the midst of difficulty! That I should so indulge the flesh, as to use that rest for ease to my flesh, which the Lord of the hill hath erected only for the relief of the spirits of pilgrims!"

So this is a wakeup call for all of us. This post Covid19 environment we are entering into – it's a wakeup call to the church – Have we been caught sleeping in the daytime? Have we been classified as non-essential because we were fast asleep,

disconnected to the communities around us, subjected ourselves to This Age and have become too sluggish to lean in and reach out for the taste of the power of the Age to Come?

I'm speaking to myself first. And then I'm challenging you too. Time to wake up. Stop being sluggish. Time to make haste, hurry up, be diligent in your earnestness to the full assurance of hope until the end.

Next week I will look at the final part of this passage where the Apostle exhorts us to "imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

Until next week, remember to lean in to God, for there is more. Reach out beyond this age to the power of the Age to come. Declare Kingdom of God come, Will of God be done, on earth as it is in heaven. If you are discouraged, make haste, hurry up, pick up the phone and do faith with someone. And may the God of comfort, strengthen and comfort you – in the name of Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit Amen.