

Jeremiah 30:10-22 "Time to Give Up?"

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 December 2019

Preacher: Will Spink

[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Thank you guys. I love that song. I love the music of Christmas in general. Yes, I started listening long before Thanksgiving, which I know for some of you is a violation of everything sacred. But there is a lot of really, really good Christmas music, really great songs written through the centuries about Jesus' birth, some of which many of us will get to enjoy together tonight. Looking forward to those songs.

But for the next few Sundays leading up to Christmas, I want to take some of those rich lyrics that we've sung and loved and I want to contemplate them together. We'll call it Songs of a Savior.

This morning, learning about our Savior and His birth from the words of O Come, O Come, Emmanuel. Now that said, I'm not preaching song lyrics.

[1 : 19] We preach God's word from this pulpit. And there are no exceptions, including this one. I'm just letting some of these great Christmas carols lead us to different passages that will feed our souls this Christmas.

This morning, we're going to focus on a prophecy from Jeremiah chapter 30. We'll look at some other passages too. But it's the theme of O Come, O Come, Emmanuel that led me to Jeremiah 30. One more thing about songs. One of the reasons we love songs and one of the ways that they help us so much is that they engage our emotions in a unique way, don't they?

Songs do that, whether it's the lyrics themselves, the tunes, the corporate singing of them. All of it connects with our hearts.

And in our relationship with God, we Presbyterians sometimes struggle with that part. We sometimes struggle to connect things that we know in our heads with our hearts and our emotions, don't we?

[2 : 37] But it's really important. So I hope that spending some time connecting biblical truth to beloved songs will help all of us to know our Savior and to worship our Savior more with all our hearts and minds and strength.

That's what I want for us this Christmas season. Let's pray together and then we'll look at God's Word as it speaks into our lives. Pray with me. Father, we most of all need to know you.

You've been reminding us of that day after day, week after week as we come and open your Word. And as the prophets have called us back to a relationship with you and knowing you.

And now that's why you've sent Jesus. That we would know you up close and personal. And so, Father, we long for that.

We know that's your heart for us. And we ask this morning as we open your Word that you would today send your Spirit. To open our eyes and open our hearts that we might know you and love you more.

[3 : 52] Help us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Imagine just a minute this morning that you're a young person.

When Malachi prophesied to God's people around 460 B.C. You remember the striking words of the prophet.

Warnings that frightened you. Promises that inspired you. And then all of a sudden he was gone. The hope of a deliverer to come stayed there in your heart.

You read other prophets. You studied the Torah. You learned of Yahweh's character. And you waited. The rest of your life.

And your children's lives. And your grandchildren's lives. And nothing. No other prophets of Yahweh seemed to be speaking.

[4 : 55] Occasionally a strong leader popped up and got everybody's hopes up. But then he faded. Entire lifetimes. Generations.

Centuries. Past. In silence. Imagine trying to hang on to faith.

Imagine trying to pass on faith to the next generation. You cling to the words of God's promises.

And the stories of God's faithfulness.

And the glory of God's character. But you're longing to hear from God. To have God actually show up. To experience that hope that you've only heard of.

Over 400 years. That's a long time, isn't it? A lot of waiting. I almost put down as the text for this morning.

[6 : 02] This blank page between Malachi and Matthew. You have one of those in your Bibles? It's one blank page usually. And the end of the prophets.

Since we've just finished Malachi. And our study of the minor prophets. God. I just. Display my foolish pride.

For people to respond. To his call to repent. And to return to him. I mean. Certainly God is active here. But. People are longing for more.

For God himself. To come. As he's promised so many times. And here God. God's going to come.

And it doesn't seem to be. Happening.

It's a long way. To live. The God. The God. Gives voice. To the Christ. Such a long way. To live.

[6 : 59] Kids. Do you know what Emmanuel. Anybody know what that word. It's a big word. I'm a desperate man. The word Emmanuel means. God is with us.

God is with us. That's what it.

You've been more patient all this time. You were me. I've given up long ago.

He's the only one who can help us. Come be with me. Like a bunch of times. Maybe when you're in the world. It's a dark. He's been in the world. I've given up mommy. Daddy.

Come help me. Come help me. Come help me. Come help me. Come help me. Come help me.

Come help me. Come help me. Come help me. Come help me. Come help me. Come help me. It's a sad way to live.

[7 : 53] Such a sad, sad way to live. Without God showing up. They face the only cross.

I'm a desperate man. You're in the shadow. I'm in desperate need. I'm here saving him. The O come.

Come help me. Come help me. It's that longing. Oh, getting desperate for God to come. Not sure how much longer they can hold on without him showing up.

Some of them certainly gave up. Come on. Come on. It's too much. It's not worth it. It's too long.

Maybe we don't have to try to. but they It's all I need and go on.

[9 : 08] But the pain and the simple truth. He speaks to the issue of what is it going on. I'm a desperate man.

I'm in desperate need of your saving end. Come and rest me. I'm in desperate need of your saving end.

Come and rest me. He delivers to God's exiled people. For thus says the Lord, verse 12, Your hurt is incurable and your wound is grievous.

There is none to uphold your cause. No medicine for your wound. No healing for you. All your lovers have forgotten you. They care nothing for you.

For I've dealt you the blow of an enemy. The punishment of a merciless foe. Because your guilt is great. Because your sins are flagrant. Why do you cry out over your hurt?

[10 : 19] Your pain is incurable. Because your guilt is great. Because your sins are flagrant. I have done these things to you.

Give up on yourselves. On your self-sufficiency, he says. Your situation really is as bad as you think.

Probably even worse. Your wound is deep and beyond cure. Your guilt is unmanageable. Your sins are obvious and condemning.

And God's people hearing this weeping prophet, as Jeremiah is known, they join in with the weeping, right? Psalm 137. The exiles weep.

How can we sing the songs of God in a foreign land? We might say, do you seriously want me to sing Christmas carols in the face of my real life, pastor?

[11 : 23] You being serious with me four weeks in a row? It's hard for me even thinking of what some of y'all are feeling because you've shared some of that with me.

Why life is hard. Why singing like that might be hard. One of our members sent me a text a few weeks ago saying, could you preach sometime about going through something tragic with long-term effects?

I'm just not hearing what God says to me here. Brother, we can relate. And hopefully you'll hear with me some of what God says to us in those situations.

We can relate here, can't we? Maybe especially during the Christmas season, we feel it. We live in a place that is not our home and God sometimes seems absent or silent.

I've talked with enough of us to know we have felt and we do feel this. Some of us are stuck in dead-end jobs that don't give us dignity or worth.

[12 : 49] No light at the end of the tunnel. Some of us are struggling to fit in with friends at school and it hurts and it seems to get worse, not better.

Some of us are battling chronic pain that we can hardly describe to anyone else. It's limiting. It's isolating.

Some of us are aching with the loss of a loved one, maybe more acutely this time of year.

Some of us are waging what feels like a lifelong battle with sinful desires, addictions, with anger. And these things and many others make us feel like the exiles that we are, right?

Not fitting in. Not finding fulfillment here. Not feeling hopeful. And realizing that all of these either directly or often indirectly result from our sins, our failures, our idols.

[14 : 06] And Jeremiah begins by saying, yep, that's the truth.

If you don't feel any of these longings or groanings in yourself, think beyond yourself to the hunger, the genocide, the trafficking of people in our own country and around the world.

I'm not seeing you, God. This doesn't feel right to me. How can I just keep going on with all of this?

Those words of the song Deliver Us that we'll hear tonight, we heard last Sunday, are haunting, aren't they? Our sins more numerous than all the lambs we've slain.

Our shackles made with our own hands. sins. We've made our own bed. But we look at it and it's disgusting. It's horrible.

[15 : 17] Oh, Yahweh, break this silence if you can. We cry out and yet the struggle continues as we are born captive to sin.

As we live in a world broken and cursed by sin's effects. As we find our flesh warring against our spirits so that we live so often for ourselves, the pain persists.

The longing for whom keeps gnawing. Yes? You with me in this? You're about ready for me to leave it? We live here, don't we?

Maybe not every day you feel it the same way, but do you feel that ache? Do you recognize that longing, that cry in your heart? God is warning us through Jeremiah not to take our predicament lightly.

Quit pretending. I'm fine. Good. Yeah, you know, fine. Yeah. Yeah, fine. How can you pray for us? Ah, I mean, my aunt's goldfish lost a fin.

[16 : 34] Yeah, but I mean, that's about it. We're good. Really? Really? We're good? Fine. Good. Yeah, we trust Jesus. We know God. I mean, we go to church, don't we? We're good.

Fine. Fine. Yep. Y'all, we are so self-sufficient. We don't even realize it sometimes. We hate receiving help from anyone.

And God is telling us this morning that when we deny the reality of our helpless situation, we miss our true hope because we are not it.

It's not me. It's not you. When we depend on ourselves, when we insist we are okay, when we commit to trying harder to handle it, we are barricading ourselves against the one who can truly help.

When we seek to fight sin and Satan without surrendering to God, without depending on His strength, we really are hopeless. I know you're ready for me to get to the hope, but before we do, Jeremiah has one more warning.

[17 : 46] One more thing we should give up on beside ourselves. Look at verse 14. All your lovers have forgotten you. They care nothing for you.

Give up on being sufficient yourselves and give up on your idols that promise to be enough to fulfill you. For God's people, it was sometimes the nations around them that looked strong enough to

provide security.

For God's people, it was sometimes idols of wood and stone, other gods who promised to provide fertility or rain or whatever they needed.

For God's people then, it was sometimes the people of the other nations in whom they thought they would find life in that relationship. And God says, no.

None of those lovers truly care for you, can truly help you. See, when you're in exile, when you don't feel at home where you are, it's so appealing, isn't it, to look for that feeling of home, comfort, rest, belonging, security, in someone or somewhere else other than God.

[19 : 10] after all the chaos of travel and football and arguing and decorating, last night, my family finally had the moment.

You know, we turned off all the lights and turned on the lights on the Christmas tree. We sat on the sofa together for just that moment and sang Christmas carols. All that chaos for that one moment, that one magical moment of peace.

Not a bad idea, but a bad idol. Right? It's good when it turns our hearts to God.

Bad when we find our hope in it. See, we don't want to admit we're exiles here, do we?

So when we find ourselves groaning, hurting, longing for something more, it's tempting to think we will find relief in a better relationship, in a little more money, in an escape to Netflix, in even a more moral or religious lifestyle.

[20 : 27] Hope in social status, hope in children, hope in success or popularity. prosperity. It's so tempting because it offers a glimmer of light in the darkness.

It's so tempting because so many of our idols have an element of goodness or truth in them like that sparkling Christmas tree moment. It's so tempting because we feel lost and we long for a temporary home even if it's just for the night, just for that one moment to feel at peace some moment, however briefly, where the ache or the longing is soothed.

And God says, no, those things cannot actually deliver what they promise. They can't heal your incurable wound.

They can't deal with your overwhelming guilt. They can't provide you permanent security. And when we deny that reality and go running off after our glittering idols of our hearts, we miss our only hope. We do this in so many ways, y'all. We keep the groaning and the longing at arm's length by living in a nice enough neighborhood with nice enough friends, with nice enough kids in a nice enough church because we hate admitting we're aliens and strangers here and for at least parts of our days we can feel that we're at home.

[22 : 05] We soothe ourselves with half-truths. We settle for quick fixes. We stop at feeling hope rather than truly having hope. And in so doing, we miss our only hope.

When there is only one real solution, settling for any other one keeps you from finding the real one, doesn't it? When you stop and get satisfied there.

It's like masking your need for emergency surgery with enough pain medication that you don't feel you need the doctor anymore. that's dangerous. The words of this song are crying out the right thing.

Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.

Unless, God, you show up, we will be mourning in exile. We will be battling sin and often losing. We will be grieving over death.

[23 : 18] We will be longing for the home that we were made for. How many of these real situations we're facing, including certainly the fact that we are living as exiles in a world where we are aliens and strangers, will not be cured by anything short of Jesus coming again to take us home to be with him forever.

You know that, right? The Israelites' one hope was a Savior coming to rescue them. And our one hope is that same Savior coming again to rescue us.

Amen? That's it. There aren't other ones. There are substitutes. there are sooths for a moment. But he's our only hope.

Listen to Jeremiah gloriously bring that hope home to God's people walking in darkness like us.

Then fear not, O Jacob, my servant, declares the Lord.

Nor be dismayed, O Israel, for behold, I will save you from far away and your offspring from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return and have quiet and ease and none shall make him afraid for I

am with you to save you, declares the Lord.

[24 : 46] God with us to save us. That's the Christmas message, right? It's the Christmas message the angel first speaks to Joseph in Matthew chapter 1.

She will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins.

And all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet.

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which means God with us, right? God with us to save us.

Remember, God shows up as a baby after 400 plus years of waiting. None of us has yet waited that long in our lives.

There's no need for us to deny it. Often, God seems absent or silent. He seems absent or silent in our lives for any number of reasons and we feel that but Jesus comes to remind us even in those moments it's still not time to give up on God, is it?

[26 : 08] Yes, give up on yourselves. Yes, give up on your idols but no, in those moments God's not actually absent or silent. Just wait.

What's about to happen? He breaks in with a sky-glowing herald of angels. Not simply sending some words of hope to hang on to.

not merely sending another prophet to go tell you how to be but actually entering in himself breaking in as Emmanuel and being with us to save us to save his people from their sins.

That's what happens at the end of all that waiting because God loves to bring his light into the darkest nights to bring his hope into the most hopeless places.

Listen to Jeremiah one more time. It's after recapping that incurable pain we read about earlier the great guilt and sin in verse 15 he says therefore therefore what?

[27 : 16] I mean you finish it, right? incurable wounds and great guilt and sin that's overwhelming therefore what? You're sent away in exile forever?

Therefore I will punish you with certain death? What does it say? No. Therefore all who devour you shall be devoured.

All your foes every one of them shall go into captivity. Those who plunder you shall be plundered.

All who prey on you I will make a prey. The very opposite of what we deserve, right?

What the world is going on? Verse 17 For I will restore health to you and your wounds I will heal declares the Lord because they have called you an outcast.

It is Zion for whom no one cares. Did you hear that? God saves his people not in spite of their outcast status but because of their outcast status because he loves to heal when the wounds are incurable.

[28 : 27] Because he loves to rescue when no one else is able to and there's no other hope. John Calvin says of this verse when therefore the people should become so sunk in misery as to make all to think their deliverance hopeless God promises that he would then be their redeemer.

Is that where you are today? Are you honestly looking at life and you're groaning you're longing you're crying out you've thought how could I not give up?

It seems to make sense it's the only reasonable path forward God loves then to be your redeemer he loves now if that's where you are and what your heart is feeling this morning to be the one who comes and enters in and meets you right there.

That's what he's like. Listen friends we like God's people are exiles who've been given God's word to study to learn his character to trust his promises even and especially for the moments of groaning he gives it to us again this morning for that because God is the only one who can truly help people groaning as deeply and honestly and painfully as we are he loves to make us like Paul who remained because of God's being with him in the midst of real difficulties sorrowful yet always rejoicing having nothing and yet possessing everything 2nd Corinthians 6 own the pain give up on any other cure and then rejoice rejoice

Emmanuel shall come God with us kids one more time want you to help us what does Emmanuel mean God is with us don't forget that you will never be alone because of that thus says the Lord behold I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob and have compassion on his dwellings the city shall be rebuilt on its mound and the palace shall stand where it used to be out of them shall come songs of thanksgiving the voices of those who celebrate I will multiply them and they shall not be few I'll make them honored and they shall not be small their children shall be as they were of old their congregation shall be established before me I'll punish all who oppress them and listen to this

listen to who's in charge their prince shall be one of themselves their ruler shall come out from their midst we know that one don't we that great prince of God's people

[31 : 58] I will make him draw near and he shall approach me for who would dare of himself to approach me declares the Lord and then the best part of all these promises of all of God showing up in the pain you shall be my people and I will be your God for us looking back on Jesus these are no pie in the sky promises maybe God will show up God has actually come Jesus has come once he's left his spirit as a deposit in us and he's promised to come again for us so this song and this passage point us to our only true hope Emmanuel shall come

God with us to be with us and be our God forever let's not settle for anything less let's not settle for anything less than Emmanuel as our savior God as our hope heaven as our home let's pray oh holy spirit help our hearts that so easily and quickly settle for substitutes for false hope that won't really last strengthen our faith even as we look back even as we see you fulfill your promises to God's people after centuries of waiting that we will find you to be faithful again to us and to know that we can trust you

God we're hurting some of us feel it personally some of us because we're in this family together we have brothers and sisters longing and groaning and crying out here in this church family around the world and we together say God don't let us have any hope but you because we believe you have come and you will come again why we cry out to you together trust you to meet us and be with us and save us for more information visit us online at southwood.org