

When Gripped by Grief

Lamentations 3:19–3:26

Pastor Andrew Larson, November 3, 2019

Well, good morning brothers and sisters. It is a joy to be with you this morning as we open up God's Word together. I love any excuse to be with you and to be with Pastor Jeremy. I wish it was under different circumstances that Pastor Jeremy wasn't sick, but it is a joy to be here nonetheless and spend time in God's Word together.

Open up your Bibles to Lamentations chapter three. I was listening to a preacher on this particular passage some time ago, and he started his message by saying, "Open your Bibles to the table of contents.", and I think that is somewhat appropriate. This is a little known book, but a very important book. It's about two thirds of the way through your Bible. Go to Isaiah, Jeremiah, and then Lamentations is right after that. If you get to Ezekiel, you've gone too far. Lamentations chapter three - pray with me as we dedicate this time to the Lord.

Father, we look to You this morning as the author of life. We look to You as the sovereign of all creation. We look to You as the Holy judge and yet, the compassionate Father, the merciful one. Lord, we can identify with Jeremiah this morning. Our lives are painted with grief at times, and yet, I pray that we would do the same thing that Jeremiah did in this text. That in the midst of our grief, we would focus our eyes, that we would grasp onto You, that we would behold Your character, that we would see Your faithfulness. And that the sight of You would overcome any circumstance or grief that we could face in this life. Lord, we need Your touch this morning, we need Your hand, we need Your Holy Spirit. I pray that You would apply this text to my heart once again, and that You would apply this text to the hearts of my brothers and sisters this morning. We pray all of this in Your Son's name, amen.

Well, you are well familiar with the words of the hymn – "Great Is Thy Faithfulness."

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father. There is no shadow of turning with Thee; Thou changes not, Thy compassions, they fail not. As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be. Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed Thy hand hath provided. Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

The words to this precious song are plucked from our texts this morning in Lamentations chapter three. If we went person by person this morning, row by row, I know that all of us could attest to griefs that life brings. We face grief personally, we face grief as families, we face grief as a church. And sometimes, we face grief as a country. At times, I'm sucked into the news and the brokenness that is so evident when we pull up the news. And yet, in the midst of that, the sovereign King is on His throne. That does not change from season to season and time to time.

Jeremiah's world was rocked in the texts that we're going to look at. And the conclusion that Jeremiah comes to will be an antidote to use in our lives. No matter what circumstance we face, if we line it up with what Jeremiah did in this text, we can face life with hope. You and I can face the griefs of this life with the hope of the Gospel, with the hope of our Lord, knowing that He is overall and in all.

There's a massive freefall, water slide at Magic Mountain down in California. And when I was going to seminary, we had the opportunity to go there. And I'm kind of an adrenaline guy, I love the thrill. And this particular slide, you get to the top after climbing the stairs, and then you sort of step into the slide and it closes around you. And you're standing on this little board and the lifeguard (this has to be the best job in the world) is looking through you and you're in the glass there, and you're looking out. And he's got this big button right next to him. And at the right moment, when he senses that you're sufficiently scared, he hits this button and the floor drops out from under you, and you go hurdling down the slide. I love it. It's so great.

Sometimes life feels like that. Sometimes life feels like we're getting on this little board and we don't know when the bottom is going to drop out. I don't know what you're facing, what you have faced or what you will face this morning. Maybe you're at the mountain top this morning, and praise God if that's the case. I'm not a prophet or the son of a prophet, but there are some valleys in your future. There are valleys in everyone's life this morning.

I want to ask the question this morning, a question that Jeremiah gives us a profound answer to. A question that is not simply academic for Jeremiah, but it's personal. Friends, what if the bottom drops out in your life? What if the ground does give way? What if the circumstances of our lives seem to close in around us? What if from a human perspective, the light of hope is extinguished? As a church, what if we lose our freedoms to gather as we are gathering this morning? What if we lost the freedom to hear God's Word together and to fellowship together? What if affliction and persecution sinks their teeth into our future and into our lives? Whether our nation or this nation rises and falls, whether the church continues to congregate as we know it, how do you deal with grief?

Maybe some of you this moment are experiencing grief from the effects of living in a sin-cursed world. We sin and we are sinned against, and in the process grief is etched on our hearts. How do we wade through those deep waters? How can we penetrate the thick fog of despair? What will you do in the night of the soul?

This text we're going to look at this morning provides answers for any question that we could have in the midst of our grief. Because it does not simply give us answers, it leads us to the Answer that we need to be confronted with in our lives. This passage that we're going to look at is intensely personal for Jeremiah. We get a window into the personal wounds of Jeremiah in these poems. We tend to focus on the stories and Scripture that speak of salvation, that speak of the mountaintop experiences.

We love the stories of Israel coming out of captivity in Egypt. We love the story of David and Goliath. We love Daniel and the lion's den. And yet the text we're going to look at here highlights the great failure of Israel, the exposure of a nation to God's Holy judgment. I would argue that we still learn a great deal about the character of God in a text like this.

Yes, it's not the exhilarating cry of deliverance from lions or captivity or giants, but it is the desperate cry, the desperate cry of a weeping prophet who is able in the depths of his grief to make some of the most profound, true statements about God that stud God's crown.

What is it that will remain the anchor of our souls? What will be the foundation of your faith? What is it that stayed Jeremiah in his grief? This text gives us the answer. Quentin read for us the first 26 verses. We're going to reread verses 19 through 26 here, which is the text that we're going to focus on. In fact, let's back up to verse 17. We're going to mainly focus on verses 19 through 26.

Lamentations 3:17, and this is God's Word:

My soul has been rejected from peace; I have forgotten happiness. So I say, "My strength has perished, and so has my hope from the Lord." Remember my affliction and my wandering, the wormwood and bitterness. Surely my soul remembers and is bowed down within me. This I recall to my mind. Therefore I have hope. The Lord's loving kindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I have hope in Him." The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him. It is good that he waits silently for the salvation of the Lord.

This morning, we will walk across three stepping stones, which will help us walk through this passage - three pillars of godly grief that will renew our hope in the midst of painful circumstances. First, in verse 21, we must return to truth. Second, in verses 22 and 23, we must rest in God's character. And then third, we must resolve to wait and to seek in verses 24 and 26. But before we can unpack these three pillars of godly grief, we need to build a bridge this morning to our text. There is something very important I want us to see that is foundational to understanding these three points. It is the current in the river of these five poems that we get in these five chapters.

Friends, it's this - this text will do nothing to minimize the rawness and the realness of grief. It will do nothing to minimize or discount the painful experiences of grief that Jeremiah faced, and that we face. The heartaches we experience and the scars that get etched onto our hearts in this life are real and they are deep. The tears of Jeremiah in this text that we see this morning are real tears. The pain of Jeremiah was real pain; the grief of Jeremiah was real grief. And so he writes these five poems.

And the majority of each poem is focused on what? It's focused on the experience of grief. Some in their grief will attempt to become callous. And I think we have a propensity to want to be autonomous. We don't want to express what we're truly feeling inside. We want to pretend like everything is okay. We attempt to become impervious through shutting down senses and cutting ourselves off from relationships, even from people that are trying to help us walk through our grief.

It's not what Jeremiah does here. He doesn't ignore the fact that his pain and our pain in grief is raw and it is real. What does Jeremiah say in this text? Look again at verse 19. He says, "Remember my affliction and my wandering, the wormwood and bitterness. Surely my soul remembers and is bowed down within me." He begs God to remember. He feels as though God, the omniscient Creator doesn't remember. He seeks to remind the orchestrator of all these events. Have you ever been there, friend, times in your life where you feel like God does not see? That's where Jeremiah is this morning. At times, we even ask, "Where is God?"

Where does Jeremiah turn in his grief? This is where we need to turn in our grief. He doesn't try to drown his sorrows in the busy-ness of work or pastimes or pleasures. He turns his face to heaven and exclaims this desperate plea to God: "Remember, remember!" Now we might be tempted to correct Jeremiah's theology here and say, "Jeremiah, God is omniscient. That means He knows all, He sees all. He knows what you're experiencing, Jeremiah. According to Grudem Systematic Theology, Jeremiah, you're wrong."

Of course, God knows all things and of course, Jeremiah knows that. But this doesn't remove the personal expression of grief that Jeremiah is putting to words here. This is the way that Jeremiah feels. And if we're honest about the dark moments of the soul, we have felt this way

too. “God, do you see what's happening?” Friends, if the very hairs of our head are numbered, as Jesus tells you in Matthew's Gospel, He knows every tear that falls from our face, and every grief that you have encountered - “Remember my affliction and my wandering, the wormwood and bitterness. My affliction...,” his misery here, the word for “wandering” is literally “homelessness.”

Land was extremely important to the Jews. One's inheritance was tied to the land, blessing was tied to the land, and community was tied to the land. Wormwood, it's a plant that had soaky leaves and would bear this yellow flower. It had a very dark, bitter oil that was produced from wormwood. It was used to make a drink.

And as one commentator stated, it had the most objectionable taste to the uninitiated. (I love commentators). It was sometimes used medicinally. The best parallel I could think of is Kombucha. Do they have Kombucha up here? Supposedly, it's really good for you. My wife likes to grow her own Kombucha, and “grow” is the right word there. She has some *scoby* that grows in this jar and then you pour it out and you - ah, it's terrible.

Jeremiah is using this as a figure of speech to show his turmoil - “Remember my affliction and my wandering, the wormwood and bitterness.” And then he goes in the next verse to show you how personal his plea is. He says, “Surely my soul remembers and is bowed down within me.” The beginning of this phrase in Hebrew is extremely intense. He repeats “remember” twice. It's as if he's saying, “My soul surely remembers. My soul really, really remembers, Lord. It's bowed down within me. Literally, my soul melts away within me.”

Friends, I want you to understand the grief that Jeremiah was experiencing; the affliction, the homelessness, the bitterness. I want you to pick up this text this morning and see the tears fall from the page. If there's one thing that stands out from this book, it is the expression of Jeremiah's deep agony. If we're going to get a proper understanding, we need a bit of a history lesson here.

Jeremiah writes these five separate poems that make up this book and you can feel his pain. We're just looking at a portion of one of these poems. But chapter 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 all represent five separate poems that are connected. The Northern Kingdom, Israel, had fallen nearly 150 years earlier in 722 BC. Now, Jeremiah is recording the fall of the last portion of God's people. The Southern Kingdom, which fell on 586 BC.

Commentators say, it's likely Jeremiah saw the destruction of walls, towers, homes, palace, and temple. He wrote while the events remain painfully fresh in his memory. You recall that Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem all the way back in 605. He took the nobility and royalty captive. He made Jehoiakim a vassal who revolted three years later. He was replaced by Jehoiachin. It's hard to keep the “chins” and the “kims” separate here.

Zedekiah was placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar in 597. Eight years later, Zedekiah turned to Egypt for help - that didn't help the nation. Nebuchadnezzar defeated Egypt and he put his thumb on the smoldering wick of Judah. The destruction of Jerusalem was so critical to understanding the Old Testament history that it's included in four different accounts. It's included in Second Kings in Jeremiah 39 and again in 52, and in Second Chronicles 36 as well.

So with the context of that destruction in mind, that exile that took place, Jeremiah pens these words that we see in Lamentations. This wasn't simply an event in history for him, this was something he experienced. These were his friends, his nation, his city, his tears, his family.

He could smell the smoke and hear the weeping in his ears. Put yourself in his shoes. Remember, Jerusalem was the most important city in all of Israel. Not just economically or socially, but it was important spiritually.

We find in Deuteronomy chapter 12, that God would choose a place from among all your tribes to put His name there for His dwelling. Jerusalem was that site. It was the site of the temple. That's where God would dwell.

The city that was a beacon for the name of Yahweh is personified by Jeremiah in Lamentations. In chapter 1:1, he says, "It's lonely and it's a widow." In verse 2, he says, "It weeps bitterly." In verse 3, "It's in harsh servitude." In verse 9, "Has no comforter." In chapter 2:5, "There's mourning and moaning." And in chapter 2:5, "The gates have sunk into the ground." In chapter 2:21, "On the ground in the streets, lie young and old."

Why did this happen? Why would this happen to God's people? He gives the answer in verse 5 of chapter 1. He says, "For the Lord has caused her grief because of the multitude of her transgressions." But did the fact that the nation was getting the covenant curses that God had promised make Jeremiah's grief any less? Does the fact that we are experiencing hurts and the reality of living in a sin cursed world, does it make the cut any less painful? No.

His soul is bowed down within him. He says, "Look and see if there is any pain like my pain" in chapter 1:12. He says, again, "For these things I weep; my eyes run down with water" in verse 16. In verse 19, "I am in distress, my spirit is greatly troubled. My heart is overturned within me." In chapter 2:11, "My eyes fail because of tears, my spirit is greatly troubled; my heart is poured out on the earth."

Then chapter 3 explodes in sobs. As Quentin read this morning in verse 1, "I am a man who has seen affliction." In verse 4, "My flesh and my skin waste away; he has broken my bones." Verse 6 ...dwells in dark places like those who have long been dead. Verse 11 ...torn to pieces. Verse 13 ...arrows entered into his inward parts. Verse 16 ...he cowers in the dust. Verse 17 ...he's forgotten happiness. Later in the chapter, in verse 48, "My eyes run down with streams of water." Verse 49 "My eyes pour down unceasingly without stopping."

Friends, do you think Jeremiah understands pain? Do you think he understands grief? Let the lament speak to you. Can you not hear the cries of the prophet?

Sometimes in our grief, we can allow ourselves to think that nobody knows our pain, that nobody knows our circumstances. Jeremiah experienced grief that matches or is deeper than anything we have faced. And going beyond that, even if there is something that tops what Jeremiah experienced, we have a loving Father. We have a high priest who can sympathize with us.

Friends, He took the wrath of God on our behalf. The wrath of God was poured out on Jesus Christ on the cross so that we might be forgiven of our sin. That is a whole other level of profound. Friends, do you think if Jeremiah was standing here today that we could tell the prophet, "Well, you really don't understand the depth of my grief, Jeremiah. You don't know what I went through."

So the question becomes, friends, what do we do? How did he handle this? The next verse is going to show what Jeremiah did, and here's what we need to do as well. He's going to show us the first step to renewing your hope in the midst of grief.

It's this (and this is our first point): return to truth. Let me ask a question - was it wrong for Jeremiah to remember the hardship of his experiences in the past? Was it wrong? No. The problem is not our memory or where we store the data, the problem is our choice of remembrance. When the waves of this life engulf us, we have to return to truth. He says this in verse 21: "This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope."

This is the turning point in the book of Lamentations, and Jeremiah's circumstances. If you were to put your finger right here in verse 21, this is the pivotal point that Jeremiah makes in his struggle. And this will be the pivotal point for us as well. This verse can turn your grief into godly grief. Your grief can have purpose if it is godly grief. Jeremiah begins to lift his eyes from his circumstances, and he starts to look up toward heaven. He begins to clear the cloud of emotions and begins to dwell on truth. In the midst of unclear circumstances, the only thing that is clear is what we know to be clear - this text, this book, this living word. It's the only thing that's going to move us from being in a debilitated state to a state in which our hope is renewed in God.

If we let our grief rule our thinking, we will be led to instability, to bitterness, to further heartbreak. Instead, if we recall to our minds truth about God, the experience of our God will overshadow any experience of grief we have on this earth. Friends, the problem is not that our grief is large, the problem is our view of God needs to increase. The perspective of God's character, His might, His power needs to be contrasted to what we experience. And when we hold those two up, we see that God is the thing that we fixate our gaze upon.

Jeremiah says this, "I recall", literally I bring back. This word is also used in some senses for returning. For example, Jacob speaking to Joseph to go to his brothers and ask about the welfare of the flock and their welfare, he says, "And bring back word to me." We need to bring back what we know is true to our minds. Friends, we're all going to turn somewhere in our grief. The question is; where do we turn?

We could turn to self-pity, we could turn to bitterness. We could turn to numbing ourselves through worldly satisfaction. Even the moorings of Jeremiah's mind had drifted, but he didn't stay there. Though gripped by grief, he was not overcome with grief. Though down, he was not down and out. His change started in his mind, and every aspect of his person was affected.

It is what we know is true, not what we feel is true that will get us through any hardship we face and motivate us in Christ-like behavior – "This I recall to my mind.", his inmost being, the core of his existence. Oftentimes, the truth that we know remains in storage. That doesn't help us to simply have filing cabinets of truth. We need to pull them out, and we need to be reminded of them in these moments. "...therefore I have hope." that's lovingkindness. He said, in the midst of my grief, what gives me hope is the process of recalling to mind.

I want to point out something important about this hope that Jeremiah was experiencing at the end of verse 21. What is our definition of hope that we have today? We use it in the kind of a wishful sense. "I hope that we get a white Christmas" or "I hope the Canucks win the Stanley Cup" (I'm trying to contextualize here).

I want you to notice the word for "hope" could be translated two different ways. And in fact, it's translated the other way later in this text. In verse 26, he says, "He waits silently." Same root word that's used for "hope" here. This word that is used here in verse 26 comes from the same root that's being used in verse 21, and later in verse 24. One lexicon captures both by

giving the sense of staying in one place and anticipating or expecting something. This hope is a confidence, not a wishful thinking version of hope that we have today.

It was a confidence that would manifest itself in waiting. Jeremiah was not saying that he would not just have hope when his land was restored or when his friends returned, or when the pain of his grief dissipated. But that he would have hope that he would wait where he was, where God had put him, and have hope, even if the circumstances didn't change.

Friends, sometimes, we stumble in our grief, not simply because it's painful, not simply because it's hard and it's difficult, but because we expect something from God that He does not promise. God does not promise in the midst of your grief to remove you, to remove me from those circumstances. Jerusalem was still in a state of destruction, people were still exiled in Jeremiah's day. But do we have that bold confidence in God, that He transcends any circumstance?

So what was it that Jeremiah specifically recalled to mind? What is it that gave him hope in this confidence that he could wait on the Lord? This leads us to our second point - we must rest in God's character. Look what Jeremiah says in verse 22. What does he recall to his mind in verse 21? He recalls verse 22 to his mind – “The LORD’s lovingkindnesses indeed never ceases, For His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.”

This is much like the cradle statements that we get in Exodus 34 when the Lord passed in front of Moses and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth.” Says something similar in Numbers 14 and Psalm 86 – “Lovingkindness.” In fact, Jeremiah even starts with this word in this verse. We don't see it in our English Bibles, but he starts with the word “lovingkindness” for emphasis. “This I recall to mind.” What? “I recall lovingkindness.” Jeremiah uses the covenant name Yahweh plus God's covenant keeping love.

We need to step back for a moment though, and realize that they were about 800 years at this point from when God's promises came on Mount Sinai. And if we go through those 800 years, what did it look like? Did it look like amazing covenant keeping ability on the people's part? Did it look like following Yahweh as He had laid out? This was 800 years of the people going away from the Lord, and yet, what happened? The Lord's lovingkindness was patient. And even in the midst of God's justice being poured out and doing what He said he would do when there was covenant disobedience, His lovingkindness continued. His lovingkindness continued in sending Jesus Christ to die on the cross. His lovingkindness continues in my life and in your life.

Jeremiah's hope in God's lovingkindness was not wishful thinking. It was a confidence in God's character, in God's Word, in the history of God's kindness over and over and over again.

Look back at Lamentations chapter 3:22 again, “His lovingkindness indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail.” His compassions never fail - this could be translated, “His compassions never run out.” I love that picture. It is the Niagara Falls that does not stop.

Is not Israel an example of this? But friends, aren't we an example of this? God's lovingkindness continues to be poured out in our lives. The mercies the Lord shows me and shows us, the compassions the Lord shows us, they don't run out. God's mercy is the flood

that can never run dry. So much of what we experience as humans is finite. We have a hard time grasping infinite mercy from an infinite God.

“They are new,” he says in verse 23 – “They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness.” It’s much like when we get a rain after a dry spell in the summer. And then it just dumps. We get a ton of rain, and what happens after we get that rain? You walk outside and there’s this freshness to the air. That’s God’s mercy that’s new every morning.

One of the outcomes of experiencing trials and experiencing grief is the trust that drives itself to the arms of God, because there is only one who is trustworthy. How can we renew our hope in the midst of grief?, recalling and grounding our minds and the reality of who God is in His lovingkindness, in His mercy.

But our third point here, we must resolve to wait and to seek. He says in verse 24, “The Lord is my portion, says my soul. Therefore, I have hope in Him.” He didn’t have hope in his situation, he didn’t have hope in his circumstances. He had hope in the thing that would never change - God Himself.

There are two pursuits that we should have in verses 25 and 26; we should wait for Him and we should seek Him. But before we look closer, I want you to catch something in verse 24 – “The Lord is my portion.” What do you think is significant about that for the Jew? They just lost their land. They viewed that as their portion and yet, when Jeremiah loses that, he doesn’t focus on the land, he focuses on God. He says, “The Lord is my portion.” All of that had been stripped away from Jeremiah. And yet, he says, the Lord is his portion.

What if everything was pulled out of our hands; our children, our livelihood, our future, our health, our comfort? Would you still say with your mouth and with your heart that the Lord is your portion? Would this be your response? In the midst of turbulent times, in the midst of unknowns of the future, will you say the Lord is my portion?

Yes, you grieve even as Jeremiah was grieving. You don’t ignore the pain and the sorrow that you have in that experience and yet, you return to truth. You come back to God’s character and you say, “The Lord is my portion.” Friends, if your security, if your hope, if your confidence is in anything other than Yahweh, we will be disappointed, friends. We will be distressed.

Notice the end of verse 24 repeats exactly what we already looked at in verse 21 except for one addition. He says, “Therefore I have hope.” But what does he add on there? “Therefore, I have hope in Him.” Jeremiah goes on to describe those who the Lord is good to. In fact, each of the next three verses in Hebrew begins with good.

Lamentations 3:25 says, “The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him.” Jeremiah uses a different word this time, slightly different from the form that we saw earlier. Still communicates the same idea. If we wanted to be more literal about the translation, we could say (reflecting the tense here), “The Lord is good to those who continually wait for Him.” This is an ongoing action. This isn’t something that we just do once. We don’t just check the box on, “Alright, I’ve waited on the Lord, done with that.” This is something that continues.

I have a few small children, and one of them has a very healthy appetite. The other one, it’s hard to get anything in his mouth. When you’re feeding him - the second one is very difficult to feed. The first one, you just put food in front of him and he’s happy. But when he was

young, I remember at times, when he would have his meal and he's sitting in his high chair, and he's buckled in. Otherwise, he'd be all over the place. And there were times when he would finish his meal and he has to wait while I go get a washrag and I rinse it off and I bring it back, and I clean his hands and I clean his face. Well, in a little one's eyes, it took enormously too long.

He had to wait until I came back and removed his bib and washed him up. Waiting is a really hard thing when you're one. But waiting is a really hard thing when you're one, when you're 11, and when you're 111.

Can't you see I'm done here? I'm ready for this trial to be over. The Lord is good to who? Those who continually and habitually wait for Him. He doesn't stop with waiting though. He adds another trait that should be true of us. He says, "The Lord is good to the person who seeks Him," literally make supplication of Him. This refers to our prayers. Friends, we accomplish more in prayer than in any other activity in the Christian life. The only one whose lovingkindness never ceases, we have the opportunity to pray to, in our grief, crying out in our pain, and seeking, sustaining grace from the one who will give it to us.

And then there's one final statement we'll look at in verse 26 – "It is good that he waits silently for the salvation of Yahweh." Friends, we are not looking for salvation simply from the earthly realities. Whether we are given deliverance this side of heaven or deliverance is to heaven, our spiritual salvation is secure and safe in Christ.

1 Peter 1:5 tells us we are protected by the power of God. We have nothing to fear. What does it mean to wait silently? It can't be to the exclusion of prayer because he just said that we need to seek Him. It's a figure of speech for patience. We need to wait patiently.

Friends, I don't know each of the heartaches (I know some of them) that you're experiencing. I don't know your struggles, I don't know the pain you're going through or have gone through or you will go through. But I do know what will get you through that pain with hope. You must recall truth about Yahweh to your mind. You must soak in the reality of His lovingkindness to you, and His compassion to you, and His mercy to you. You must wait for Him and seek him in the midst of your grief.

I want to read for you an amazing example of someone who did just this (as we close) on the mission field. Ann Judson wrote to her parents - and you remember Adoniram Judson was a missionary to Burma. He experienced much grief on the mission field. Their first child was the source of joy for them in the midst of incredibly hard work, and yet, this child passed away. And Ann wrote this at the little one's death, and I quote:

Death, regardless of our lonely station has entered our dwelling and made one of the happiest families wretched. Our little Roger Williams, our only darling boy was three days ago, laid in a silent grave. Eight months, we enjoyed this precious little gift in which time he had so completely entwined himself around his parents' hearts, that his existence seemed necessary to their own. But God has taught us by afflictions what we would not learn by mercies, that our hearts are his exclusive property. And whatever rival intrudes, He will tear it away. But what shall I say about the improvement we are to make of this heavy affliction? We do not feel a disposition to murmur or to inquire of our Sovereign, why He has done this. We wish rather to sit down submissively under the rod and bear the smart, to the end for which the affliction was sent shall be accomplished. Our hearts were bound up in this child. We felt he was our earthly all, our only source of innocent recreation in

this heathen land. But God saw it necessary to remind us of our error, and to strip us of our only little all. May it not be in vain that He has done it. May we so improve it that He will stay His hand and say, "It is enough."

That is an example we're following. What could get you through something like that? What got Ann Judson through something like that? It's returning to truth. It's recalling the lovingkindness of God. It will never come to an end. We have a hope in a person and in a future that is sure and can never be taken from us. We must wait on God in our circumstances and seek His face. Let's pray.

Father, You have given us a text this morning that is difficult. It's difficult because it reveals the grief of even our own souls, the experiences of this life. And Lord, this text can be a serve to our souls in the midst of those times. I pray that we would walk away this morning holding on to hope, that we would walk away this morning armed with the ability and the structure that we need to approach any trial, any grief with hope. It is hope in You that keeps us honouring You, glorifying You, responding in a way that is Christ-like.

Lord, help us to see the beauty of Jesus Christ; the one who died on the cross for us on our behalf. Who took the wrath of God for those who would turn from their sins and put their trust in Him. And that we would live our lives with Gospel-driven, Christ-centered hope come what may. Lord, we love You and we trust You, and we trust that You will do Your work in Your people this morning and in the future. We pray in the name of Jesus, amen.