



Sermon Title: A New Kind Of Hope

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Scripture: Psalm 74:9-12

⁹We are given no signs from God;
no prophets are left,
and none of us knows how long this will be.

¹⁰How long will the enemy mock you, God?
Will the foe revile your name forever?

¹¹Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand?
Take it from the folds of your garment and destroy them!

¹²But God is my King from long ago;
he brings salvation on the earth.

Transcript:

Jesus, you love us so much that you would give your life up for us. That unconditional love breaks our hearts this morning, because we've never experienced love like that before. You saved us, you made us whole through the power of the holy spirit, and we worship you as we sing songs of praise, as we pray and we hear your words In Jesus' name, amen.

Well, good morning, everyone. For those of you watching and joining us online and in-person, thanks for worshiping with us. My name is John Kim, and I'm one of the mission pastors here on staff. Now, many of you know that my parents were shop owners. They owned a small business selling women's clothing and wigs and hair products. And yes, at one point in my life, I was an expert in women's hair and women's clothing. If you needed a hair extension, a wig, or needed that dress for a cocktail party, I was your man. Now, when I was about 10 years old, I went through an experience that would change my life forever. And you know where this is going. As an employee of my parents' store, Wig Paradise, as a kid, my dad would have me close the store at night. He and mom would clear the store, and it was my job to close up. I would head back to the

back of the store through a maze of wigs and heads. And that, to be honest with you, that would totally freak me out.

I could hear the heads talking to me as I walked by. I would then turn off the lights, and in almost complete darkness, do a mad dash through the maze of wigs and heads to the front door, turn on the alarms, and then lock up. The whole process was extremely fearful, high anxiety, and it was like escaping the pits of death every time. Well, one night after closing, I would have my fingers on the light controller, and prepare myself for the sprint to the front of the store. Then once I flipped the switch, I took off. And for a brief moment, I was faster than I'd ever been. But as soon as I thought I would be through the maze of wig heads, I turned a corner, and tripped and went head first into a pyramid of heads and wigs just like this one. It's pitch black. And I'm lying flat out with wigs and heads all over me, all over the floor. A complete mess. And I thought I was going to die at that moment. I mean, the wig heads had gotten me and I was a goner.

Now I know it's a comedic story, but in this pandemic and turbulent world that we live in, I wanted to share something lighthearted, but also recognize that for many of us, we live in anxiety, fear, and many times wonder if God is really there for us. For some of us, our anxiety is crippling us in having normal relationships with our spouses, our kids, coworkers, and even at school. We wonder if something is wrong with us. Am I a bad person? Am I a failure? Can I be accepted by my family, friends, my church, my loved ones. And because of this fear, guilt, and shame, we retreat believing we can't ever be restored and made whole. And if you're in a place like that, this message is for you. There is a new kind of hope, a hope that says God is for you. That God's power is over you. That God creates your wholeness and fills your heart completely with his love and being.

Hallelujah.

That God saves you over and over and brings his healing spirit to fill you no matter what you're going through, that all your problems are nothing to him, that the powers of this world pales in comparison to his greatness. So this new hope begins today for you. Jesus is for you. The holy spirit is in you, and the father's love and protection surrounds you. Can I get an amen?

Amen.

Today we're going to look at poetry in the book of Psalms. The Psalmist Asaph, not the songwriter during the time of David and Solomon, but his lineage of writers wrote Psalm 74. Now let me set the scene up for us. In 586 BC, the nation

of Israel experienced one of the most devastating events in their history as a nation. Because of their rebellion and sin, they broke their covenantal relationship with God. And God allowed the Babylonians under the rule of king Nebuchadnezzar to take the city of Jerusalem. And they demolished the walls, destroyed the city, tore down the temple of God, and burned everything. It's hard to put into words how devastating this loss was for the nation of Israel. Jerusalem was the capital, and was the city of God. The temple was built as a dwelling place for his presence. And in this utter destruction of the city is the setting of this Psalm 74. It's a Psalm of lament, the Psalmist, crying out to God and pleading for him to remember his people while experiencing grief, regret, and sorrow.

The book of Psalms is full of laments. 42 of them in fact are laments. The book of lamentations is a collection of five poems, all lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem. Now let's take a look at the passage for today. Psalm 74 verses nine through 12. We are given no signs from God. No prophets are left, and none of us knows how long this will be. How long will the enemy mock you, God? Will the foe revile your name forever? Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand, take it from the folds of your garment and destroy them. But God is my king from long ago. He brings salvation to on the earth.

Now, some things to notice from the text. First, from verses nine through 11, there is a progression of things going from bad to worse. When the city of God, Jerusalem and the temple of God are destroyed, nothing is left. And in verse nine, the supernatural power of God is gone. There is no word from God. God is silent. And there is a complete loss of hope. A friend of mine who works in church leadership told me that he knew 16 pastors that left their church ministries during the pandemic. Not to go into other church ministries, but leave the ministry altogether. It's a very difficult time for so many people. Another pastor friend who works in women's ministry at a large church just like ours recently told me that she is counseling spouses that have been told by their husbands that they are done in the marriage. They just walked out, leaving families and children behind. There is nothing more damaging to a person's soul when a marriage dissolves. And when things go terribly wrong in our lives, and we wonder, is this our fault? Maybe I did something wrong. It's because I am a failure.

When we lament, many of us, we experience guilt or shame. Brené Brown has written a lot on this in her research. She would say, "Guilt is a focus on behavior, and shame is a focus on the self. Guilt says I did something bad. Shame says, I am bad." Let's say you did something hurtful to me. How many of you would just

say, "I'm sorry, I made a mistake." That would be guilt. Shame would say, "Sorry. I am a mistake." As an Asian American, I'm accustomed to a shame-based culture. I remember my dad telling me as a kid, "Son, don't ever do anything to bring shame upon our family." Can you imagine? What kid grows up as a latchkey kid, doesn't get into trouble all the time? I mean, that's me. I screwed up all the time. I always felt that fear of shame. It's like a weight that you can never take off. Eastern cultures in general identify more with shame, and Western cultures identify more with guilt. Did you know that younger people like our millennials and Gen Zers identify more with shame than guilt? It's true.

I spent time reading up on the literature. One of the reasons why younger people are leaving the church is because they are shifting from the guilt mindset from their fathers and mothers, a Western mindset, towards a shame honor-based mindset. Feelings of shame are painful and debilitating, affecting a person's identity. In comparison, feelings of guilt, though painful are less disabling than shame, and seems to motivate people toward a positive change. When young people experience lament, they hurt in their whole being and identity. So when parents or older people try to address the individual issues that young people are going through, they think with the guilt mindset that says just deal with that one issue and everything else will be fine. But the young struggling with lament see themselves as the problem. And as this develops, they slowly separate themselves from their families and communities of faith. So how do we reach younger people?

Well first, we need to understand that they see life through a different lens, like shame versus guilt. Second, in a shame-based culture, there is the importance of honor. How we treat others by loving them, valuing relationships, being loyal, having humility, and living a life of hospitality. You see, relationships are more important than being right. Let me say that again. Relationships are more important than being right. Listening and identifying with their pains and struggles. Not trying to fix them, but being in solidarity with them. This is the kind of community that young people are longing for. And there is a third way. Jesus is the only one who can free us from the effects of shame and guilt. He took all of our lament, all of our pain struggles and brokenness, and on that cross, he gave his life up for us. When the disciples found out that the tomb was empty, Jesus was alive. He brought a new kind of hope, creating a supernatural wholeness in our being, healing us completely, filling us with this holy spirit so that we can live life with him and with each other.

Now, if you're a millennial or a Gen Zer, one way you can understand older people is that they also see life through a different lens. It's not that they don't

care about the issues that affect you. They process how to meet those challenges differently than you do. Showing patience and understanding goes both ways. There needs to be a lot more humility in all of our lives if we are going to be the kind of church God wants us to be. As a parent of two college kids, one graduating, and one a sophomore, I realized that issues like justice and racial reconciliation affects their identity and who they are. For me, I can compartmentalize many things in my John Kim Rolodex of Social and Theological Issues. But when I do that, and what I try to communicate issues like this with my kids, it can come off as hurtful. Because these issues affect their being. So I've decided to listen and to take their perspective and be in solidarity with them. It isn't a question about who is right. It's about a relationship.

I love them deeply, and I want them to love God fully and love others just as Christ has taught. We are a church family that can come alongside young people and reflect God's love best seen in the person of Jesus Christ. As a Psalmist moves from bad to worse in verse 10 and 11, it goes to a very dark place. Feelings of revenge, anger, bitterness, where he wants God to destroy his enemies. He tries to plead his case for total annihilation, by saying, "God, the enemy mocks you, makes fun of your name, do something about it. God, use every resource as a king to destroy your enemies." As I read this passage over and over, I kept thinking something is wrong here. In this lament, the Psalmist expresses his anguish over the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and wants God to destroy his enemies. I get that. Sometimes when things are so bad, we just want God to take away our problems, to destroy our problems. But something is terribly wrong here.

It's because when we look at the Old Testament, we see over and over that God wants all people to be in a right relationship with him. Look at Jonah. When God told him to preach repentance to the Ninevites, what did he do? He ran. Why? Because he knew that the people of Nineveh would repent, and that God would forgive them. Jonah couldn't stomach God's forgiveness. And that's where the Psalmist is here in this lament. Everything has come down in his life, and he wanted God to fix it by taking revenge on everyone and everything. Now look at verse 12. It says, but God. Here is the pivot, here is the turn. But God is my king from long ago, he brings salvation on the earth, in his deepest, darkest moment in his life, the Psalmist reorients himself toward God and says, there is a new kind of hope, no matter how bad things have gotten, but God, when your life has turned upside down, but God is for you when your anxiety and fears overtake you, but God's power is for you.

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When shame and guilt have wrecked your soul, but God creates your wholeness and fills your heart completely with his love and being. And when your relationships with your family, your spouse and your children have been damaged beyond repair. God saves you over and over, and brings his healing spirit to fill you no matter what you're going through. I love this passage and lamentations Chapter three, verses 21 through 23. It says yet this I call to mind. And therefore I have hope, because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. God does the supernatural. He speaks prophetically to us. He is our king, and he is bringing salvation on the earth and in our lives.

Over the past five years, I've had the privilege to walk alongside a BelPres mother and her daughter, as they have been developing as global missionaries that specialize in ESL and Bible translation. They've been working in Asia where sharing your faith in Christ can land you in prison. A month before the pandemic hit, they decided to return to the US for a quick home assignment before going back. So during the pandemic, the daughter who has already mastered the language of the country where they're serving, decided to take a one-year linguistics program for Bible translation. During this year, she and her mother were introduced to a translation team. And now, looking at working with this team as they head back to Asia sometime in July. I was able to visit and debrief with them about their education plans and how God is moving mightily in their life. And I remember asking them, do you need anything from us at BelPres?

And they looked at each other, but then just smiled. And they said they're doing great. What I learned a month later when we did an online check-in was that the daughter did not have the funds to complete her last semester of school. So when I asked them a month before, when they looked at each other, they almost spilled the beans. They said that God had told them to trust him completely for the funds and not ask for help. So when I asked them if they needed anything, they said no. It was because they completely trusted in the word of God. How crazy is that? When your church who is caring for you, ask if you need help, who wouldn't say yes, Well, the story gets even better. The first day of

Classes was coming fast and the funds did not come in. So the daughter told her teachers and classmates that she wouldn't be attending school for that semester. She told the registrar that she wasn't going to take any classes because of the lack of funds. Well, the last day the tuition was due, a man walked into the registrar's office and said to the registrar, "Do you have anybody in need?" And the registrar told the man that a student did not have funds for

her tuition that semester. And just like that, the man pulled out his checkbook and he wrote the entire amount. The registrar called our missionaries to tell them the incredible news. When God spoke to our BelPres mother and daughter missionaries to completely trust in him to take care of the tuition, they trusted in him alone. And he provided a miracle. God is in the business of miracles. We might be in a pandemic, but God speaks supernaturally to us. He opens our heart, and wants us to communicate with him, to listen to him. He wants to speak to us.

Now you know, as I was lying there in this mound of wig heads, all talking to me, I kept my eyes closed. I plugged my ears to block off the talking heads. And the next thing I knew, my dad was pulling me up from the mound of wigs. And he asked me, "What happened?" And I told him I was running through the store, and after I turned off the lights. And he said, "Why would you run?" And I thought for a moment, should I say something? Would this cause me to be shameful to my parents? And it just came out. I said, "I ran because I was scared." I thought my dad will respond with anger. But he just smiled. He chuckled a little and said, "Son, there's nothing to be scared about or afraid. I am here with you." And that was it. Hearing my dad say those words, "I am here with you", made all the difference in the world.

From that point on, the wigs still said some things to me as I walked through the maze, but I wasn't scared at all, because my dad told me he would be there with me. We all make messes in life. Some messes are the result of things that we cannot control. And some messes are result of our own faults. But we don't need to live in fear, guilt or shame, because God is with us. God loves us. So much in fact, he sent his son. Giving his life up for us. Making us right between us and God. And he rose from the dead with the power to make us whole. Bring complete healing in our lives, free us from the power of fear, guilt and shame, because he calls us his own. And we belong to him forever. Father, thank you for the hope that we have in Jesus. Be our rock, our protector, our savior, bring a new hope in our lives, and help us to live into that this week in Jesus' name, amen.

Discussion Questions:

Opening Question

- Icebreaker: Do you like to plan things out in details or be spontaneous?
- Looking back, were you able to apply any of the things we talked about last time to your life this week? What did you do? How did it go?

Scripture Reflection Questions - Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God (e.g., traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage and sermon?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?

Sermon Reflection Questions

- What has been the most difficult thing you have been going through during the pandemic? Take a moment and lift up prayers to God for this.
- What brings you the most hope in life? Why?

Closing Question and Application

- Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week?
- Who might you share this with?