

## Homily for Lent 5, 2020

Psalm 130

*'Hope in a time of crisis'*

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### GREETING AND TEXT

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

The text for the sermon today is Psalm 130, and I'd like to read this for you now:

<sup>1</sup> *Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.*

<sup>2</sup> *Lord, hear my voice!*

*Let your ears be attentive  
to the voice of my supplications!*

<sup>3</sup> *If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,  
Lord, who could stand?*

<sup>4</sup> *But there is forgiveness with you,  
so that you may be revered.*

<sup>5</sup> *I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,  
and in his word I hope;*

<sup>6</sup> *my soul waits for the Lord  
more than those who watch for the morning,  
more than those who watch for the morning.*

<sup>7</sup> *O Israel, hope in the LORD!  
For with the LORD there is steadfast love,  
and with him is great power to redeem.*

<sup>8</sup> *It is he who will redeem Israel  
from all its iniquities.*

Let us pray.

God of hope, as we listen to your word today, fill us with all joy and peace as we trust in Christ, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit, we may abound in hope. In Jesus name, Amen.

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### INTRODUCTION

Dear friends in Christ,

Our world is in strange and troubled times.

As we continue to deal with the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic,

Many are anxious,  
Many are frightened,  
Many are confused and overwhelmed.

We're wondering how bad it will be,  
How long it will last,  
And what light is at the end of the dark tunnel.

In short,  
Where is our hope in the midst of this crisis?

This psalm set down for the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent is one which speaks to just this topic,  
Hope in a time of crisis.

It takes us through three stages,  
First hope from the depths,  
Second, hope as we wait,  
And finally and most importantly,  
That our hope is ultimately in the Lord.

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### **HOPE FROM THE DEPTHS**

So first is hope from the depths.

<sup>1</sup> *Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.*

The imagery of the depths is very powerful and vivid.

It seems to be an image of being engulfed by water,

Where waves crash all around you and there is this sense of being overwhelmed.

Perhaps you can think back to being even just at a normal beach out in the water when the waves build up and start crashing all around you,  
Perhaps it's cold,  
Perhaps it's getting darker.

But it's one thing for the water to be overpowering you from above,  
It's another thing when you have the moment when you reach your foot down to feel the security of the sand,  
And you can't touch.

The tide has taken you out that bit far,  
And now it's not just being engulfed by the water above,  
But it's also that there's no sure foundation underneath.

There's this sense of drifting and a helplessness,  
And in those situations panic and despair can quickly arise.

Those are the depths.

I don't think it's too dramatic to say,  
That many people in our world,  
Perhaps some of you,  
Feel like we are in our own version of the depths right now.

There's a sense of being overwhelmed,  
There's a sense of not having a sure footing on which to stand.

For some of you this is very personal in whatever way the fall out of this pandemic has affected you already,  
Loss of jobs and financial security,  
Being cut off from our loved ones and other social contact,  
The fear of physical sickness.

For others it may not have had a big impact on you yet,  
But the sense of the need in our world is what is overwhelming.

Notice in our psalm,  
That it's **from the depths** that the crying out to God begins,

From this place of being overwhelmed and lacking a solid foundations,  
That the psalmist cries out to the Lord to hear him,  
And is confident that he will hear him,

There is hope from the depths.

The hope is there because the psalmist knows there is forgiveness with the Lord.

In other words,  
His own sinfulness makes him realize that he's got no case in himself to call out to God in this time of need,

He can't say to the Lord, please hear me because I've done such a great job in life and I deserve for you to help me.

No no,  
Quite the opposite.

This crisis,  
As all crises do,  
Remind us of our own sinfulness and so they are a call to repentance.

But the psalmist can cry out confidently even from the depths,  
Because he knows there is forgiveness with the Lord.  
Friends,  
We do well in this current time,  
To recognize the importance of **lament** in the life of God's people.

The Christian faith is not just for the good times,  
But is especially for the times of suffering.

Our life with God is not only for the heights,  
But for the depths.

There are many psalms of lament,  
And this is the time we need to use them.

As Christian people we can pray our laments to the Lord for ourselves,  
**and** for our world,

We can all out to him from the depths and acknowledge the pain,  
Acknowledge the overwhelming nature of it all,  
Acknowledge the feeling of having no firm footing underneath,

We can cry out in **hope** even from the depths,  
Knowing that he will hear us.

So it begins,  
With hope from the depths.

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#### **HOPE AS WE WAIT**

Next,  
We move to hope as we wait.

<sup>5</sup> *I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,  
and in his word I hope;*

<sup>6</sup> *my soul waits for the Lord  
more than those who watch for the morning,  
more than those who watch for the morning.*

The picture here is of the guards or soldiers up on a tower and on the night shift,  
Watching for danger.

These are the ones who are charged with the watch through those long and slow night hours of deep  
darkness,  
When for the most part,  
Nothing happens,  
But it's crucial they continue to watch just in case.

If you've ever been on night shift, especially outside,  
You can perhaps get a sense for what this is like.

I've heard of others who have a similar experience when they have sleepless nights for one reason or  
another,  
That the first light of morning comes with an immense sense of relief.

The people of God have always been a waiting people,

Just like Simeon and Anna,

Who at the time of Christ's birth were waiting for the redemption of Israel. (Luke 2:25,38)

As we pray in another psalm,

**'Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!'**

God promises his people he will hear,

God promises us he will act,

But the timeline is his,

And so to be a person of hope,

Is to be a person who waits on the Lord.

We have entered this time in our country right now when much has already been shut down,

Where so many of regular activities including the church,

Have had to be suspended for a time.

We don't know how things will go from here,

Things have changed so rapidly in the past couple weeks,

But it's possible that these restrictions will get more severe,

And that we will have a strange time of waiting ahead.

Waiting to see how bad the virus becomes here,

Waiting to life to return back to normal,

Waiting for the Lord,

And what his plans are for his world,

For our church,

For each of us.

Notice for psalmist the shape his waiting takes,

*<sup>5</sup> I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,  
and in his word I hope;*

One of the things it means to wait for the Lord,

Is to direct that hopeful waiting toward the Word of God.

Last week pastor Fraser gave us some good encouragement to consider how we may continue to show practical Christian love for our neighbours during this time.

During the week if you had a chance to watch, listen or read to Pastor Tom Pietsch's sermon, He also gave us some good encouragement on using this time as one especially for devotional prayer.

Well, here is some more practical advice for us during this enforced times of waiting,

Turn to the Lord's *word*,

We are blessed to have the Scriptures in our homes,  
And if you don't let us know and we will make sure you get a Bible.

In his Word I hope.

Let us,

Hear,  
Read,  
Mark,  
Learn,  
And inwardly digest the Lord's Word as we wait.

And perhaps on your shelf you've got other Christian devotional books that you haven't read in years,  
Or you've got that old spiritual classic in the bottom of a drawer that you've never got around to reading,

Well now may be the time,  
As we wait in hope,  
We turn to the Lord's word.

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## **HOPE IN THE LORD**

So there was hope from the depths,  
There was hope as we wait,

And finally and most importantly our hope is in the Lord.

<sup>7</sup> *O Israel, hope in the LORD!  
For with the LORD there is steadfast love,  
and with him is great power to redeem.*  
<sup>8</sup> *It is he who will redeem Israel  
from all its iniquities.*

As Christians we subject ourselves to our government,  
That's mainly why we're no longer meeting publicly,  
We respect the governing authorities as given by God and we pray for them,

But our ultimate hope is not in the government.

As Christians we support and pray for good science and medicine,  
We give thanks for all those people who are working hard to care for the sick,  
To manage the outbreak of the virus,  
To find a vaccine,

But our ultimate hope is not in science, technology and medicine.

As Christians we try to act responsibly with the money and possessions we are given,

And again we can give thanks as experts in various sectors seek to stabilize the economy,  
as provision is made in our country for those in financial hardship,

but our ultimate hope is not in our bank balance.

### **O Israel, hope in the Lord!**

Your hope is in the Lord,

Why?

Because of his 'steadfast love',

There is the that steadfastness we were looking for when it feels like the bottom has fallen out from our life.

A steadfast and solid and enduring love which the Lord has for you his people,  
And which means that no matter what comes your life is always safely hidden in him.

A steadfast love which meant the sending of our savior Jesus Christ,  
To give his life for the sins of the world.

*'And what shall separate us from the love of Christ?  
Hardship, or distress, or persecution,  
Or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

*No I am convinced,  
That neither death nor life,  
Nor angels, nor rulers,  
Nor things present, nor things to come,  
Nor powers,  
Nor height,  
Nor the **depths**,  
Not anything else in all creation will be able to separate s from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord'.  
(Romans 8:35,36,38)*

### **O Israel, hope in the Lord!**

Why?

Because of his 'great **power** to redeem'.

A power which he worked in Christ as he as he raised him from the dead,

To redeem you from your slavery to sin,  
To redeem you from the power of the devil,  
To redeem you from death.

Jesus says,

*'I am the resurrection and the life,  
Those who believe in me,  
even though they die, will live,  
and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die'. (John 11:25,26)*

In the context of this virus and our world,  
The Lord does not promise us simply that everything will be okay.

He doesn't promise us simply that everything will go back to normal and when.

He does not even promise that some of us will not die from this.

But in the face of death,  
He promises something far far better,

a resurrection life that is stronger than death,

a redemption in Christ Jesus that gives deep and lasting life,

**Hope in the Lord.**

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## **CONCLUSION**

So there it for today,  
*'hope in time of crisis'*.

There is hope even from the depths.

There is hope in our waiting.

There is hope in the Lord.

God grant it to us for Jesus' sake, Amen.

*'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit, you may abound in hope', Amen. (Romans 15:13)*