

Letters of Hope

*These are the **Red Letters** we're used to associating with Jesus: letters of comfort, peace and rest. Let them wash over you and bring you hope.*

What kinds of things do you generally hope for in life? What is the difference between most of our hoping, and a life lived in the hope of the Lord?

“2 A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”
3 Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “**I am willing,**” he said. “**Be clean!**” Immediately he was cured of his leprosy. 4 Then Jesus said to him, “**See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.**”” (Matthew 8:2–4 NIV)

Try to picture yourself with leprosy... You've asked “...if you are willing...”. Can you imagine what it would feel like to hear Jesus say: “I am willing”?

What kind of hope do we have in Jesus when we are ill? Should we shoot for something higher?

28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28–30 NIV)

What kinds of things truly bring “rest for your souls”?

Has your impression of Jesus in these **Red Letters** so far led you to see Him as “gentle”? “Humble in heart”? In what ways is the “yoke” of a Christian easy? In what ways is it hard?

“16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. 17 The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, 21 and he began by saying to them, “**Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.**”” (Luke 4:16–21 NIV)

“42 At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. 43 But he said, “**I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.**”” (Luke 4:42–43 NIV)

These last two passages could easily fit under “Letters of Mission.” Why do they also fit so well here? What was Jesus saying when he declared the Isaiah prophecy fulfilled?

33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33 NIV)

In what ways is having the peace of Christ the most hopeful thing you can have? In what ways did Jesus “overcome the world”?