

IS THERE HOPE FOR THE FUTURE? +



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Well, have you ever felt hopeless? Like you're in the middle of something and you can't see your way way out. Maybe you're stuck in a season of waiting and you're just waiting, waiting for a breakthrough, waiting for a call, waiting for an answer, waiting for a healing, waiting for a rescue. And in the middle of that, you're asking questions like, as I'm down here, is anybody up there working for me? I want you to know if that's ever been you or if that's you today, you are not alone.

David Kinnaman's a top researcher in our nation and he was here in Omaha speaking to the pastors and church leaders a couple of weeks ago. He said this, he said many things, but this was one, that 70% of Christians have a sense of hopelessness about the future. And I don't know if that means a little bit of hopelessness, a lot or somewhere in between, but that's a lot of people that profess a belief in Jesus that have some sort of sense of hopelessness. That we are not immune from feeling and being hopeless at times in this world, but we are the ones that profess a belief in God. And I want to press into that belief today and help you see that no matter what you're going through, you can keep hope alive.

I want to do that through a modern day story that will lead into a Bible story. How many of you remember the remarkable story in 2010 of the 33 Chilean miners? It's been a very popular story. It's been made into a movie. It's an incredible story of 33 men that were just doing their job and they descended down into the depths of the San Jose copper gold mine. Everything was normal until a couple of days in a catastrophic collapse forced them to be 2300 feet underground. If facing realities that were unbelievable as they were down there, families were hard at work, not even sure if their loved ones were safe, let alone alive.

And they began to work right away of, of how can we get messages down to them in 17 days into this, this thing they came up with, it's called a Paloma system where they were able to send a message down and actually that message could come back up. And so they reached the people and a message came up 17 days later from the Chilean miners that said, estamos bien los 33. We are well the 33 and up above on top, they erupted, they celebrated, they sung the Chilean national anthem knowing that their family at least was alive, but they were certainly not out.

This Paloma system really became their lifeline for the next 52 days. It would deliver messages of hope from above and hope from below. And they were able to understand what was going on and to keep hope alive. You can see that what the Paloma looks like, it's like a little tube where maybe you can fit a, a bottled water, a little bit of medicine or a letter perhaps that might give hope one way or the other. And this communication was going for 52 more days.

Finally, add the 52 and the 17, 69 days later, all 33 men were rescued. The beautiful story that you can be so far down, but not out of hope. And maybe you're like the Chilean miners today, and you're going

through something pretty deep. And hopefully, and I use that word in the purest sense of the word, you can leave here with the full hope that no matter how far down you are, that if Jesus is your God, you are never without hope. That's the main message today.

Because of Jesus, I am never without hope. Come on all campuses. Let's say this out loud. Because of Jesus, I am never without hope. You may not feel it and it may not even be, Ooh, it might be hard to believe right now, but come on, let's press in again. Because of Jesus, I am never without hope. I want to give you three reasons today why you can keep hope alive, and we'll do that in just a moment.

Thank you so much for being here. We're in just the second of a three-week quick series called Asking for a Friend. Next week's going to be really fun. I'd invite you to invite some friends and come back. We're going to be answering some questions live, but you can also submit your questions early at that QR code there, and some of those will be chosen. This is our attempt to really answer questions that you have. We want to make sure we're meeting the needs of our people.

And so next week's going to be fun. I'm going to give you today three reasons why you can keep hope alive. But before we get to why you can keep hope alive, why are we feeling hopeless? Are you feeling hopeless? I remember it was David Kinnaman who works with Barna that did the study in Omaha a few years ago called The State of the City that talks about the state of our mental health here in Nebraska, and the stats aren't that great.

And so as you look at what Omaha and its metro areas are believing and seeing, you'll see things like that, man, we're far more stressed and far more anxious than the national averages. We're also a little bit more burnt out, a little bit more depressed, more lonely and grieving loss even more than national average. Our mental health is unwell. And when you are stressed and anxious and lonely and all up in here in an unwell place, it's hard to remember that hope is yours through Jesus.

So then, great. So why though? Why are we hopeless? Why is our mental health struggling? I wanted to do a little bit of my own culture analysis, so I did what anybody would do. I asked the question on Facebook and I said, if you're feeling hopeless, would you share with me in the comments or private message me? And a lot of people did in the comments and in the messages, and I want to kind of give three reasons. I want to put a name to why we're feeling hopeless. Three reasons as to why we're feeling hopeless in our situations today.

Here's the summary. My summary of the top three reasons. Number one is that life is moving too fast and it feels like I'm losing control. We live in a world that just keeps going and going and going, and it is not slowing down. And we're living in an age that we've never been in before, and we're not certain what that means for us. It feels like we're losing any bit of control that we thought we might've had. And it's true.

When I look at my generation and older, we were the first ones, millennials and older that have to deal with this brand new thing called the internet, which nobody asked us, do you want the internet? We had to figure out life and how that is going to just absorb into every part of our life and figure it out with all of the complexities. And when we were still struggling with that, Gen Z got dropped with social media. Now you've got to figure out, you didn't ask for it, but you've got to figure out now how you can live with all the complexities that come with that. And now Gen Alpha, those that are 12 and under, now you get to deal with artificial intelligence. And all of this is like, we're just losing more and more

control. And it feels like for many of us that life's passed us by and the trains are too far down the tracks. We know it's not stopping and it feels like life just passed me by. Maybe that's how you feel.

Number two, I've placed my hope in worldly leaders. This one actually was voiced the most often. And when you place your hope in something or someone other than Jesus, let me tell you, you are liable to be in places where that lets you down and that's hopeless. And they put a name to it. Most of them, politicians, governments, leaders, religious leaders, there are different people that we place our hope in that promise certain things that let us down.

And when we try to operate with what the world says, do this, follow this formula, a lot of us are listening to that and we're like, we're trying, but the formula is not working. They said, go to college and get a job. And I went to college and I got a job. But now younger people are feeling like they're getting left behind. The average age of a U.S. homeowner now is 40. First time homeowner, I should say 40, man, we get promised certain things by politicians and leaders and say this, say that, and some things come to pass and some don't.

And we place, whenever we place our hope in anything or anyone other than Jesus, let me tell you, you are liable to be in places where you are left hopeless.

And number three is similar, but pressing a bit deeper or broader is my eyes are more fixed on what's temporal than eternal. I feel like of all the 2025 sermons I've given, this is kind of the common thread that keeps popping up that you actually live twice here for a little while there forever. And yet our eyes get fixed on what's temporal right in front of us right now. And we start looking at what's natural instead of what's supernatural and what's coming.

And whenever we place our eyes or our hope in the things of this world, we realize really quickly that things of this world and gosh, even people of this world break down and that life is fragile. And we get evidence of that over and over.

And so when the news came on Thursday that one of the classmates of my boys at high school, Zach Klein lost his life in a car accident at 17 years old, it's so sad. And the more I've entered into it, it's like, man, there's just nothing good about this. It's awful. And you wake up Friday and it was like the most gloomy day that there's been. It just felt like that gloominess and that morning was like, oh man, it was there the last few days.

And then Saturday last night I was texted, I don't know the details yet, but a man my age in our congregation all of a sudden passed away from a heart attack, leaving a fiance and children behind. And I'm like, man, we get hit all the time in this world with reminders that things of this world break down and even the people of this world break down and that life is really fragile and there are things that happen in this world that I can't fix.

But the more I place my eyes on what's around me, what's temporal, I'm reminded of that. And there's so many things that we can't fix and that's hopeless. There's parents and grandparents that have contended for the faith of their kids or grandkids and yet they still don't believe in Jesus. Nothing you can do can fix that. It's like, man, that's frustrating.

There are people that they want nothing more to just get married and they can't get married. They can't find a spouse. There's others that are married. They're like, why am I struggling so much in my marriage and will it ever be what I thought it would be? And your sin is super real and so is mine. And there's some of us that deal with a sin that we thought was of our past and yet it creeps up again. And it's like, I'm feeling hopeless that this sin will ever get out of my life.

Maybe one, two or three of those realities speak into your life. Maybe you have other legitimate reasons that you feel hopeless, but the good news it's into that or those realities that God acts and God speaks.

I do not want to trivialize this world's problems and what you are going through right now. I'm not here to tell you that that's a small matter or that you need to cheer up, but what I do want to remind you loud and clear is that God's will is not for you to be hopeless. That is the enemy's work. God's will is that no matter what happens in this world, even in the worst things that you have Jesus. And so you have hope.

To be without hope is ultimately, I believe the definition of what hell actually is. To have no hope whatsoever. In fact, Dante, when he wrote his book Inferno to describe hell, he said over the gates of it is this phrase right here, abandon all hope ye who enter here.

Despair and hopelessness is total separation from God. And here's the good news in Jesus is that you and I never have to experience that. That no matter what you're going through, Jesus is here and we'll meet with you and he can rescue you. Even when the world throws really tough, challenging things at you, God can rescue you. You might be down, but you're not out.

The scripture says that the arm of the Lord is not too short to save. You can go down 2,300 feet and he'll still get you there. Psalm 40 verse two says that he lifted me, Jesus lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire. He sat my feet upon a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.

No matter what pit you're in, no matter how far down you are, what depth you're experiencing, right here and right now, the good news is that Jesus meets you, is here with you and will bring rescue to you.

And I really believe that if we're struggling with all these things coming from the outside, they're going to keep coming. And one of the enemy's tactics is for you to just sit back and take it and let them mess with everything in your mind. But I believe we're called to play offense, to not live in despair. That is not the will of God. I'm not trivializing what you're going through. I'm not saying you can't ever feel or be hopeless at the situations that happen in this world, but I am telling you that Jesus came so that you would never have to be truly and always forever without hope.

And so let's turn now to the good book. If you brought it with you, you can turn all the way back to the beginning in Genesis into chapter six. We're going to look at the story of Noah. There's some similarities with what the Chilean miners went through, with what Noah went through, with what you may be going through today.

And I want to give you what I'm calling the basics, the ABCs, your hope survival kit, three things you can have to keep hope alive that we see in the story of Noah. I see it in the story of the Chilean miners, and I know God gives it to you and offers it to you.

We're going to look at these three things, the ABCs, that you've got supporting allies, a community of people that will walk with you no matter how dark your world is. You've got an unwavering belief in a coming rescue, a confidence that your story's not over, and you've got a lifeline of communication, your Paloma, if you will, a reminder from above that as you're down here, you are not forgotten and that rescue is on its way. Let's look at these three in detail in the story of Noah.

Noah lived in a time when it was really, really dark. In fact, there's some people today that are like, oh man, the world's never been as broken and as messy as it is. And I'm like, yeah, it has. I think it's been worse. Have you ever opened up Genesis chapter six?

Because that's what we see in here. Here's what it says. Starting in verse five, it says the Lord saw the wickedness of man was great in the earth. And listen to this. Every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth and it grieved him to his heart.

Humanity had become so violent, so corrupt, so broken that scripture says God was grieved that he made man. And then we turned to chapter six, seven, verse seven. It just happens all the time. It's crazy. So the Lord said, I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens for, oh, I am sorry that I have made them.

In the middle of that mess, one man stood out. Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. And these are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.

And many of us know the story of Noah, that God gives Noah this warning that a flood is coming, but he gives him a calling to build an ark, not a little raft, not a little boat, but a massive structure called an ark that took him, scholars believe, 120 years to complete. And amazingly, Noah did this.

And we know him as the ark builder, the craftsman. But what most people don't know about Noah is that as he was building, he was also a preacher. He was a preacher by day and an ark builder by night. And Peter two, verse five says that Noah was a preacher of righteousness.

And if you're measured at how well people respond to your message, I'm just going to go on record to say that I think Noah was a far better craftsman than he was preacher. Because for 120 years, he's saying this and not one person in the community joined Noah.

We flip a chapter to Genesis chapter seven, verse six, seven. I don't know. It just, it keeps coming. I'm not trying this. Noah was 600 years old when the floodwaters came on the earth and Noah and his sons and his wife and his son's wives entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood, the waters came and his family was there.

It had to be so hard to preach for 120 years and to have people not only reject your message, but I'm sure they labeled him as ridiculous and as crazy. I'm sure it was really hard to be in Noah's family. My

goodness. Can you imagine your dad, your husband, your, your father-in-law preaching this? The community has got to think that guy's gone mad.

And no one responded for 120 years and it would be easy to look at it that way. But here's what's kind of neat is some did respond. You want to know who his wife, his sons and his son's wives, they got on the boat.

We don't know much about the family dynamic prior to the boat, but we know that Noah must have been at least a good enough husband and a good enough dad and a good enough father-in-law that his wife and his kids and his son's wives would join him on the boat.

I think that tells us a lot of things in this world that it's really easy to try to appeal to everybody else. We can try hard for 120 years, but sometimes actually, how are you doing in your family? So one thing to reach the masses, but if you reach the masses at the expense of your family, I would say you've maybe got your priorities mixed up.

And it had to have been hard for his family, had to have been hard for his wife, for his sons and the son's wives to have all the people talking about their dad, their family member, how crazy he is.

And it's not like Noah was building this in Monowi, Nebraska, population one, and keeping it to himself. He was building it in public in front of everybody. I can't imagine how hard that would have been.

And I would imagine his dad, his sons would have been like, dad, can you just please just stop talking about it? Just shut up. People think you're crazy. And yet he kept doing it. Why? Because parents love to embarrass their children.

The reason is because they are ungrateful little rascals and this is your revenge on them. It feels good, doesn't it?

One of the ways I did this with my kids was at car line at school and car line was always super stressful.

So I remember driving up to car line and I have this song on my playlist called the doxology and in the playlist, it's sung acapella. Some of you, some of you may know this, may know this song is praise God from whom all blessings flow, praise him all creatures here below. And it keeps going.

But they picture somebody good at singing with a chorus behind him. It sounds so beautiful. And so what I would do is I would go up to car line and right at the end, I would roll all the windows down and turn it so far up this beautiful chorus of humanity meeting divinity.

And as the boys were walking out, I would yell, Brady and Nathan, dad loves you. You know what they didn't do? Come back in the car and give me a big old hug. You just shut up, dad. That's not a cool song, dad stop.

But when the rain came and the doors were shut, how cool that he may have failed for 120 years to reach one person, but there were seven people in his family that joined him on the boat. What a sweet message that is. Noah had in his family was his supporting allies, supporting allies.

Chilean miners had 33, 32 others. And I really believe that you don't need a hundred and you don't even need 33, but you need allies in this world and ally, at least in this world to walk with you.

It's really challenging in our world with all of this technology that's being dropped on us and us trying to figure out how to do all of this with things we didn't ask for.

It's really hard in this. I'm sure you've heard the phrase that we have more ways to connect than ever before. And yet we're as disconnected as we've ever been. Totally true.

And there are many families, myself included at times where we may be together, but all of us are on our own device with our own AirPods so as to not infringe on everybody else. We are living in a more individualized culture and country.

And I believe one of the key reasons our mental health is struggling and why we lose hope is because we're spending more time on this rather than a real community with other people.

And so in the ABCs of keeping hope alive, do you have allies? It's one of the reasons church exists that we get to do this together with one another. Allies of like-minded faith are a beautiful thing.

So why we do things during the week, great to come on Sunday and be a part of the crowd, but, but it's why we do things during the week.

We call them connect groups, small groups where a dozen people are under a study the Bible and look at it and find truth in it. And we're able to speak into each other's stories and endure with one another and encourage one another and cry with one another and laugh with one another.

Not just that we have ministries, student ministry and women's ministry, so many ministries that are happening where people are coming together and bonding relationships.

It's what happens when we serve together actually in some of these ministries is we come together for a greater good and it causes us to bond together.

And that's what allies and the original Latin was about. It was about bonding together, forging together.

It actually came out of war talking about two people that are bonded together, that I got you and you got me, I got your back and you got mine and we're in this together no matter what happens.

And for some of you, as you kind of get to the end of this year and start another year, that might be the thing on your list. They're like, you know what? I need to press in more and make myself more vulnerable and get an authentic relationship and try this out. Need an ally. Need someone to walk with.

The second basic that the Chilean miners had, that Noah had an unwavering belief, an unwavering belief.

Noah had it actually before there was ever any evidence. He trusted God before there was a drop of rain.

Here's what Hebrews says, chapter 11, verse seven, by faith, Noah, when warned about things not yet seen in holy fear, built an ark to save his family.

It's crazy to trust for 120 years when not a raindrop has come that I'm just going to keep building. I'm going to keep building. I'm going to keep building an unwavering faith because typically when we believe something but don't see any evidence of it, man, we give up on that.

Or when someone, a leader says something, but we don't see them kind of bringing that to fruition. We doubt that it will really happen, but Noah didn't.

We give up too early in our world.

Nathan, when he was 12, his five-year-old cousin was named Benton, Benton Bay.

And we were at the Bay family and they have this lunch dinner table that is like very, very crafty, very woodworky. So it's not perfect. It's got a lot of weird, jagged edges.

And they were playing paper football. You know what I'm talking about? Paper football where you slide the football across and you try to get it to hang over the edge.

And a bunch of us have been doing this for a half hour. Not one person landed it over the edge. It was a really hard table.

So Nathan, my 12-year-old, learned a valuable lesson that day.

He said to Benton, Benton, if you, if you can get this paper football over the edge in one trial, I'll give you 10 bucks.

So Benton took that paper football and slid it across the table.

You know what happened? Hung over the edge, 10 bucks.

Nathan, of course, he'd been there the whole time, said, this is unbelievable. I got to get my 10 bucks back.

And so he said, okay, you're going to put your 10 at risk, but if you choose to do it again and you get it again, you get a hundred dollars. This is impossible.

He'd already done it once, but he's not going to do it again.

Benton took that paper football.

You know what happened? He slid it across the table and he landed it hanging over the edge.

Nathan owed him a hundred bucks at 12 years old.

Learned an important lesson that day.

Don't make promises to little cousins that have good aim.

Nathan tried to get out of it.

I was bluffing. I was joking. I don't have a hundred dollars.

Benton did not give up.

For four years, Benton reminded Nathan, where's my a hundred bucks? Where's my a hundred bucks?
Where's my a hundred bucks?

And in year five, Benton, I think just lost hope.

But at some point in year five, Nathan got birthday money and actually gave Benton a Benjamin.

To which Benton was super excited about, but a minute later said, it's \$150 with interest.

Cousins are fun, but man, we just aren't conditioned to wait well.

We don't suffer well.

We give up when we don't see things happening.

This is the microwave society that we live in, where we get entertainment at our fingertips.

Remember the good old days when we'd have to sit on the couch for an hour and watch a show and the cliffhanger would come and you'd have to be on that couch a week later to watch the next episode.

Now just next episode, you either push it or three to 10 seconds, depending on the platform, it'll just fire up for you.

When we text somebody, we want to communicate with somebody.

We expect a text reply back right away.

Worst thing is when you see texting bubbles and it goes away and there's nothing, then we got problems to talk about.

The Greek word for hope is Elpis.

It's a expectation, trust, and confidence.

Not a flimsy, whimsical kind of hope that's based on nothing.

Not a kind of hope that at 920 last night, down 27 points, we think anything's going to happen.

Not that kind of hope, but a hope that says, even if I haven't seen any evidence of this, I'm believing it.

My faith, my belief is unwavering.

Why?

Because if God said it, it will happen.

I don't care if he said it 120 years ago and nothing's happened.

I don't care if there's a prophecy 700 years prior and nobody's seen anything.

I'm believing that Jesus is still coming.

And 700 years later, that prophecy would come.

We call it Advent.

It starts next week and it means coming, waiting, arrival.

If God said it, he'll make it happen.

It just won't always be on your timeline.

And I think all the world and the microwave society we live in, the world that says, you don't have to wait at all and suffering is to be avoided at all costs, I think that messes with us spiritually.

And we start praying for something on Monday and if we don't see action on Tuesday, we give up by Wednesday.

Where's our unwavering belief that if Jesus said it, it's going to happen?

We've got supporting allies, we've got an unwavering belief, and there's a third basic, a lifeline of communication.

Chileans had that Paloma system, that tube that was able to go back and forth.

Noah had a lifeline of communication after the flood waters came.

You remember what it was?

He would send out something and it would come back and give him messages.

Remember what it was?

A dove.

First time it flew out and it came back, nothing to give.

Second time it flew out and it brought back an olive leaf saying, we can see the top of the trees now.

Third time it flew out and didn't return, so it's safe.

Rescue has come.

Rescue's here.

Rescue's here.

He had this beautiful way of communicating and getting back messages.

The Chileans had this beautiful thing of being able to send a tube back and forth, up and down and receive messages to keep hope alive.

Now, the beautiful thing is, do you know what the Spanish word Paloma means in English?

Dove.

The Chileans didn't even know they were doing something biblical as they were passing that dove back and forth and back and forth and back and forth.

And I want to tell you today, do you know what the Holy Spirit is depicted as?

A dove.

That when Jesus came into this world and went into the waters of baptism, God the Father said loud and clear, this is my son whom I am well pleased.

He's here for the salvation of the world.

And a dove, the Holy Spirit was descending upon that moment.

And that spirit lives inside of you.

That's your Paloma.

That's your dove.

That's your communication that at any time, if you're down deep and you got nothing else, you've got the spirit that lives inside of you that wants to communicate with you.

You've got his word right here in the Bible.

You get his word preached that every time it goes out, it will not return void.

You've got this beautiful gift of prayer.

I can communicate with God no matter where I am.

I can reach him and he can reach me.

The ABCs, the truth is that the A and the B won't always be perfect.

You're going to have allies that let you down.

And you're going to have a belief.

I know I said unwavering belief, but you're going to waver, you're going to toss to and fro by what the world brings at you.

But thank God you got C, you got communication.

You got the dove, you got the Holy Spirit, the power of God that is real and it will never let you down.

He doesn't always work the way we want him to.

It doesn't always work on the timing that we want him to.

We still struggle when we see realities of this world, the fragile world we live in.

And we're still like, God, where are you?

Is anybody up there working while I'm down here?

And what God wants to say to you through his word, through prayer, through scripture, through worship is I'm working for you.

Trust me, you can have hope no matter what you see in this world.

No matter how far down you are, you are not out.

Will you stand?

And repeat this after me.

Say, because of Jesus, I am never without hope.

Come on, all campuses, because of Jesus, I am never without hope.

I want us to do something now really vulnerable.

Allies, belief, communication, ABC.

I want you to find at least one other person.

Find 10 others if you want, but I want you to put your arms around each other.

If you don't know somebody, just meet them.

This is how you're going to meet them.

Put your arms over the person next to you.

All campuses, the church is meant to be allies together.

That though challenging times come, we get to put our arms around.

We get to forge ourselves and bond ourselves together.

So you know that you don't walk alone, that what you're going through right now, that hopeless situation, you at least don't walk it alone.

Because you've got a church family of like-minded faith around Jesus Christ.

And we're here with you.

I'd like for the people on the edges of that arm lock, whatever it might be, I'd like for you to just put your arms in the air right now.

Put it as a sign of a fist of like, I believe, I believe.

Come on, you're representing all the people that are in the middle right now.

Put the arms out on the outside of I believe.

We've got unwavering belief, not in ourselves.

Oh, we are fickle and we are fragile, but we have unwavering belief that Jesus, you are real and that your promises are real.

And that if you said it, you're going to complete it.

You're going to do it.

And we've got this amazing ability to communicate with God.

And so I'd love for you to, each of you now, lift both of your arms in the air.

Lift both of your arms in the air.

We reach toward heaven.

Where does my help come from?

It comes from the Lord.

So Jesus, we're reaching high because we need you.

We need your spirit right now.

Thank you that you do not leave us alone to fend for ourselves, that we can trust every word because there are times and there are situations that feel and that are hopeless.

May we know and may we see that you meet us in those and you don't always pretty it up right away, but your promises are still real and we love you and we need you more and more and more.

Jesus pray with Jesus.

Be with those who are down in the depths this morning.

Rescue them.

Be there.

Paloma.

We love you, Jesus.

It's in your name.

We pray together.

All campuses say amen.

Amen.