

**Joke:** Carl and Miles are strolling through thick woods on the way to their cabin, when they come up on a strange, deep hole in the ground. "That's weird, you see that?", says Carl. "Yea, I wonder how deep it is..." Miles replies. Carl grabs a small rock and tosses it down the hole. Seconds go by, and no sound is heard. Miles looks at Carl... "Something heavier". Both of the men spot an old anchor sitting on the ground a few yards away. Miles grabs it first. "Carl this is heavy, help me with it." They struggle with the rusted anchor until they finally get it back to the hole, and the throw it in. Nothing...

Seconds go by and all of the sudden a goat comes running through the trees, speeding toward them. When it gets to them, the goat jumps right down the hole. "What was that all about?!", Miles yells. . . "I have no idea, lets get out of here!".. .as they were turning around to leave a man comes through the trees. "Have you guys seen my goat?!".. . "Yea, one just came running through here and jumped in this hole!", Miles says, pointing. The man replies, "That's impossible, I had him tied to an anchor!"

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Here we are in Week 2 of our anchor series: today I want to pose this question, What Are You Holding Onto?

Before we continue our *Anchor* series together. Let me give a quick refresher from two weeks ago, we took a week away to celebrate Father's Day. If you recall the basic concept of an anchor is that it "is a device, normally made of metal, used to secure a vessel to the bed of a body of water to prevent the craft from drifting due to wind or current."

An anchor simple in design, but yet very powerful in its function.

As you can imagine, an anchor needs to be strong enough to hold no matter how much tension and pressure is being put on it by the boat.

Bible commentator Alexander Maclaren says this about the strength of an anchor:

“A sure anchor is one which does not drag. It is not too light for the ship that rides by it. It has found its firm ground, its flukes are all right, and its belch. It does not deceive. The ship’s crew may trust it. An anchor which is steadfast, or, as the original word might be rendered, ‘firm,’ is one that will not break, but is strong in its own substance, made of good tough iron, so that there is no fear of the shank snapping, whatever strain may be put upon it. We may then say, generally, that this object of the Christian hope is free from all the weaknesses and imperfections which cleave and cling to other objects.”

Today we are going to look at what Maclaren calls the “weaknesses and imperfections which cleave and cling to other objects.”

Because the truth is that there is only one firm and secure anchor in which we can put our hope. And that’s Jesus.

Truth is church, life is filled with false hope and security.

We are met with a constant barrage of promises for health, wealth, and well being from every source imaginable.

From an early age we taught that if we can get strong enough, smart enough, and save enough money then everything will be alright.

And for a little while, all is fine, until of course it's not.

And this affects each one of us, so don't feel singled out today. All of us have, at one time or another, have put our hope in things that couldn't deliver.

This is one lesson we've all had to learn the hard way.

So what is that thing in your life that calls for your allegiance and loyalty? Is it strength, smarts, or possibly saving accounts? Is it a job title, position, or a relationship?

The good news today is that no matter what that thing is, I can promise you Jesus is better, stronger, more firm and secure. And He's always ready for us to return to Him.

As mentioned, all of us are guilty of misplaced hope. I love how God is patient with us, no matter how long the process takes.

2 Peter 3:8–9 (TPT): 8 So, dear friends, don't let this one thing escape your notice: a single day counts like a thousand years to the Lord Yahweh, and a thousand years counts as one day. 9 This means that, contrary to man's perspective, the Lord is not late with his promise to return, as some measure lateness. But rather, his

“delay” simply reveals his loving patience toward you, because he does not want any to perish but all to come to repentance.

The Lord’s patience has nothing to do with slowness and everything to do with our salvation. He is interested in all of us coming home, no matter how displaced and fractured our hope may be. No matter how far from “home” we’ve wandered.

Just listen to this story from Luke 15, you all know it, it’s the story of The Prodigal Son.

Luke 15:11–20 (NIV): Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them. 13 “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. 17 “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ 20 So he got up and went to his father. “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

Heard the story before? In it, we can clearly see how the younger son misplaces His hope. He chases after earthly things, brief pleasures, and experiences. But eventually all the money and energy are gone and he is left with nothing.

For all the hope he must have had in creating a new life apart from his family and away from his father it all ended when the hope he was holding onto slipped through his fingers. Everything he had, it just wasn't firm or secure.

I love that through this story, we get an amazing picture of divine love and acceptance. As the son realizes what he's done, he decides to head home. His father, who had apparently been waiting and watching, saw him a far way off and ran to meet him. Embracing his wayward son he welcomed him home.

The father didn't scold or shame his son. He hugged him, kissed him, even threw a massive dinner party to celebrate his return.

How many of us here today are tired of trying everything the world has to offer only to find it meaningless and hopeless?

Look what Solomon said about chasing stuff. . .

Ecclesiastes 2:1–11 (NIV): I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless. 2 "Laughter," I said, "is madness. And what does pleasure accomplish?" 3 I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly—my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was good for people to do under the heavens during the

few days of their lives. 4 I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. 5 I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. 6 I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. 7 I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. 8 I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired male and female singers, and a harem as well—the delights of a man's heart. 9 I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me. 10 I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil. 11 Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.

Maybe it's time to simply head home, to our heavenly Father. To the place where our hope, faith, and love have a firm and secure space to thrive.

Someone else talked about the earthly treasures we tend to grip as well. Maybe you have heard of Him as well. We find Him teaching in Matthew chapter 6. . .

In there Jesus goes into a lengthy teaching about our motivations, anxiety, fear, and then of course, the hope we have in the kingdom.

Let's look at what Jesus says about earthly treasures.

Matthew 6:19–21 (NIV): “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Earthly treasure is easily destroyed, or worse stolen.

Some of you remember when I had my car stolen. Left the keys in it at the gas station went in got the things I wanted for the day and on my way out someone was in it taking it for a spin. I chased after them to no avail. They found the car in a parking lot in Chicago about a month later. I still think it was an inside job with the towing company. But that’s another story.

I mention that not because it’s unique to me we all have had things get lost, stolen, misplaced, or damaged. I’ve got two of somethings because I misplaced something just to locate it after I replaced it. Back to my car, I really liked that car. I felt violated. My point is if we are not careful those things, like my car can become something we trust will last but in an instant be gone and can shake us.

We can so easily find ourselves holding onto the wrong things. . .and this is why Jesus offers us so many correctives throughout Matthew chapter 6.

Matthew 6:31–34 (NIV): So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the

pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

So many of us are worried about what to eat or what to wear. We're worried about property values and sporting events. In the season many are worried about their 401K. All of this highlights how our hope is in the wrong place.

Jesus offers us a divine solution to it all. "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Wrap your arms around the kingdom of God. Around Jesus, His teachings, and His people.

This is the divine corrective for misplaced and displaced hope. There are so many "weaknesses and imperfections which cleave and cling to other objects." Things that are too easily destroyed, damaged, or stolen. In fact, as Jesus mentions, every single day we live has more than enough worry of its own.

It's time we let go of all the false security and hold tight to Jesus. He is our hope, He is a firm and secure anchor for our souls.

So, as we wrap up today, I want to draw our attention to the story of The Rich Young Ruler found in Mark chapter 10.

Mark 10:17–23 (NIV): As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 18 “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’” 20 “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” 21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” 22 At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. 23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

In this story, we see another passionate young man who has a desire to follow Jesus. He claims he’s held tightly to the teachings of the law, and observed the commandments since he was a child.

But Jesus, in his perfectly Jesus-y way, identifies another thing in the young man's life he’s got an even tighter grip on. When Jesus shows him he needs to let go of all his wealth in order to follow Him, the young man becomes very sad and he leaves.

You see, this story highlights something we all struggle with, and it’s not necessarily money, although that could be it for you personally. No, it’s the fact that we grow attached to the things we place our hope in. This young ruler clearly had a lot of attachment

to his wealth. So much so, that he was unable to put it down in order to follow Jesus.

Or said another way, he was unable to loosen his grip on money in order to tighten his grip on Christ. And this picture leads us to turn our attention back onto our own lives.

What are you holding onto today?

What do you need to let go of so that you can grab hold of Jesus?

What time do you need to spend this week to get your priorities straight.

And finally, how can you tighten your grip on the anchor of your soul?

Let's pray together.