

Where Have the Godly Gone?

Speaker 1

Our Scripture reading today comes from Psalm 12.

¹Save, O LORD, for the godly one is gone; for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man. ²Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak, ³May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts, ⁴those who say, "With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are with us; who is master over us?" ⁵"Because the poor are plundered, because the needy groan, I will now arise," says the LORD; "I will place him in the safety for which he longs." ⁶The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in the furnace on the ground, purified seven times. ⁷You, O LORD, will keep them; you will guard us from this generation forever. ⁸On every side the wicked prowl, as vileness is exalted among the children of man.

This is the word of the LORD.

Well, good morning. Well, Psalm 12 is an important text, and I'd like you to join me as we ask the LORD to help us understand it. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you that your word is real, and it speaks to the world in which we live, the pain that we feel, the sorrow that we experience. And in this great psalm, you give voice to a man and woman in pain. And I thank you that there are not only great and hopeful words in the Bible, but there are honest, painful words, because that's the world in which we live. And one moment can be filled with all kinds of hope, and then another moment can just be so frustrated because of the evil and the difficulties and the unfairness of things that happened. And so, I pray today that this psalm would be first, a comfort to those who are in a crucible of unfairness or pain or sorrow. And I pray also that it would be secondly, a help to those who in their lifetime will face pain beyond belief, unfairness that just can't be fully reconciled in this lifetime. And that they will come back to this text, this sermon on this Sunday and will hear what you are saying to get them ready for a season in the future. So, help us, LORD, help us. We need this word from the Psalms, and we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

By personal and pastoral experience, I have come to a conclusion about the nature of sorrow and grief. Because of my own journey and because of what I've seen in the lives of people as I've ministered to them, I have learned that grief, my friends, is not tame. By that I mean that grief is unlike any other human emotion that you'll ever experience. And those of you who suffered a great loss or have had a great injustice done to you, maybe someone has died in your world or someone is as good as dead because of what has happened. You know that grief comes from a region of your soul, from your heart, that. That sometimes,

frankly, is a bit surprising. The extent of the emotions are so strong and so powerful that you wonder at times, can I even survive this? Because it seems untenable that you could continue with this level of pain in your heart. It's unyielding, it's unwieldy, it's unpredictable. It happens when you least expect it. Grief is not tame.

But that's not the only problem. You see, not only is it not tame, but it's also common. The reality is, every single one of us in this lifetime, if you live long enough, you are going to be hurt, someone's going to do you wrong, you're going to lose something, someone's going to die. You're going to experience pain. And part of my role, part of the role of our elders is to prepare you for those moments. Because the time for you to think and pray and learn about how to sorrow in pain is not when you are in pain, but it's before that.

Some of you are here this morning, and you're in the crucible of suffering in the middle of hardship. Your heart aches today. And when you sang, you know, you overcame for you that there's a belief that that's real. But inside of your heart, you know that you're going to leave today and it's going to be a battle for you to really anchor your heart to that truth. Others of you, you're maybe young, you're in your 20s, you haven't experienced a whole lot of pain or loss. And I'm just here to tell you that eventually, somewhere along the line, something's going to happen and you're going to come face to face with this thing called grief. So that's why Psalm 12 is so important, because there is a particular genre, a particular type of psalm that helps us answer questions like, what do you say during a season of sorrow? How do you grieve well? How do you balance honest wrestling with unhelpful brooding? You know, the difference? On the one side is this is really hard. On the other side is this person who's constantly defined by their pain. They're just always in pain. So how do you, how do you distinguish between honest wrestling and unhelpful brooding?

Well, this is where psalms of lament are incredibly helpful. And today we're going to look at one and then next week look at another one. Psalm 12 is today, which is a psalm, it's a community psalm about the landscape of culture that the psalmist sees and is personally bothered about. And then next week we're going to look at Psalm 13, which is incredibly even more personal, where he says things like, *"How long O LORD, will you forget me forever?"*

And these psalms are really, really important for a number of reasons. The first reason is that of all of the psalms, the largest type of psalm in the book of Psalms are lament psalms. In other words, when we began this series, I told you there were like seven different kinds of psalms. Well, one type is lament, and of the lament psalms, that's the most number of them in the entire book. So, the book of Psalms is filled with these sort, this kind of heartfelt, difficult, painful song.

Here's the second reason is that the psalms of lament express a very familiar emotion. They identify what we feel and what is going on inside of our soul. In other words, they put to words what you are feeling when you're in the crucible of grief.

The third thing is they, they deal honestly with what's going on and deal honestly with emotions that every single one of us will eventually feel. So, you read the psalms long enough, you're going to see things that you've said. And when you're in the midst of a very difficult season, that's when this book becomes incredibly helpful, particularly when psalms of lament become incredibly helpful. Further, psalms of lament help us because they model what God-centered grieving looks like. And it shows us how to be able to wrestle but still be godly. Now let me just lay this before you that I think this is something we need to work on because I find many 21st century American believers who equate struggling with sinfulness.

For instance, if someone is grieving and you go and talk to them, you say, "How are you doing?" If that person who's grieving says, you know what, we're really struggling. Many of you will assume that they have a spiritual problem when the reality is part of the struggle is part of the sanctification process. So, there's a good struggle, there's a rugged struggle, a righteous struggle dealing with honest emotions. And laments show us how to have a God-centered grieving process.

And then finally we are able, through laments to rediscover the path of worship that comes through lament. And I think that many of us have lost this path. We choose instead to pretend as though everything is okay, or we go on the other side that everything's always bad, and yet in between there is this beautiful sweet spot where the psalmist would have us be, where we can acknowledge that life is really hard, this is really difficult, and sometimes I'm not doing real well, but you know what, God is still on his throne and I have these two competing values that just exist as realities in my heart at the same time. And this is what the psalmist does. He shows us how you could offer a cry to God, go to the depths of despair, anchor your heart on the promise of God, and then return to trust in God. And it's as you enter through the valley of lament that you learn that this process of grieving, hurting and pain can actually become a platform to lead you to a beautiful God-centered relationship that's new and fresh and vibrant. After all, if you think about your own personal spiritual growth, wouldn't you acknowledge like I would, that most of the times great seasons of spiritual growth happen when you're at the very bottom of the bottom of the bottom of the bottom. So, this is where Psalm 12 helps us and where lament psalms help us because they show us the reality of what the human experience is and then point us godward.

So today we're going to look at this psalm with three words. The word **cry**, that's where it starts. The word **promise**, that's where it sort of terminates, and then **trust** as it comes back up. So, think of it like a U or a valley. We're going to go from cry to promise, back to trust. And I hope this will be a help for you either today or for some of you in the future, that this

would be a psalm that you'd come back to and go, "Aha, on this day the LORD helped me learn how to be able to lament and lament well."

So it begins with a cry, a longing for help. The psalmist is desperate and he wastes no time introducing his pain or his concern. The circumstances in his life are so real, so prevalent, and so frankly scary that he just lays it out. He's overwhelmed, he's frustrated. But mostly what's going on is this man is scared. By the way, mark it down, if you're trying to minister to someone who's in pain, that pain creates fear. It's scary. You're feeling things you've never felt before. You're wrestling in ways you've never wrestled before. And if you're trying to minister to a spouse or a friend, just realize that at the core of who they are they are scared, and they should be, because what's going on inside of their soul is a scary reality. And this psalmist is scared. So, in verses 1 to 4, he lays out what he sees and then what he wants to happen, he cries out for help. And the whole psalm begins with verse one, with the very first word, the word *save*, a very direct appeal. He says, *Save, O LORD*, this is an enormously important word. This is the Hebrew word "yasa". And this word along with its derivatives are used over 350 times in the Old Testament. The meaning is to take somebody who is in a position of insecurity, or a position where they fear for their safety, distress, and then bring them to a position of safety, thereby delivering them. So, the idea is someone's stuck, and then to "yasa" them means you deliver them and then make them safe. And as you can imagine, this concept is not only all over the Old Testament, but it has strong spiritual meaning. In fact, the storyline of the Bible is that God saves. That's the message, that is the good news. It is that we were sinners, that was our distress, and that God through Jesus comes and saves us, meaning that he pays the atonement for our sins so we can be saved from the problem within our own hearts, that being our sinfulness. And God by definition is a saving God. In fact, Jesus' name, the angel said to Joseph, he'll be named Jesus because he will what, save his people from their sins. So, by definition, in the New Testament we see the fully orbbed reality of God's mission to save people, to save them from their sins.

In the Old Testament we see this in a smaller, more elementary way where God saves people. And we see that he develops this pattern of being a saving God. For instance, Noah and the Ark, or Abraham being called out of Ur, or David and Goliath. These are all evidences that God saves people. He rescues them when they're in their distress. And the greatest example of this in the Old Testament would be God's deliverance of his people out of Egypt. He delivered them. In fact, God's relationship with his people is defined by the fact that they were saved by him. He pulled them out, he rescued them out of the land of slavery, out of the house of bondage. And all of these Old Testament events show us God's constant deliverance. God delivers, he delivers, he saves. And in fact, Psalm 90 or 68:20 even uses a name that describes God as God is a God of salvation. He is "Jehovah Moshi'ech," in other words, saving people is what God does. This is the theme of the Bible. God is saving people. So, the psalmist cries out and says, "God, do what you do. Save me."

What's remarkable is that this theme not only defines Israel, but it defines all who place their trust in God. And over and over throughout the Bible, God delivers people despite their waywardness. God delivers them despite their lack of faith. God delivers them despite who they are. In fact, Psalm 106 is all about God's repeated deliverance of his people, even though they didn't deserve it. Listen to what it says. Psalm 106: 7. It says, *Our fathers, when they were in Egypt, did not consider your wondrous works. They did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love, but rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea. Yet he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power.* In other words, God is a saving God, not because of the worth of the people, not because of the value of who they are, although they are worthy, and because they are also valuable. God saves them because on the evidence of their lives, they make much of God and his glory. And so, God saves people in spite of who they are and in spite of their weak faith.

So, the beautiful thing is, is that when you're in the middle of your grief and you cry out to God and you feel like you're failing or you feel like you're hanging by a thread, the reality is, is God's deliverance of you never depended upon your faith so why do you think it depends like that in the midst of your grief, God didn't save you and clean you up when you were a prize. You were weak in faith when he came to you and redeemed you in the first place. So, it makes sense that even in your grief, when you really know you're weak and you cry out to God, he's not looking for you to be some kind of strong, robust person. Instead, he wants you to cry out to him and say, "God, I can't do this. Would you help me?" That's the person who God condescends and helps. God has delivered his people over and over and over. And so, the cry for help is, God save us.

So, then the question is, okay, so saved. Saved from what? Well, we see in verses 1 and 2 what he's grieved by. And what he does is he uses a number of words that are hyperbole to try and communicate how frustrated or disturbed he is by what he sees. So, look at it. Verse 1, here's what he says. First, *the godly is gone*. In other words, he looks at culture and he's like, look, there's no more godly people around. I mean, I'm sure there was at least one godly person, but the point is that's what he feels. And this is what pain does. Pain makes you say and feel things that are so strong, they may not be entirely true, but it expresses. When I look at culture, it looks to me as, looks to me as though the godly are completely gone. And then he also says in verse one, *the faithful have vanished from among the children of men*. So, he looks out and he's just like, look, there's no more godly people. There's no more righteous people.

And then verse two, he then says this. *Everyone utters lies to his neighbor*. He sees a culture that's just filled with all sorts of half-truths. And then, even worse, verse two, *with flattering lips and a double heart, they speak*. So, we don't know what the specific situation is here that the psalmist is addressing. There were plenty of moments in Israel's history when righteousness was not flourishing. But the picture that we get is that he's looking at his

culture, and he is alarmed, bothered, frustrated, and fearful that, that when he looks, he doesn't see godly people. He doesn't see righteousness flurrying, but instead what he sees is lies. He sees double talk. He sees flattering. And the idea is that he doesn't know who to believe anymore.

Righteousness is gone. And the effect is he sees evil all around him. And in particular, he sees a particular kind of evil that is very disconcerting. It's the kind of evil that is not just evil, at the front end, but it's the kind of evil that appears initially to be kind or sweet. You ever experienced this? It's the person who talks to you with a smile on their face and such genuineness in their mouth, and then is horribly evil. That's evil. That's kind of freaky evil. A good example of this.

Let me illustrate this, would be from culture in the movie Toy Story 3. How many of you have seen and would admit that you've seen this movie? Okay, if you've not. Just so you know, it's scary. Okay? It's a scary movie. I was closing my eyes, you know, asking Savannah, tell me when it's over. It was scary. The reason part of it is that the main villain is a character who has a soothing, sweet, good old boy, Ned Beatty southern drawl. He's a bear. He's the leader of a motley crew of evil toys. And he appears at first to be a very sweet and caring figure. Do you know his name? Lots O Huggin Bear. That's right. Now I'm telling you, when I see a picture of that bear, it trips me out a little bit, because that bear is freaky evil right there, okay? Because it's all sweet. Welcome, welcome to the, to the, to the daycare center. And you're thinking, oh, he's nice. And then you find out, no, he's evil and got this half one-eyed baby that's walking around with him. It's just, ugh, just awful, awful! The reason he's scary and the reason he's freaky is because he's nice evil. It's one thing if it's just evil evil, but he's a nice evil.

And so, what happens here is the psalmist looks around him and that's what he sees. The godly are gone, the righteous have vanished. And everywhere he sees, he sees lies and he sees flattering talk and half-truths and, and he sees this awful aberrant of evil where it seems as though the evil are evil people actually pretend to be nice.

Now all of us can relate to the psalmist picture here at some level. Some of you who are senior citizens, you must look at our culture and just shake your head at times about a culture that just seems so overtly godless. Things that we talk about, laugh about, print, that have never been mentioned publicly and have now become just passe and part of the very fabric of what our culture is. I guess you look at our culture and just go, what has happened? Others of you, like me parents may wonder what kind of world will my children live in. Seems like we've hit the bottom of the barrel. What else could happen?

But for some of you, it's not just cultural. This is personal. You've been the victim of evil in the world and maybe at the hands of someone who not only overtly lied, but they actually

acted like they were friendly or kind. This happens when you've been abused by somebody who claims to love you. Some of you have even worse been exposed to supposedly righteous people who do very unrighteous things. And some of you have not said, the godly are gone. You said, "Church doesn't work," or "Christianity is a scam", because on the back of a unrighteous man or woman who claimed to be righteous, you saw horrible things. And your conclusion understandably was this is just a joke.

So, what's happening in this psalm is the psalmist is frustrated and angry and scared at what he sees. And what's wonderful is he gives voice to many of you in what you see and feel and what has happened. And so, you can resonate with the exasperation in his voice. Now, what does he long for? Well, verse three and four tells us he longs for justice, vindication, and deliverance. This is what he wants. He wants to see judgment come, and he wants to see these perpetrators have justice brought to them. And what's frustrating is it looks as though they're getting away with it. And therefore, he says, Verse 3, *May the LORD cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that makes great boasts*. So, what does it mean to cut off? It doesn't mean he wants these people to be lipless, like cut off their lips, LORD. That's not what he means. What he means is to cut them off is a sign of judgment. When God judged somebody in the Old Testament, it said he would cut them off from Israel. He would put them on the outside of the camp. He would send them out. They would no longer be part of the community. And so, what he's longing for here is God, bring justice, bring judgment, separate them. And so, the cry is for God to do something. And the beautiful thing of this psalm is I know there are some of you that you have felt like that. I can only imagine how many of you would raise your hands if I asked you. Ever been done wrong? Ever been lied to? Ever had someone be two faced with you? Ever watched an arrogant person get away with something? Ever wondered God, when in the world are you going to do something about this? That is the basis of lament right there. This cry of save God because this has fallen apart now, that's the cry.

Here's secondly, the promise in the midst of this verse five comes to bear. Verse five records God's answer. And the answer that happens here is, it's as though it's an oracle from God, or here comes now the word of God, which is why if you look in your Bible, it's in quotes. So, the cry happens, and then this oracle comes from God, where God now speaks. He's actually responding to what the psalmist is saying and what he's asking for. And here's what God says, verse 5. *"Because the poor are plundered, because the needy groan; I will now arise," says the LORD, "I will place him in the safety for which he longs."*

And so verse 5 then becomes a turning point in this Psalm, it becomes the oracle. God speaks God's words. God's word now comes. And there's a couple promises that are within this short little verse. Verse 5. The first promise is that God has heard. And that's what some of you need to know. You cry and there's silence. And you need the sure word from the Bible that God has heard you. God has heard. He hears the cry of the afflicted. And over and over

throughout the Psalms, we hear this theme. Listen to Psalm 22:24. Listen, it says, *For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard when he cried to him.* I love that, God hears! Or, take Psalm 69:3. *For the LORD hears the needy and does not despise his own people who are prisoners.* Here's 1. Psalm 56. 8. *You have kept count of my tossings.* I love that. That means when you're toss it in your bed over and over and over throughout the night because of the pain, because of the difficulty. This psalm says that God knows what's going on. And then he says, put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book? Why is that in your Bible? It's there because God wants you to know he really cares, that your pain that you've experienced is not a waste.

The second promise is that God will put him in a place, in the place for which he longs. So that could mean one of three things. It means that either God provide the judgment that this psalmist is longing for. It could mean that in the midst of the hardship that he's in, God is going to make him have a sense of safety. Or it could mean that God's going to go before him and make things right or safe. Regardless of which of those three it means, the point is really the same, and that is this, that God is going to fight this battle for him.

So, what do we have here? We have a man who is hurting because he feels like evil is winning, and he longs for divine intervention. And in the midst of this moment, God speaks. God speaks. He offers comfort that he has heard him and the assurance that he will make everything right. And so, what we have here in this section in verse five is in the midst of the crisis, we hear the word of God that a promise is now issued. And what you need to see here is the difference between promise or pain. And that is that in the midst of crisis, God gives you something that can make all the difference in the world. He gives you the promise of a sure word.

So, the oracle that we have in Psalm 12 is just one little verse, verse 5. But for New Testament believers, we have this entire book that is filled with exceedingly great promises. And these promises are activated in the midst of crisis when you take them and believe them and apply them to your situation.

John Bunyan, while in prison in the 17th century, wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*. And Pilgrim, in a particular point in the book, is locked in a prison. And he's locked in a prison in a place called Doubting Castle, held under the guard of a giant named Despair. You get that? So, he's in Doubting Castle, locked up in a prison guarded by a giant named Despair, and he remembers that he possesses something in his pocket, a key. And that key has a name. And the name of that key is Promise. Listen to what Bunyan says. "What a fool I am thus to be in a stinking dungeon while I may as well walk at liberty. I have a key in my bosom called Promise that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle." Then he pulled it out of his bosom and began to try at the dungeon door, whose bolt, as he turned, the key gave

back and the door flew open with ease and Christian and Hopeful came out. Then he went to the outward door that leads into the castle yard and with his key opened that door also. In other words, this key called Promise, opens the prison doors of Doubting Castle and was the means by which they were able to flee from the giant named Despair.

So, if I translate that into a New Testament context, you need to know that we have a sure promise from God that is found first in his Son and then secondly in his Word. In fact, the book of Hebrews has promise after promise after promise after promise that we can bank our lives on. Let me give you a few. The first is that God has definitively spoken to us through his Son. More so than one little oracle. God has spoken definitively through the person and work of Jesus. Hebrews 4 says that Jesus sympathizes with our weaknesses. In other words, he really understands.

Further, God has made it possible through Jesus for us to come to him with boldness. Hebrews 4 says, *Come to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* Further, Hebrews tells us that we have a sure word, that *the very words of God are sharper than in a two-edged sword, that they are able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* And then as you take and apply these promises, we have all of this, Hebrews 12, *so that we can run the race set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.*

In other words, we have an oracle in our hands so great, so sure, so pure, so marvelous and so trustworthy that God invites you to come and bank your life on the promise of his Word. The question then becomes friends, whether or not in the midst of your crisis and in the midst of your pain, you, if you will be defined forever by your pain, or if you will be defined as a person in pain who banks their life on promise. You can live your life on two different paths, based upon pain or based upon promise. And I would commend to you the beauty, the awe-inspiring reality of what it means to place your hope on the promise of God's Word. You see, this is where biblical lament should lead us through honest pain to God's promises.

I was watching some news over the weekend and this whole debate about the whole debt ceiling thing, and you know what? I don't know who to believe anymore. We live in a culture where I don't know which poll, which person cites what statistic, or which new government survey or stat needs to be believed. One person says this, another person says this, and I found myself just throwing up my hands going, I don't know who to believe anymore. And I'm so grateful that one day a week I get to come to the house of God and hear and listen and be reminded about a sure word, a true word that is life giving and powerful and is able to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. I find myself in the midst of a culture needing even more so the sure word of God's promise. Because everything around me feels like sinking sand. When you're in the midst of lament, when you're in the midst of sorrow, there's a caution. Because lament could lead you to the sure promises of God or your lament could

lead you to become self-absorbed, you could become bitter, you can become resentful, you become depressed. So, I'm not saying in the midst of your lament, don't be sad. No, I'm saying be sad, be very, very sad. But take your sadness somewhere, take your sadness, take your outrage, take your pain and take them and make them sit down and listen to the promises of God. Because God's answer in the midst of crisis is not to deny the pain, but in the midst of pain, to give you a promise. And that's how he saved you in the midst of your sin, he gave you a promise; *If you will confess with your mouth, Jesus as LORD, you will be saved*. This is what God does. He saves people in the midst of their crisis. And this is what he does even in the midst of pain.

And then finally is this notion of trust. So, we come from cry to promise. Okay, so promise is where I need to bring my heart to and. And then turn back and go God-focused with this notion of my trusting and believing in him. The final element is all about trust. In fact, the difference between good and godly lament and unhelpful and sinful lament is what you do with the promises and if you trust God in them. And the point here is that you believe while hurting. This is so important. It's not that the circumstances change, because circumstances may never change, but you find a way, by God's grace, to believe in the midst of the pain, that you, while hurting, still place your trust in him.

Verse 6 responds to the oracle of verse 5 with the affirmation he's as though he's preaching to his own heart, just heard the oracle of God. And then immediately verse 6 says, *The words of the LORD are pure words*. Why does he say that? Because he needs to reassure his heart that what he's just heard is pure and true. So, he says, *the words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground purified seven times*. Notice the imagery, that this is a word that has experienced the fiery test of time, and it endures. And so, he's receiving the Word, saying, this is the word of God. Thanks be to God for it. And he's acknowledging the enduring quality, the beauty of what God's word is.

Verse 7 then carries it even further. He banks his life on this promise that God, by virtue of his promises, will, according to the verse quote, keep them, and you will guard us from this generation forever. So, listen, how does God keep you in the midst of crisis? Answer, he gives you a promise and you believe it. How does he save you in the midst of your sorrow? He gives you a promise and you claim it, you own it. It becomes yours. So, the grief may not change immediately. The person may not come back into your life. The illness may not be fully cured, but you're free. Because while hurting, you believe. While trusting, you hope in the promise of God.

And verse eight, it ends with kind of a downer. *On every side the wicked prowl as vileness is exalted among the children of men*. It ends with this kind of sober reality. Because what he's saying here is that there's still going to be wickedness all around me. But the fact of the

matter is he's a different man, has a different perspective. God is able to still help him. He is clinging to God's promises and finding hope even when things are hard.

See, I love to think about the fact that what we have in our hands is the Word that not only gives us comfort, but has given generations of believers comfort for years in the past. And one of the reasons why I love biographies is because they link us historically to men and women whose lives prove that God's Word is worthy to be trusted. And I don't know about you, but I need to see people who trusted in God's Word and it worked. It helps my soul. One such person is Charles Simeon. He lived from 1759 to 1836. He pastored the same church in Cambridge, England, for 54 years. Now, that's remarkable in itself. But what's even more remarkable is that for the first 12 years, the people of his church did everything they could to run him off. 12 years! I mean, come on, you'd have lasted 12 weeks. I'd last 12 days in that scenario. And they tried everything. For instance, in those days, the way they raised money for the church was they would sell a pew and then you would buy the pew as a family, and then it would have a door, and you would be given a key to that pew door, and therefore that's where you, you would sit as a family. Now, some of you act like you bought the pew in here, but you didn't. So not a bad idea. But anyway, so, but, and so this family would have this pew and this door and this key, and the people hated him so much that they locked their pew doors and wouldn't let anyone sit in their pew and thereby emptying out the church. And then when Charles Simeon put chairs in the aisles, the ushers took the chairs and threw them out on the lawn.

Can you imagine? For 12 years he endures this difficult church ministry. And a friend who was staying with him found the secret to his success. So how did Charles Simeon endure 12 years of a church that didn't want him to be there? Pastoral ministry is hard enough, let alone serving people who don't like you or want you to leave or throw your stuff out on the lawn. Here's what he said. Simeon invariably arose every morning, though it was winter, at 4 o'. Clock. And after lighting his fire, he devoted the first four hours of his day to private prayer and the devotional study of the Scriptures. Here was the great secret of his grace and spiritual strength. Deriving instruction from such a source and seeking it with such diligence. He was comforted in all his trials and prepared for every duty. So, listen to me. The secret of success in making it through hard seasons and is not finding some great key. It's every day you give up, you get up, you find the promise of God's word, you bank your life on it. You live 24 hours, you go to bed, you get up, you do the same thing again and do that over and over and over and over.

Some of you are in a micro trial right now. Some of you get really frustrated when just little annoying things happen. And the reality is you're missing the opportunity to learn the skills necessary spiritually for big trials in the future. God may be giving you small trials because he wants you to be ready for something in the future. So why not learn the lesson that God has for you right now?

Some of you, you don't know the promise of God's word. You don't know the promise of God's word. You don't spend time in this book. And it's no wonder that you've got spiritual weak knees. When hardship comes, bad things happen to you and you're like, what? What do I do? How come this is happening? And there's promise after promise after promise after promise. You've just neglected them. And sometimes God uses hardship to drive you back into this book because he's more interested in you being holy than you having the life you always dreamed about. So, Simeon learned and lived where we still need to learn and live. And that is that God's Word is an exhaustible resource for spiritual endurance.

So finally, let me just give you some conclusions. There's four of them as to what I see in this text that I think is really important. Here's the first.

Friends, pain and sorrow is inevitable and so you ought to be ready and not surprised when it happens. Could you, could you please be a mature person and not be shocked when hard things happen? Could you not go through life expecting that you deserve to have a pain free life? Could you just have a better biblical mindset so that when hardship comes, you just like, yep, that's what we live in, a sin, curse world. Hard things happen. Yep. And I'm going to buy God's grace, going to make it, don't be one of these people with this perpetual chip on your shoulder like, why me? The answer ought to be, why not you and why not more? That's the perspective.

Secondly, godly sorrow involves being honest about the pain. On the one hand is stoicism, "Oh, we're fine, everything's good, praise the LORD." On the other hand is this, "Whoa, it's all awful." And every testimony begins with this dark pain about everything about your life and you define. So somewhere in those two extremes is the sweet spot in the middle where you learn to acknowledge that this is hard. At the same time, it's a platform for you to talk about God's goodness, not how awful your life has been.

Third, lament can and should lead us to the promises of God. And the question we have to ask ourselves is, where does lament lead you? This is a critical question because lament could lead you to self-centeredness that ends up being bondage and misery. Or you could see that lament could lead you to God-centeredness that leads to hope and comfort. This is a world of difference. And oh, I hope that you could get this into your soul because you could actually be free while still in pain.

And finally, we must learn to trust while hurting. So, here's the deal. Freedom doesn't come from an absence of pain. No, no, no. Freedom comes from learning to trust while in pain. So, if you wait to have your circumstances change, they may never change and you'll never be free, but you could trust while hurting. So, this is what Psalm 12 is about. And I don't know about you, but I am so grateful that we have psalms like this because they really help us. It really helped me.

Grief is not tame and it is common, but it's also not supreme. Pain is real and it's hard, but it doesn't rule. In other words, it is a beautiful and hopeful thought that even the darkest and most discouraging moments of life can actually lead you to worship God. And that is something that only God could do. To take the darkest of the dark, the hardest of the hard moments. And God by His grace, could make those moments worship moments if, if you will trust in his promise while in your pain. What God does is he marvelously and redemptively takes my pain and he brings me to himself. And in that way, pain actually ends up serving God's goal of glorifying himself. That's what lament is meant to do.

So, Father, we pray for the countless ways in which pain and difficulty and trial surfaces the stuff within us that we sometimes try to hide and even don't like. And I pray for brothers and sisters here today who are in the crucible of hardship or suffering that today you would remind them again of the power of relying on your promise. LORD, I think of others who may be in pain. And you're using that pain today to awaken their soul to their real need, which is to turn to Christ and to begin putting their promise, their faith first in a promise that you have made it possible for their sins to be forgiven. So, God, you know the varied needs within our congregation of those who will hear this over the Internet. I pray that today, God, you'd bring us back to the beauty of how to trust you while hurting. In College Park, while we're just in an attitude of prayer, before we leave, I just want to remind you that there's folks up here after the service who would like nothing more than just to pray for you, to pour out God's grace upon you. You are not meant to walk through the valley that you are in alone. And at the same time, it was not meant to define you either. So, Father, through your promise and through your word, help us to believe and to trust while hurting so that pain can become a platform for worship. And thank you that you, by your power, into the beautiful name of your Son can do that. And we ask this in Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.

These folks are here to pray for you if you need some prayer this morning. All right.

God bless you, College Park. I love you. Thanks for coming today.