



grow. pray. study.

January 10, 2021 Hope. Living with Confident Expectation “At the End of Your Rope”

Scripture:

I’ve rejected peace; I’ve forgotten what is good. I thought: My future is gone, as well as my hope from the LORD. The memory of my suffering and homelessness is bitterness and poison. I can’t help but remember and am depressed. I call all this to mind—therefore, I will wait. Certainly the faithful love of the LORD hasn’t ended; certainly God’s compassion isn’t through! They are renewed every morning. Great is your faithfulness. I think: The LORD is my portion! Therefore, I’ll wait for him. The LORD is good to those who hope in him, to the person who seeks him. It’s good to wait in silence for the LORD’s deliverance. - Lamentations 3:17-26

Monday 01.11.21. Ecclesiastes 3:1-12 There is a season

This scripture was brought into the mainstream of American culture in 1965 with the number one hit "Turn! Turn! Turn! (To Everything There Is a Season)" by the Byrds. Ecclesiastes belongs to the category of wisdom literature, the body of biblical writings which give advice on life, together with reflections on its problems and meanings—other examples include the Book of Job, Proverbs, and some of the Psalms. Ecclesiastes has taken its literary form from the Middle Eastern tradition of the fictional autobiography, in which a character, often a king, relates his experiences and draws lessons from them, often self-critical: Kohelet likewise identifies himself as a king, speaks of his search for wisdom, relates his conclusions, and recognizes his limitations.

- When facing difficulties in life, how does knowing that times come and go affect you?
- “I know that there’s nothing better for them (human beings) but to enjoy themselves and do what’s good while they live” closes our reading for today. This is not another listing of “a time for…” like “a time for doing what’s good.” Instead, the author is giving us framework of how to respond to all of the times listed previously. In your current circumstances, the time you are in, what good could you be doing? Make an action plan for today or this week and get started on doing good.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, life is hard sometimes for me. Thank you for walking with me through all the different times that make up a life. Help me to do good today even if my current circumstances are painful or disappointing. Thank you for the times when life is rich and full. In all the times of my life help me to be a force for good that honors your love for me.

Tuesday 01.12.21. Isaiah 43:18-19 Behold, I am doing a new thing.

“Burying the hatchet” is an American phrase referring to the real practice of Native American chiefs marking the end of hostilities between tribes by the literal burying of the weapon. Unfortunately, many of us have difficulty with leaving hostilities behind. We bury the hatchet, but leave the handle sticking out…just in case.

Getting stuck in past hurts is a real thing. The pain of our past can rob of us joy in the present. Our attention to what has happened can keep us from seeing God's work of restoration and new birth.

- What troubling situation or event from your past continues to occupy your mind? What can you do to move past the hurt or other feeling that is keeping you from moving forward?
- God is constantly on the move and is consistently healing and creating. Where is God doing a new thing in your life? Is there a relationship or situation where you desire God to do something new? How can you trust God to work without scripting God's actions to your liking?

Prayer: Creator God, you know my past and the things that stop me from moving on and seeing the new thing you are doing. Open my eyes that I may see and understand your active presence in my life. Amen.

Wednesday 01.13.21. Psalm 40:1-4 Saving and praising

Pay close attention to the phrases describing what God does in today's first three verses. Underline them in your Bible. Your list may look like this: leaned down, listened to my cry, lifted me out, set my feet, steadied my legs, put a new song of praise in my mouth.

- Seeing God's action toward the author, how does this inform how you can expect God to respond to you? Think of a time when you had no where else to turn but to God for hope. How did (or do) you experience God's response? What will it take for you to trust God will deliver like described here?

This new song of praise has ramifications, "Many people will learn of this and be amazed, they will trust the Lord." When we praise God for our rescue it has influence on those who hear our "singing". When we trust in the Lord we find our way to true happiness.

- What does happiness look like for you? What steps can you take today to put all your hope in the Lord and live into happiness?

Prayer: Lord, you know my heart and the places I have been that feel like the pit of death. Rescue me. Lift me up. Help me to find ways to praise you and discover true happiness.

Thursday 01.14.21 Jeremiah 29:11 God's plans for who exactly?

Jeremiah is speaking to a nation that is in exile, so the "you" in this verse is plural. The plan is for the nation to be at peace and a future that has hope. Read the verse again with this perspective in mind. In our society, the individual has been highly prioritized. This has its strengths but also weaknesses. We are experiencing a cultural awakening to the importance of "tribe" and the history of particular peoples. If you are a member or TTUMC you are part of the United Methodist tribe of Christians.

- How does this passage speak to your tribe (however you define it)?
- Notice the abundance of hope ascribed "filled with". What does a future filled with hope look like for TTUMC? How are you a part of that hope? What specifically can you do to participate in cooperating with God's plans?

Prayer: Master of the Universe, help me to see my place as part of your people. Lift me up with all those who call you Lord so that we may walk in peace and greet each day full of hope.

Friday 01.15.21 Romans 5:2-5 Suffering. Endurance. Character. Hope.

Time can give us perspective on events, helping us to see our spiritual growth toward maturity. However, when in the midst of suffering, it can be hard to see anything else but our pain. Paul describes the value of suffering and what it can produce through the power of the Holy Spirit. If we can remember that our journey leads to hope, then we may actually be able to rejoice in the midst of suffering.

- Think about a time in the past when you were suffering. Write or share about your experience with how that time produced (or failed to produce) endurance, character and hope.
- How does “God’s love poured into our (your) heart(s) through the Holy Spirit” make the movement of suffering-endurance-character-hope possible for you?
- How might this passage support you in your next season of suffering?
- How might this passage give you understanding and patience when coming alongside another who is suffering?

Prayer: Holy Spirit, fill my heart with God’s love so that I may endure suffering, practice endurance, grow in the character of Jesus and experience hope.

Saturday 01.16.21 Romans 8:24-25, 28; Hebrews 11:1 Not seeing but still believing

Seeing is believing. The proof is in the pudding. I’ve got to see it to believe it. This ancient Greek concept continues to be a basis of experimentation proving a hypothesis. The bible, however, has a different view of believing. Belief is necessitated by not seeing. Of all of our senses, perhaps sight is the one most easily deceived. Magicians use sleight of hand and misdirection to fool our eyes. Our brains will fill in the blanks for our eyes based on experience which is why proof reading our own writing is so difficult.

Scripture clearly defines faith in Hebrews 11:1.

- How hard or easy is it for you to have faith in what you cannot see? What types of things do you need to help you have faith short of seeing?
- What convictions do you have about what God is doing in your life? What does God want for you?

Paul’s words in verse 28 can be a great source of comfort when facing uncertainty or in the midst of trial. There is a qualification to all things being worked for good. It is reserved for “the ones who love God”.

- What does loving God look like to you? How is God calling you into a deeper love relationship?
- What is God’s purpose you are experiencing today? How can that purpose guide your actions?

Prayer: God of all that is seen and unseen, help me to believe. Establish your promises in my heart that they may be a firm foundation on which to stand. Thank you for adopting me into the divine family and working all things for good. Help me to grow in my practice of patience as I learn to trust you with the future.