

Pentecost 6  
July 1, 2018

Lamentations 3:22-33  
617-618-389/620-619

### As Christians We Always Have Hope

- I. Because of God's great love and faithfulness.
- II. As we wait quietly for the Lord.

Dear Christian friends,

You've probably heard it said – you've **maybe even said** it yourself. "IF you HAVE YOUR HEALTH you have everything." More important than a beautiful house – closets full of clothes and bulging bank accounts is your health. **Health** is a wonderful blessing from our God that's **too often** TAKEN FOR GRANTED.

But think again about those words. "IF YOU HAVE your **health** you have **everything**." So what happens if you DON'T HAVE your health? **What happens** when the doctor says there's **nothing more** he can do for you? **If** our health is everything does that mean we HAVE NOTHING WITHOUT it?

**As Jeremiah wrote** these words about the ONLY THING he had was his health. Bu that's NOT what gave him hope. **"I say to myself, 'The LORD is my portion.'"** The truth is – if WE HAVE GOD we have **everything**. So learn from these verses - AS CHRISTIANS WE ALWAYS HAVE HOPE. We **always have hope** 1)because of God's great love and faithfulness. We **always have hope** 2)as we wait quietly for the Lord.

#### **I. Because of God's great love and faithfulness.**

Hope is what the Israelites desperately needed. They needed something to CLING to – to LOOK FORWARD to. The book of Lamentations is just that – one LONG, SAD SONG of **pain** and **suffering**. Jeremiah was sitting IN THE ASHES of **what had been** his country. The Babylonians under King **Nebuchadnezzar** had crushed Judah's **armies** – conquered the **country** – carted most of the people off into exile. Their cities were **destroyed** - their homes in ruins. All that they had worked so hard for was now ALL GONE. Even their health was threatened by **disease** and **starvation**. It was **awfully hard to say**, "CHEER UP! It COULD BE worse!" TO THE EYE it looked like they had lost everything. **Jeremiah saw** that they STILL HAD GOD and that gave him hope.

***"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."***

It took a LOT OF GUTS – make that a lot of FAITH – to **say** that. How could Jeremiah speak of God's love AT A TIME like this? Jeremiah knew that God had brought this destruction on them. ***"How the Lord has covered Zion with the cloud of His anger,"*** Jeremiah had lamented. ***"Without pity the Lord has swallowed up the dwellings of Judah, in His wrath He has torn down the strongholds of Judah. The Lord is like an enemy; He has multiplied mourning and lamentation."***

As Jeremiah looked over the **situation** he STILL HAD HOPE. Bad as it was it was NOT AS BAD as they **deserved**. A life that's HELL is still nothing compared to an ETERNITY IN hell. Jeremiah understood that's what their sins – what HE – **really deserved** from God. Jeremiah understood that while God had struck down his STUBBORN, WAYWARD people He had not given up on them. ***"Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed."*** God's promise of a Savior STILL STOOD. They still had the hope of **eternal life** in heaven. So God IN LOVE had **promised**. So God IN FAITHFULNESS would **do** for them.

As God's NT people **we have** that promise fulfilled. Peter wrote, ***"We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place."*** When we are tempted to doubt GOD'S LOVE all we **need do** is go back to Bethlehem and

kneel at the manger. There is the eternal Son of God who came here ***“not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*** When we’re feeling overwhelmed by **sin** and **guilt** all we need to is go stand at the foot of the cross. ***“Father, forgive them,”*** Jesus prayed as He shed His blood to ***“cleanse us from all sin.”*** As GRIM DEATH STARES us in the eye all we need do is take another look at Jesus’ EMPTY grave. ***“I am the Resurrection and the Life,”*** Jesus reassures us and then promises us, ***“he who believes in Me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die.”*** Our living Lord Jesus is the ULTIMATE PROOF of God’s ***“great love and faithfulness.”*** Trusting in Jesus we have **God’s forgiveness** of all our sins AND **His promise** of eternal life in heaven when we die.

As Christians we ALWAYS HAVE HOPE. God loves us. God has made us some FANTASTIC promises – to ***“be with us always”*** – to ***“meet all our needs”*** – to answer all our prayers – to ***“work all things”*** for our eternal good – to finally take us home to heaven. We can confidently build our **faith** and **lives** on those promises. ***“Great is Your FAITHFULNESS,”*** Jeremiah wrote. We always count on God to DO EXACTLY what He says. God ALWAYS keeps His promises.

As Christians who ALWAYS HAVE hope we don’t have to dread the **dawn** of a new day or fear what it **may bring**. God’s compassions ***“are new every morning.”*** EVERY DAY God gives us evidence of His ***“great love and faithfulness.”*** Jeremiah is talking about all those LITTLE THINGS God gives and does for us – the **bright sunshine** and **blue skies** – the **flowers blooming** in the garden – **birds singing** – the conveniences of life that we TAKE FOR GRANTED – the love of **family** and friends. The list is ALMOST ENDLESS.

None of those blessings is God’s GREATEST blessing. We could lose them **all** and still be RICHLY BLESSED and HAVE HOPE. We would still have Jesus. **At the same time** we shouldn’t despise those other blessings. They are GIFTS from our **good God** and He wants us to ENJOY them. They are LITTLE REMINDERS of His love and **faithfulness**. Learn from Jeremiah that the best cure for the BLUES is to stop and count your blessings.

Great is God’s ***“love and faithfulness.”*** COUNT and appreciate God’s blessings. Understand that God has never promised us an EASY life. **Lamentations** makes clear that **hardships** and **heartaches** are A PART of this life. But don’t GIVE UP. Don’t GIVE IN to **despair**. AS CHRISTIANS we always have hope...

## II. As we wait quietly for the Lord.

Jeremiah shows us how the CHRISTIAN HANDLES life. We face the fact that life isn’t PERFECT or FAIR. We don’t live in the **Garden of Eden**. We’re not in heaven yet. God doesn’t let us ignore the HARSH REALITIES of life. God also directs us to the ROOT of the problem. The real problem with this world is not POLITICAL or SOCIAL or ECONOMICAL. It’s a spiritual problem – **sin** – people rebelling against God’s **will** and **ways**. Ignoring – DEFYING – God is the ultimate source of the **sorrows** and **sufferings** of this life.

As Christians we **always** HAVE HOPE **because** we know our lives and not a matter of LUCK or **fate**. We know our God is IN CONTROL of **all** things at **all** times. We know that ***“the LORD is good to those whose hope is in Him, to the one who seeks him.”*** We also understand that God **sometimes** DOES let us suffer – suffer JUSTLY because of **something we’ve done** – or even suffer UNJUSTLY through no fault of our own. Our confidence **through it all** is that God is ***“working all things”*** for our eternal good. **While** we may not understand everything God is doing we have the peace of God’s ***“great love and faithfulness.”*** Hear again what Jeremiah wrote. ***“For men are not cast off by the LORD forever. Though He brings grief, He will show compassion, so great is His unfailing love. For He does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men.”*** God doesn’t get HIS KICKS out of making us suffer. But FOR OUR GOOD God will send sufferings our way. We’re told in

Hebrews, ***“Do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those He loves. God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace.”*** God in love refuses to raise us as SPOILED, ROTTEN BRATS. When NEEDED God will let us suffer awhile.

As Christians who ALWAYS HAVE HOPE we ***“wait quietly”*** for the Lord. **One** of the dangers of suffering is becoming IMPATIENT. We show impatience by WHINING and complaining. **Impatience** is telling God, “You COULD DO a **better job** taking care of me.” **Impatience** can easily lead to, “God, You DON’T KNOW what You’re doing. I deserve better than this.” **When we suffer** we can become angry – upset – **frustrated**. Then WHAT’S HAPPENED? We’ve lost sight of our God. We’re seeing only our **problems** and not our LOVING – FAITHFUL Father.

***“It is good to WAIT QUIETLY for the LORD. Let him sit alone in silence.”*** When we sit quietly ***“in silence”*** we can LISTEN and LEARN. Quiet and silence mean we’ve SHUT UP and we’re letting God speak. We need to do that! Look what this **did for Jeremiah**. It helped him get his PRIORITIES STRAIGHT. It drew him CLOSER to his God. It led Jeremiah to TREASURE **God’s Word** and **promises**. It helped Jeremiah understand that his GREATEST POSSESSIONS were his Savior’s love and **forgiveness** and **promises**. Rather than finding his joy in THINGS Jeremiah rejoiced in his SALVATION. Jeremiah understood his life IN THE LIGHT of **eternity**. He was grateful for God’s PRESENCE in **his life now** and he looked forward to **living forever** IN GOD’S PRESENCE in heaven. Those are all lessons WE TOO NEED to learn – and thank God He’s WILLING TO TEACH them to us!

As Christians we are in a WIN-WIN situation. Trusting in Jesus there’s NO WAY we can COME OUT LOSERS. We **win** if we have a longer life with God here on earth. We **win** if God quickly takes us home to heaven. As Christians we ALWAYS HAVE HOPE. That’s AS CHRISTIANS. **All this** is true only through faith in Jesus. WHEN YOU HAVE JESUS you **have everything**. Thank God – WE HAVE Jesus! Amen.

NICENE CREED