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Renewing Our Hope for the New Year

December 31, 2023

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TEXT: Psalm 80:1-7;17-19 (ESV)

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up your might and come to save us!

Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved!

O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers? You have fed them with the bread of tears and given them tears to drink in full measure. You make us an object of contention for our neighbors, and our enemies laugh among themselves.

Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved!

But let your hand be on the man of your right hand, the son of man whom you have made strong for yourself! Then we shall not turn back from you; give us life, and we will call upon your name!

Restore us, O Lord God of hosts! Let your face shine, that we may be saved!

Well. It's my desire and prayer that you will face this new year with a great hope in your hearts, and that at whatever level of hope you're at right now, and anticipation and excitement and longing for what's going to happen in this next year after this time that we spend together in God's Word that will be exponentially multiplied in your heart. I want to talk to you today about having that hope in your heart renewed and growing ever stronger. Our text in Psalm 80 highlights a people who had lost their hope, their enthusiasm about what lies ahead. And in the context of this psalm, we see about how a hope is renewed. You know, I have a young grandson. His name is Clayton, and he's three years old, and he gets so excited, so hopeful about so many things. It's it's fun to watch his little spirit and his little soul get anticipatory, excited about something that lies ahead. And he has hopes about various things. We were recently at a football game with him, and at the beginning of the game our team was doing

well and he was standing there with his fingers in the air like we were number one. And and then as things of course waned through the game and a football game, never, you know, is just simple straight victory all the way through most of the time. And he was in despair at times, and it was fun to watch his hope go up and down and up and down and up and down.

And such is the nature of life. I remember just earlier this year, it was time for me to sell an old vehicle that we had, and it was a black sport utility vehicle, and actually it was the same color as his mother and his father's vehicles. And when I told him that we were going to sell this vehicle, it really disappointed him. He he was discouraged in his heart. And he said to me, he calls me diesel. He said, diesel, I hope you don't sell that car. It matches mom's car and it matches dad's car. Well, it just so happened that the car was put for sale and some people came to our house and he was there watching outside when they decided to buy the car. And they got in the car and they pulled out of our driveway. And young Clayton, this little three year old boy who was hoping that I wouldn't sell the car, was clearly seeing that the car was leaving with a new owner, and he was standing there watching it drive down the driveway and onto the road. And as he watched it drive away, he had two toys in his hands. He had a tractor in one hand and a wagon in the other that he'd been playing with. And as as that car drove down the driveway, the tractor fell out of his hand, and then the wagon fell out of his other hand, and then he fell to the ground himself.

He was just heart sick. His his hope that we would keep that car had been dashed. And now he was just playing heartsick. And I went over to him and picked him up and wrapped him up in my arms. King Solomon described what happened to young Clayton in one of his proverbs, Proverbs 13 verse 12, when he said, Hope that is delayed or hope that's denied, or a hope that's deferred can make the heart sick. I don't know if you've had something in your life that you've been longing for, anticipating, for a desire maybe in your career path, maybe in your financial world, maybe in your health, maybe in your relational life, in your marriage or something with your children or something in your extended family, some part of life that you've been longing to be improved to, to be better, to, to be touched by God in some way and it hasn't come to pass. And if you have an area like that, I'm asking you today, how are you handling it as you leave 23 and step into 2024? How is your heart? How how anticipatory is it of what lies ahead? Has your heart become sick in any way and some area of your life has has deferred hope caused your heart to be saddened, to be hardened, to be cut off a little, to be more cautious, to be less hopeful.

If that's you, I want to give you some encouragement right out of Psalm 80. These people in Psalm 80, they'd been in captivity for a long time. They couldn't see much good lying ahead. And then they in this Psalm teach us how to have our hope renewed, how to have our hope strengthened even when things look bleak or. In what lies ahead. The first encouragement I find for renewing our hope in Psalm 80 is this. They say simply this our tears have been our bread. We have drunken our tears by the bowlful. They're describing here a common human condition. If you're discouraged in some area of your life, if your heart's sick in some area of your life, I want to encourage you today. We see it right in the Psalms. You're not alone in human history. I mean hopelessness and despair and discouragement. This is common to the human race. I mean, every generation, every person who's ever lived has had their hopes dashed, their hopes disappointed some aspect of life, not go the way they want it to go. And every human being this side of heaven has experienced that. If you're experiencing that today, I want you to know you're not alone. I mean, these people were in despair for a long time.

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Well, it is my desire and prayer that you will face this new year with great hope in your hearts. No matter your current level of hope, anticipation, excitement, or longing for what's to come in the next year, I hope that the time we spend together in God's Word will exponentially multiply that hope in your heart. Today, I want to talk to you about renewing and strengthening that hope in your heart. Our text in Psalm 80 highlights a people who had lost their hope and enthusiasm for what lies ahead. In the context of this psalm, we learn how hope can be renewed.

I have a young grandson named Clayton who is three years old. It's delightful to watch his little spirit and soul get excited and hopeful about many things. We recently attended a football game with him, and at the beginning, he was enthusiastic as our team performed well. However, as the game progressed, and as is typical in football, with ups and downs, his hope fluctuated. Life is similar in nature, with its twists and turns.

I recall an incident earlier this year when it was time for me to sell an old black sport utility vehicle that matched the color of his parents' cars. When I informed Clayton that we were selling the car, he was disappointed and discouraged. He expressed his hope that I wouldn't sell it because it matched his parents' cars. However, when the car was eventually sold, and he witnessed it being driven away by the new owners, his hope was shattered. As he stood there watching, his toys fell from his hands, and he fell to the ground in despair.

In such moments, hearts can become sick, as King Solomon described in Proverbs 13:12. Hope that is delayed, denied, or deferred can make the heart sick. Perhaps you've experienced something similar in your life—a longing or anticipation for improvement in your career, finances, health, relationships, or other aspects of life. As you transition from 2023 to 2024, I encourage you to reflect on how your heart is handling deferred hope. Has it become saddened, hardened, more cautious, or less hopeful?

Drawing inspiration from Psalm 80, which describes a people in captivity for a long time who couldn't see much good lying ahead, I offer encouragement for renewing hope. The psalmist acknowledges a common human condition: "Our tears have been our bread; we have drunk our tears by the bowlful." If you find yourself discouraged or with a sick heart, know that you are not alone in human history. Hopelessness, despair, and discouragement are common experiences for every generation, and if you are going through this now, remember that others have faced similar challenges. The people in Psalm 80 were in despair for a long time. I mean, they were, their tears had been being drunk by the bowlful. They'd been eating them like bread. And, you know, it's not just people who can be heartsick. The Bible describes creation itself as being in a sense of longing or groaning. Paul wrote to those in Rome, and he said this: all of creation is groaning, as in the pains of childbirth, right up to the present time. That's creation itself. See, the Bible reveals to us that you and I live in a broken and fallen world, and things aren't as they should be. You and I were made for a better place. The great author C.S. Lewis said this. He said, if you find in yourself a longing, a hope, a desire for something that nothing in this world will satisfy, it should point us to the reality that you and I were made for a better place, and there is a hope of a better place that God promises to us. And if you're finding yourself discouraged about something in this life, I want to give you encouragement today. God has promised all of us who will call upon him a better day. And you're not alone in your groaning and your angst and your hurt and your pain and your suffering. We see that from the Psalms. Not only is creation groaning, but the Scripture says we ourselves, even those of us who know God and have the fruits of the spirit and the first fruits of the Spirit of God in us, we groan inwardly as we're waiting eagerly for that time when God makes everything right.

Paul writes to those in Rome; he says, for the redemption of our bodies. You know, the Bible says this outwardly we're wasting away, but inwardly, and this is what we're talking about as we head into 2024, friends, inwardly you and I can be renewed day by day with a supernatural work of God. He can stir in us an unquenchable optimism. So if you've been discouraged in this life from the challenges and the pains and the sufferings and the hurts in this life, I want to

encourage you today. You're not alone. You are not alone. Every human being who's walked the face of this earth has had their hopes dashed, been discouraged, been through periods of pain and suffering. And here's what we see then from these individuals. What do they do after this long time of being heartsick, from their hopes being dashed, they begin to think about and remember the nature of God as revealed to them in their history, but also as revealed to them in the scriptures that they had. And to us now, in the current scriptures that we have, the Psalm begins saying, this shepherd of Israel, who led Joseph like a flock, they're describing the nature of God here, a shepherd who leads people individually.

He led a group of the Israelites, and he led Joseph like a flock. This is the one. And then they said, who sits enthroned between the cherubim? They are reminding themselves of two aspects of the nature of God that we need to come to understand if we're going to live with a consistent, positive, hopeful outlook in life. Here's the aspects. He is a shepherd. He leads us personally. This is a personal God, you know. There are many people who believe that God exists, but he's out there somewhere and isn't personally involved with you and me. But the Scripture teaches us differently. And the people who wrote this psalm, they knew differently from their history. They could look back and see how God had raised up a man named Abraham, then Isaac and Jacob and Joseph. And out of these individuals. And then came the 12 tribes of Israel, the Israelite people. And God was very personal with them. He loved them deeply. He was long-suffering with them and patient with them; he would restore them, and they drifted from him. And they're remembering how he shepherded the people and how he led the individuals. Friend, this is the nature of God. He's very personal with us. And then they acknowledged, even though he's personal and tender and kind and patient, he's also one who sits enthroned between the cherubim. The prophet Isaiah gave us a picture of this God in his prophetic word.

He said, the Lord sits there and cherubim in the throne of heaven. Cherubim fly around him day and night, and they simply cry out, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. These people in the Psalm are remembering God's personal nature, but also his power. This is the God who created the heavens and the earth. This is the great I am. This is the one who was and is and is to come. This is the one who always has been. Everything that exists come from him. The scripture says nothing is impossible for him. If we understand that God is personal and powerful, not just intellectually, but we come to believe it in our hearts, it starts to change our outlook on life. We can begin to see God cares about us personally, and he can handle every problem and every challenge you and I will face in having their hope renewed. These individuals understood the nature of suffering in this world, but they reminded themselves

about the personal, loving nature of God and about his great power. And then we see in the famous refrain of Psalm 80, they took a movement towards this God that they were reminding themselves about. They drew near to him, and they began to call out to him, to cry out to him, if I may.

Here's how the prayer is recorded in Psalm 80. "Awaken your might," they're appealing to his power. "Awaken your might. Come and save us," they're appealing to his personal nature. "Restore us, O God. Make your face shine on us, that we may be saved, that we may have life." You see the hopelessness in their hearts, the discouragement in their hearts was causing them not to truly live. And they were wanting God to do a supernatural work in him and reach to him and touch him and minister to him and restore to them life. The Bible says this is an important thing for you and me to do, a crucial thing for you and me to do. As a matter of fact, the Bible says that's why we're here. We've been put here so that we might call out to him and reach out and get to know him. And, you know, it has been suggested by many theologians that the main reason that you and I have pain and suffering and there's a curse in this world after we turned away from God is simply to cause us to draw back to him nearer and nearer to him. And if we do this, and we'll get over our pride, and we'll continue to reach out and call out to God, he promises that he will draw near to us.

"The Lord is close to all who call upon him." Psalm 145, verse 18. James said, if you and I draw near to God, he will draw near to us. The Bible says, he will hear and answer us. "I called to you," the Scripture says, "from deep within the pit, and you heard me when I cried. You came when I called and you answered me, and you answered me with these words, 'Do not fear.'" God will draw near to us. He'll hear us, he'll answer us, and he'll begin to transform us. First Corinthians one verse two says, "God wants to make us holy in Christ. And he does this for all people, everywhere. Anyone who will call upon the name of the Lord, they'll begin to be transformed by God. As he hears them and listens to them and draws close to them, we can't help but be transformed when God comes and starts to work in our lives." And then Romans 10:12 says, "If we'll cry out to him, he will richly bless us. He blesses all those who call upon his name." Psalm 86 verse five says, "The Lord is good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon him." God wants to minister to you and me. If we'll call upon him, he will tell us great and unsearchable things, Jeremiah said. Do you need to be renewed in your heart today as you walk into the New year? I want to encourage you to be turning towards the Lord Almighty. I mean, this is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and I want to remind you that he loves you more than anyone.

And if you will draw near to God, he will draw near to you. If you need more hope, more optimism coming into the New year, the only place that I can guarantee you will find it is in the presence, in the power, and in the nature of a very personal God. Heavenly father, as we walk into this new year, we need you. Please stir in us this supernatural hope that comes only from your hand. Birth it in us. Peter said this, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who wants to give us new birth into a living hope, a hope that's kept in heaven for us that will never perish, spoil or fade." And father, if there are some here who are discouraged deeply by the pain and suffering of this life, birth in them this supernatural hope of the confidence of heaven. A better day when you wipe away every tear, every bit of suffering, every bit of sorrow through the shed blood of your Son Jesus. Praise you God. Stir in them this great hope of eternity, and help them be clearly right with you through your Son Jesus. Oh father, we ask you to work this in us by the power of your spirit. Pray this together. In Jesus' name. Amen.