

Jeremiah 29:4-14 “JESUS is Our Hope”

INTRO:

Good morning! It's great to be here with you guys on this last Sunday in 2020.

I want to also welcome those of you who are watching online...

In case you don't know me, my name is Matt Houston. I am the worship leader and middle school pastor here at Calvary Chapel.

This morning, we will be studying in Jeremiah 29 with a message I've titled, “Jesus is Our Hope.”

We'd love for you to follow along this morning. If you need a Bible, raise your hand and one of our ushers will bring one to you.

While you're turning in your Bibles to Jeremiah 29, I want to also remind those who are watching online that you can text and questions, comments, or prayer requests to the number on the screen:

(678) 960-9321

====

Let's pray and ask the Lord to speak to our hearts through His Word this morning.

PRAYER

Well, one thing is for certain: 2020 has not looked at ALL like we expected it to look going into this year, has it?

If it HAS turned out exactly how you expected it would after all, then we can consider you the pessimist of all pessimists! ☺

I remember (back in December of last year) hearing kids joke about this so-called “Coronavirus”. But by January, it was becoming more and more of a reality. You know the rest of the story.

But, if someone told me on December 27th of 2019 that I would be carrying a mask around with me everywhere I went a year later, I would have laughed in their face! I would have called them crazy. But the truth is, you cannot enter the majority of establishments without seeing a “Masks Required” sign on the front door!

Just a couple of weeks ago, I was at an outdoor Christmas event and one of the workers of the event leaned over to me and kindly asked, “Sir, do you have a mask?” I replied and said, “Yes, ma’am... thank you!” and carried on as usual. That’s when my wife leaned over to me and said, “I think that was her way of asking you to put it on.” I’m a little slow sometimes ☺

A few months ago, I jokingly predicted that just as we have a sock drawer at home – one day we would all have a drawer dedicated to our masks! It’s not so much of a joke anymore.

I’m not here to argue whether or not masks should or shouldn’t be worn, or if they should or shouldn’t be required... I’m simply saying: What an incredible change in our everyday lifestyle!

And not just with masks, but with the majority of procedures concerning safety today.

For some of us here today in person and online, Covid has impacted our lives in a big way.

It’s interfered with our jobs. It’s affected our financial status. Our health. And, sadly, for some, the very lives of friends and family have been lost due to this horrible pandemic.

My point is: **In a year like 2020 that should have provided a chance for clearer 20/20 vision... it has been anything BUT 20/20.**

Covid aside, the social unrest in our country has caused a heaviness on our hearts. The racial injustice that has run rampant this year has rocked our nation. The election has managed to spur outrage and division among a country that prides itself on being 50 UNITED states.

If this year has been anything... it's been everything BUT a clear vision.

In fact, it's been both the shortest year and the longest year of my life! The shortest year, because I can't believe it's already almost the end of December, and yet the longest year because it seems like it's never going to end!

So many events have been canceled that there's nothing to measure time by anymore. A couple of months ago, I looked over at Jenny and said, "I can't believe how quickly this year is flying by. It still feels like it's June and yet here we are now in September." To which she replied, "It's October." ☺

But, one of the great things about a new year is it's just that... a NEW YEAR.

It's a time of celebration – and renewal. It's a time to RESET. It's a time to move forward in new vision. In new beginnings. In new things.

Each year, millions of Americans pledge a better year ahead than what they experienced the last. This next year shouldn't be too hard to accomplish that, though, should it? ☺

A new year provides a new START. **If 2020 had a reset button, it would be pressed with great pleasure this Friday – on New Year's Day!**

But, of course, for you pessimists, some of you are already thinking, "What makes you believe 2021 will be any better?"

I don't know! Maybe it gets worse! ☺

The truth is, I don't know what next year will hold. Just like I don't know what tomorrow will hold, nor the end of today.

We are not promised tomorrow. None of us knows when we will breathe our last, nor if the Lord will come back for His Church before we even reach the drop of the New Year's Ball.

But what I do know is this: God has a plan. He has not given up; therefore, I will not give up.

One verse that rose to the forefront of my mind very early in the pandemic stage was Proverbs 16:9: “A man’s heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.”

“A man’s heart plans his way...” In my heart, I planned MY 2020. MY 2020 turned out differently than what I had planned.

But the Lord directed my steps.

This verse was a truth that became a hard reality.

Even here at the church, we spent Easter Sunday Livestreaming our service to our viewers at home as our worship team led worship before Pastor Sandy got up to speak before an empty sanctuary.

Easter Sunday is a day of celebration with our church family! Don’t get me wrong... we know you were celebrating with us while viewing online. But, what a strange way to celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord!

Again, if someone would have told me in December of 2019 that we would be celebrating Easter Sunday in an empty church building, I would have labeled them “crazy”!

Our church closed its doors and shut down for many weeks in an effort to help control the spread of this virus.

Obviously, the Lord was reminding His Church that the building is not what makes the Body of Believers. His people are His Body. Yet, a strange turn of events.

Last year, our middle school youth group took 37 students to our summer retreat at Awanita Retreat Center. This year: ZERO.

Our annual youth conference that brings in 500 people from Calvarys all across the southeast was canceled just weeks before hosting the event.

Our high school retreat – and our Kids Camp – canceled.

I’m not venting... and I think my point has been made, but the fact remains: The Lord is in control. He knows far greater than I could ever know, and He has better plans than I can ever imagine! And for that, I’m thankful!

Yet, in all that has happened (or not happened) in 2020, I am reminded again in reading Jeremiah 29 that the Lord is not finished with us yet.

Situations may have forced us to change plans. Circumstances may have led to a different outcome than we have expected.

But, as long as there is breath in my lungs and pep in my step, still I will praise Him and continue walking with Him. Amen?

In Jeremiah 29, we are reminded of God's great faithfulness in our times of great peril.

Many people jump to Jeremiah 29:11 in times of trouble, which is a wonderful verse to memorize and keep handy. But, there is a backstory to this verse that I believe is a necessary reminder this morning.

You may remember from **the book of Daniel how he and other Jews had been carried away in exile and held in captivity.**

There is a letter from Jeremiah recorded here in the 29th chapter written to those of God's people who were exiled in Babylon.

Although, it was primarily given to the elders, or Jewish leaders, I believe it holds great value to every Believer today.

Read with me starting in verse 4.

*⁴ Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have **caused** to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon:*

As odd as it sounds, God says He caused His people to be carried away into a foreign land of captivity.

God allowed HIS people – to be plucked out of their cozy homes and comfortable lives – and to be carried away as captives.

This phrase, “whom I have caused to be carried away,” can translate to, “to make bald,” or “to make naked.” It was a phrase used to describe taking hair off the face. In other words, it’s as if God says, “I have taken the covering away from you, and I’ve left you exposed, and I’ve done it for a reason.”

Kind of scary, isn’t it? That God has a reason for allowing us to reach a state of “nakedness,” or leaving us “uncovered.”

In the very next chapter of Jeremiah, chapter 30, God says to His people in verse 15:

“Why do you cry about your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable. Because of the multitude of your iniquities, because your sins have increased, I have done these things to you.”

See, there is a continual pattern that we find in the Old Testament. And it’s not just a one-time repeated offense. It’s not even a second-time offense, or a “three strikes, you’re out” kind of thing. Over and over and OVER again, God’s people continually fall prey to their own weaknesses, and to their sin.

And before we pass judgment on them, we need to remember we have more than likely been down this road a time or two ourselves.

And, time and time again, God promised His people that if they will repent and turn from their evil ways, He will forgive them and pull them out of their bondage.

And time and time again, God’s people would repent and move forward with God again.

And some short time later, whether the same generation or perhaps the generation under them, we read about them falling away from the Lord again for various reasons.

God was bringing His judgment on His people for their actions, and yet – something beautiful also continues to happen:

God remains merciful.

Look at what He tells His people to do in the next few verses.

Verse 5:

⁵ Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. ⁶ Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished.

God instructs His people to “Settle in, because you’re not going anywhere for a while!”

Ever heard that saying, “Bloom where you are planted.”?

I hate that saying.

I don’t really hate that saying ☺. It’s just that it scares me... because the saying implies I am in a situation I don’t necessarily WANT to be in, so I might as well make the best of it.

I don’t want to be planted in an uncomfortable situation! I don’t want to “settle in” where things aren’t cozy!

We may not like it, but God continually allows us to experience uncomfortable situations.

For HIS glory, not ours.

What are we to do about it?

“Build houses. Dwell in them. Plant your gardens and partake! Eat of the fruit you cultivate. Find wives and have children. In fact, go ahead and find wives for your sons, marry them off, and let them increase with children! As depressing as it may seem, you won’t be going anywhere anytime soon. I’ve got great things in store for you in the future... but not before you enter into ‘grandparenthood.’”

God has a plan for each of us. But it’s HIS plan.

And guess what? His plan for you might include some time in Babylon.

See – BECAUSE of God’s plan to bring His people back one day, His desire was not to see them perish in the meantime!

God promised a great future to these, His people, but there will be no future if they just stopped living!

In our troubled times of grief or despair, life just seems to stop for a while, doesn’t it? But not for others around us. When I find myself in this position, I must remind myself it is imperative that I keep moving. For the world around me is still in constant need of Jesus. I cannot just implode in my own emotions.

Grieve, yes. Mourn, absolutely. There is a time for sorrow.

But I must continually move forward in my walk with the Lord, knowing that He holds my future. My hope is in HIM, not the things of this world.

Jesus said it best in John 16:33: “*These things I have spoken to you, that in ME – you may have peace. [...in ME – not your money, not your family, not your job, not your success or reputation... in ME]. In the WORLD you will have tribulation [And, where are we? In the WORLD, right?]; but be of good cheer, I [Jesus] have overcome the world.*”

Which means, **if I am in Christ Jesus... then the WORLD should have NO hold on me.**

This world, “tribulation,” in John 16 means, “affliction, trouble, anguish, persecution, burdened, pressured.”

It’s the same pressure that’s used to describe pressing grapes. The pressure, the weight, of any burden gets heavy eventually. Even unbearable at times.

And Jesus promised that in the WORLD, **we will be pressed and trodden upon like grapes in a winepress.**

This may seem like some kind of weird retribution or something, but the truth is – when God’s people were in disobedience to Him, He caused them to be carried away into captivity.

He *allowed* it to happen.

Because He loved them.

The Bible is clear that the Lord chastens those who He loves.

Believe it or not... we make mistakes! We mess up. Even as Christians, we all have sin that rears its ugly head at times!

But, be thankful the Lord doesn’t smite us in His anger. Instead, He allows us to experience a time of “uncovering” or exile. But He always promises a return – if we seek His face.

And then there are times where God allowed His people to be carried away because of the hardness of their hearts.

I’m reminded of *Romans 1:24*: “Therefore God also **gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator...**”

When WE, as God’s people, become consumed by our fleshly desires, God will give us over to those pleasures. It isn’t that God doesn’t care about us anymore... it’s that He will not FORCE us to love Him and follow Him!

God allows US to make the choice as to whether we follow Him – or if we follow worldly pleasures.

God doesn’t set traps and snares for us to FALL into! On the contrary, God desires to see us overcome those temptations and those sins which overtake us so easily.

The author of *Hebrews* tells us in chapter 12, verse 1: “... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, LOOKING

UNTO JESUS, the AUTHOR and FINISHER of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

LOOKING unto JESUS – who is the Author and Finisher of our faith.

See, Christian, we must ENDURE the hardships of THIS life... keeping our eyes on Jesus, who has promised us hope in Him.

Jesus knew it took great perseverance to survive the hardships of this world... because *greater things* were ahead.

And look at WHY Jesus endured the Cross... “...for the JOY – that was set BEFORE Him...”

Do you have a JOY that is set before you?

You do! And His name **Jesus**.

Jesus endured His hardship for the JOY that was set before Him.

But what “joy” did Jesus *really* have to look forward to? He went to His death on the Cross!

I believe the joy Jesus had set before Him was the work *beyond* the Cross.

The joy of OUR salvation.

I believe He was looking *forward* to what the Cross would mean for every Child of God.

Maybe you're tired. You're facing battles that others don't (and they wouldn't understand).

But remember – Jesus did not give up, and it was because of the *joy* that was set before Him.

There is true “Joy to the world, [because] the Lord is come!”

My absolute favorite Christmas song is “O Holy Night.” You can’t beat it. We sing, “A thrill of HOPE, the weary world... REJOICES. For yonder breaks a NEW and glorious morn.”

As Mrs. Doubtfire would say, “Help is on the way, Dear!”

Hope – is on the Horizon.

And His name is **JESUS**.

A weary world can rejoice because Jesus brings new life again.

There is the age-old question that most Christians (and non-Christians for that matter) struggle to have answered at some point in their life: Why do BAD things happen to GOOD people?

When you figure that out, let me know.

In short, we live in a fallen world. This world is imperfect, and WE are imperfect. Once sin entered the world, so did its imperfections.

Sin is woven in every part of our world and it is present in our everyday lives.

You can blame Adam and Eve for that, but truth is – I’m not sure the Fall wouldn’t have happened to each of us if WE were the ones placed in the Garden in the beginning.

I'm a big believer of finding answers in God's Word. And here's what I do know from Romans 3 (9-12): "... *There is none righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. ¹² They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.*"

Paul goes on to say in verse 23 that "... ***ALL** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*"

Who has sinned?	Everyone!
Who falls short?	Everyone!
Who is deserving of judgment for their sin?	Everyone!
Who among us is good?	No one!

If there is none among us who is righteous, then the REAL question isn't "Why do bad things happen to good people?"

Rather, it's "Why does any GOOD thing happen to me at all?"

Jesus said in Matthew 5:45 that God "*makes His sun rise on the evil AND on the good, and sends rain on the just AND on the unjust.*"

We can't look at everyone – *Christian or non-Christian* – as either "good" or bad."

Everyone – "good" or "bad" – is part of God's creation. It is not in God's nature to pick and choose sides. The truth is, He is good to all. Not all see it that way, nor are we quick to recognize it sometimes.

If that's true, then which category to do I really fit in – the good or the bad?!? ☺

But the truth is, bad things happen to both "good" AND "bad" people. Likewise, GOOD things happen to both "good" and "bad" people.

Again, the REAL question is, "Why is God so GOOD to me?"

What have I done to deserve it? Not one thing.

I deserve DEATH and HELL.

But, I am made righteous – ONLY because Jesus made me righteous when He took my sin upon Himself.

I didn't deserve it. Still don't. Yet, here we are. Sinners, saved by God's grace alone.

And that's the beauty of God's grace. It's unearned. It's given by God freely to anyone who will accept it. The work has already been done. Have you fully received it?

It's not your place to find out WHY bad things happen in your life, or in this world. We're already told that bad things WILL happen.

It's like singing, "Mary, Did You Know?" What an 'oxymoron'! Of course, she knew... the angel told her! ☺

There shouldn't be any surprise that there is trouble in this world!

But we have hope! Because Jesus promised that we can 'cheer up,' because He has OVERCOME the world.

In verse 7, Jeremiah says:

⁷ And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace. ⁸ For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed. ⁹ For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them, says the LORD.

One of the major problems happening at this time was an overtaking of false prophets.

God said, "Don't let these prophets deceive you! They are not telling you the truth! They are not sent by Me."

The false prophets were promising a quick return. But God wanted Jeremiah to set the record straight and bring them back down to earth. Hey – truth hurts sometimes.

But a hard-truth-reality is better than a sugar-coated false hope.

See – when we listen to the world around us instead of the truth of God’s Word, we will reap the consequences of the WORLD. The Lord desires and delights in our steadfast walk with Him.

We shouldn’t become more like the world; we should desire to see the world become more like JESUS.

WHILE God’s people were carried away in their exile, they still had the privilege and responsibility to share God’s love with others around them.

Even in times of trouble, people will know your love for God by your love for others.

But as God said in **verse 7: “Seek My Peace.”** “... seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be...” “... and PRAY to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace.”

Well, that’s confusing ☺

That’s like defining a word by using the word.

“Daddy, what does ‘peace’ mean?”

“Well, Son, it means ... ‘peace.’”

Notice... God says, “Seek the peace of the CITY. For, in ITS peace, you will have peace.”

This is NOT God saying, “Seek peace with everyone around you and don’t cause any trouble and all will be right with you in your life.”

God says, “The CITY is where you are temporarily.”

And – for the sake of today’s study, I’m putting the “city” in quotation marks.

Your “exile,” your “trouble,” your situation – is where you are, but it’s temporary.

Therefore, find peace – with where you ARE right now.

Fight or Flight. Too many people run from their problems rather than face them with the Lord – and before the Lord. When the pastor or someone at church makes them mad, what do they do? They run down the street to another church where everything seems perfect suddenly. When they feel that God has “hurt” them in some way, they might even run from God. When their boss makes them mad, they find a new job. When relationships go sour, we cut them off! When someone says something we don’t like, we just “cancel” them.

Truth is: In situations like these, we put too much stock in PEOPLE, when people will let you down 100% of the time.

God tells His people in Jeremiah 29: Stop “taking flight” and *start seeking PEACE* with where you are.

But, see – peace does not mean DEFEAT. If we’re not careful, we can mistake PEACE for DEFEAT. We think we have to give up or give in to receive peace. On the contrary, Paul spoke of a contentment that can only be found in Jesus in the MIDST of a situation.

In *Philippians 4:11-13*, Paul says, “... for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

“I have learned the value of contentment – in all situations.” Not wanting more than I already have, or have been given. “I have learned,” Paul says, “to be satisfied with what the Lord has given me – and with what He is doing *through* me.”

Victory will come through Jesus. Rather than take flight, let Jesus *fight* on your behalf.

In the MEANTIME...

WHILE you are – WHERE you are – seek God's peace in your situation.

God has promised us peace. HIS peace. Not the peace of the world. Not the peace of a relationship. Not the peace of our finances or what you define as prosperity.

But, the peace of God which surpasses all understanding. The peace of God which will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)

Verse 10:

¹⁰ For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. ¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

An all-too-familiar verse.

When we seek God, He provides:

- His **PEACE**.
- His **PRESENCE**.
- He gives us His **PROMISE**.

God promises to bring His people back.

And then look at this: God has thoughts that He thinks toward us!

And, notice... these are thoughts TOWARD you. Not AWAY from you. Or AGAINST you.

Did you know God thinks of you?

He thought of you in your mother's womb, He thought of you while He was hanging on the Cross, and He thinks thoughts toward you now.

His thoughts toward you are thoughts of **PEACE**.

His thoughts toward you are **NOT OF EVIL**.

And His thoughts toward you are **TO GIVE YOU A FUTURE AND A HOPE**.

In the 2003 film, *Paycheck*, Michael Jennings is a reverse engineer, who creates a machine that can see into the future. It didn't take him long to figure out the dangers of seeing the future, whether it was seeing something good or bad. As the creator of the machine that could see into the future, he knew he must do one thing: Destroy it.

He says, *"If you show someone their future, they have no future. You take away the mystery, you take away the hope."*

If we could see our future, then what kind of future would it really be? Where's the hope?

No, God intended for us to live day-by-day, step-by-step, a life filled with faith, hope, and expectancy.

We are not promised tomorrow. But we ARE promised a future – in Christ. Jesus is our Hope. He is our future.

May we be hopeful for that future that God has promised us.

If Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith, then we need to know He knows the beginning and the end! God is outside of time. He is not waiting on the sidelines to see how we finish our race. It's as if God is looking at the entire timeline of the universe, from beginning to end. He sees Adam and Eve in the Garden, He sees His Son dying on the Cross, and all the while looking at your life on a later point in a spectrum.

I have no Biblical evidence to back this up ☺. It's just a picture to give you an idea... but – again – God is outside of time.

Which means He knows how your story ends! He was there in the beginning, He is here with you now in the present, and **[SPOILER ALERT]** – He is waiting for you in the end.

It's like watching your favorite movie or TV show all over again. Even though you've already seen it, when the conflict of the story enters in Season 3 of your favorite show, you still feel the gut-wrenching emotions... but you know how the story ends! You know what happens in Season 8 when the conflict is resolved. It gives you hope. It allows you to endure the conflict.

We may not know the outcome of OUR conflict, but we DO know that God does!

And, it allows us to endure the conflict of right here and now.

It's so easy to think (or assume) that God is AGAINST us because of our despair. But, as a Father looks upon His children and thinks good thoughts TOWARD those children, so does our loving Father in Heaven look upon you – **ESPECIALLY in your times of despair.**

God is not AGAINST you. He is FOR you. Stop wallowing in what feels like a strict punishment and start looking forward to what He is promising for your future.

Romans 8:28 tells us, “And we know that ALL things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to HIS purpose.”

We must trust God that He knows what He is doing!

God may be using your hurt of today – to prepare you for something of tomorrow!

In a recent interview with **Jeremy Camp**, regarding coping with the loss of his first wife due to cancer, he said, “It wasn't like [the Lord] was saying, ‘Get over it; I'm here; I'll take care of you.’ He met me where I was.”

He goes on to say, “Through just time, God took an open wound – a scar that still remains – but it's not an open wound anymore.”

Wounds take place. But through time, and with God's healing, they don't remain as open wounds anymore. They become scars.

When I look at my own scars, I should see the work of Jesus. I see the both the hurt that I endured, but also the VICTORY that HE has accomplished in and through my wounds.

When you look at your scars, do you see the faces of those who put them there? Or do you see the work of Jesus – the victory of Jesus – through your pain?

Scars remind us of the past, but they also prepare us for the future. They build in us a toughness that's needed to take on tomorrow's problems.

Jesus, too, has scars. Because He has been working in your pain, dear friend – long before you even realized it.

Lean on Him. Trust in Him. Find our peace – in Him...

For – as Ephesians 2:14 tells us, “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation.”

And then God promises something so powerful, and I hope you don't miss it this morning:

¹² Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.

Isaiah 59:2 tells us, “... your iniquities have separated you from your God. And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.”

Sin causes a separation.

Separation brings a distance.

But God promises a restoration – with our repentance.

And He says, “If you call upon Me. If you pray to Me. I will listen to you.”

“You will seek Me, and guess what? You WILL find Me. When you search for Me with all your heart. I WILL be found by you, says the Lord. And I WILL bring you back. I will gather you back to Me. That’s a promise.”

Concerning verse 13, Yates writes, “God’s Word to His people in the day of Jeremiah is still His sure word for men who have sinned and lost touch with the Infinite. No perfunctory gesture of interest can procure the rich treasure that is more valuable than all gold. He is always available. His longing is that all men may look to Him and live. His arms are always open in loving invitation to any who will turn to Him. It is just as true, however, that a diligent search is necessary. One who becomes conscious of his need, senses the satisfying gift of God, and sets out to find Him can be sure of victory if he seeks with his whole heart. Cleansing, peace, joy, victory will be his at the hand of a loving God who delights to welcome His children home.”

Every one of us have a need for a Savior – whether realized or not.

Maybe it’s time you seek Him today... whether for the first time or the hundredth time.

Verses 12-14:

God was providing a NEW beginning – with a NEW purpose for His people. MAYBE... God wants to provide a new beginning for you, too. But, a new beginning according to HIS purpose.

The Bible tells us in *Lamentations 3:22-24* that “*Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions [or, His mercies] fail not. They are new EVERY morning; Great is Your faithfulness. ‘The LORD is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘Therefore I hope in HIM!’*”

How often are His compassions and mercies made new? EVERY, SINGLE MORNING.

I think that’s one of the reasons God made our bodies to require sleep. Yes, sleep helps heal our bodies of many things, and it provides a much-needed rest... but it also provides a much-needed fresh, renewal of our mind.

I'm sure you're familiar with *Romans 12:2*, but it says, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the RENEWING of your MIND." A TRUE change in your life can start with the renewing of your mind – for the purpose that GOD has for you.

Some of you are dying to hit the RESET button on 2020! And you CAN! By the renewal of your mind in Jesus Christ.

God can transform your thinking, your attitudes on life, your choices... but it takes a real renewal of your mind in Christ Jesus. As *Colossians 3:1-2* says, "If then you were raised with Christ, SEEK those things which are ABOVE, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."

If God's mercies truly are new every morning, then let's move forward with our hope in Him every day – starting again today! He has new mercies for you today! Let us pray, and seek, and ask, and receive of those mercies from the Lord.

God just might be preparing you right now for a new beginning in HIM. One where He is at the very CENTER of your life.

Last week, a memory popped up on my Facebook page of a picture I posted two years ago.

It was a picture of a beautiful rainbow arching over dark clouds looming in the near distance. I thought it was such a great picture of the Light that stands in front of the darkness. It's not always seen, and sometimes it's overlooked. It reminded me that – perspective (the view from where you're standing) – makes a huge difference.

See – when you look at that picture, do you see the dark clouds... or do you see the rainbow?

In other words – do you JUST see the darkness? Or can you see God's promises IN the darkness?

Storms have a way of wiping out both the good and the bad things of life. But behind every cloud is a rainbow. Behind every storm are the lingering promises that God has given us.

As God has promised in Jeremiah 29: He WILL be found by you. When you seek Him – with your whole heart.

But He cannot be found by you... if you are not looking.

Jesus is our Hope. Let's seek Him today.

If you need prayer this morning, we would love to pray with you and ask the Lord to remind you of these truths.

Don't forget, you can text us, as well at **(678) 960-9321**.

=====

CLOSING PRAYER

=====

PRAYER COUNSELORS →

=====

Hey! What if we treated SIN like we have treated this virus? What if we were to socially distance ourselves from sin?

A deadly virus sweeps across the earth, threatening our very value of life as we know it. And yet, we turn a blind eye to an even greater threat – sin, itself. One thing is certain: We will all die a physical death. But one thing that we shouldn't fall prey to is a *spiritual death*.