

Message Series: **If You Only Knew...truths that can change your life**

Message Title: **Hope has its reasons, and they include you!**

Scripture Source: **Lamentations 3:17-26**

Date: Sunday, August 26, 2018

Teacher: John Garner

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### **Casualty**

When life is hard, hope falters and wonders. 'Can God be trusted? Does God care about what is happening around me and within me?' Many people speak with an ache in their voice about struggling to maintain hope in the face of perplexing circumstances and any number of frustrating realities. What has caused you to wonder about God, life and faith? When has hope become, or almost become a casualty in your story? What has threatened to snuff out the fragile flame of hope?

### **When All Seems Hopeless: a Lament: Lamentations 3:17-20**

The Jewish prophet Jeremiah stands in the ruins of the city of Jerusalem. The temple has been utterly destroyed. A sense of community has been vanquished. Desolation remains. The year is 587 B.C. The Jewish nation has been invaded by foreigners. The people of God have lived lives of persistent rebellion against God and his 'laws of liberty' and the day of reckoning has come in dramatic and devastating ways.

His raw and real book, Lamentations is comprised of 5 poems of lament. "to feel or express sorrow or regret for, to mourn deeply...a 'death' is lamented."

Emotional darkness engulfs the man. "*my soul is downcast within me.*" Vs. 20. Have you ever felt that way? A loss, a reversal of such magnitude that a feeling and fear of fading hope invaded you...a relational trauma, a fearful health diagnosis, a financial collapse, the onset of emotional/mental health issues...what might your story be? Illustrate:

### **Hope's Return...begins with honesty: Lamentations 3:20**

Jeremiah faces life as it is with rigorous and accurate honesty. He understands and accepts that this hard and gut wrenching turn of events is largely self-inflicted. God is using foreigners to discipline his wayward people, to get their attention and help them come to their senses. And come back to God, his ways and purposes.

**Let's pause and reflect:** Are we willing to face life as it is and honestly and accurately assess what is self-inflicted trauma (poor/unwise choices) and what is others-inflicted or what occurs circumstantially, outside of our control. Are we open to learn from God what he may be teaching us through hard realities?

This quality of self reflection is challenging and often requires the wise insights of a trusted friend along the way. But, make no mistake, honesty in specifics is essential.

### **Hope Has its Reasons...and they include you! Lamentations 3:21-25**

Jeremiah turns a corner in his journey when he chooses to bring God clearly and squarely into his hard reality: "*Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope...*" Vs. 21

**Reason # 1:** He disciplines his mind to think upon specific truths about God, life and faith. He refuses to be perpetually engulfed in emotional distress. He chooses to not only be honest about his emotional life but also take full responsibility for what he thinks long and hard about. "*Yet this I call to mind*"

**Let's Pause and Reflect:** Are we willing to be both honest about how we feel and purposeful about what we give our minds to? If we allow our minds to traffic in dark and desolate thoughts and refuse to open the door to God's truths, a future marked by hope and purpose will elude us.

**Reason # 2:** The man thinks about God, in specifics. It is a renewed connection with God personally that begins to alter the landscape of his heart and mind with fresh evidences of hope.

Hope being a thoughtful confidence in the character and purposes of God that instill the trusting heart with the anticipation of a future worth engaging in. What does he ponder about God? Vss. 22-24

- "*the LORD's great love*" personally acknowledged and experienced. God's love is abundant and he generously pours out his love to people like you and me. The idea conveyed includes God's undying loyalty to his people and purposes.

- *"his compassions never fail. They (his compassions) are new every morning..."*

**Let's Pause and Reflect:** Will you ask God to be involved in the good stuff and hard stuff? Will you believe that God has shown up in the person of Jesus, to forgive your sin, to reconnect you with God and guide you forward, with hope and purpose? Friends, Jesus is God with the skin on, longing to offer you evidences of 'his great love and compassions' each and every day...and he's not late...they are new, fresh and relevant to your specific reality at the start of your day. *'new every morning'*. 'in the morning' of your fears, your uncertainties, your longings, your opportunities.

Whatever your morning involves, God's Spirit has an expression of love and compassion that 'matches the moment...your moment.'

Reason # 3: The faithfulness of God. Lamentations 3:23

Jeremiah reminds himself of the great and enduring faithfulness of God...to his people, to the promises of care, guidance and provision he has made. Consider Hebrews 13:5-6 (Psalm 118:6,7) The man talks to himself! *"I say to myself"* God is his 'portion.' His primary source of strength and resources for the journey of life.

### **A Hopeful Response: Lamentations 3:24-26**

A teachable mind, a trusting heart along the way. What can this look like in your life and mine?

Choosing 'table time' with God, time reading and reflecting upon Scripture and trustworthy resources.

Friends, if we live with closed Bibles, genuine hope will elude us. Why? Because the Spirit of Jesus speaks to us in the pages of Scripture and in conversations with others who are seeking God. Lam.3:25

Choosing 'table time' with a few trusted friends. Because God often supports and encourages us through the 'voice and touch' of others. Consider 2 Corinthians 7:5-7

Choose to be mindful of others, and seek to be the 'voice and touch of Christ' to them.

Three questions:

- What do you need to 'call to mind' today about God? Be specific!
- How have you experienced God's love, compassion, and faithfulness recently?
- What adjustments could you make to create 'table time' with God and others?

RESPONSE CARD:

*"Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope..."*  
Lamentations 3:21

Three questions:

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- What adjustments could you make to create 'table time' with God and others?