



Finding Hope in the New Year

Pastor Ted Cunningham

This is going to be our last Sunday together for 2015. We're headed into 2016. I have to be honest with you. A few weeks ago, I hadn't planned on this message being a political message. It wasn't in the plans until about Wednesday of this week and then it hit. So if you have brought your grandma to this church for the very first time and she has been a democrat her whole life, I need you to know this is not a message for democrats or republicans or independents. This isn't a political message along those lines, but we always go into the new year talking about hope and how to have a great year. While I wanted it to be very personalized and individual, the more I studied the text, the text is taking us to where you and I grieve with hope over the sinfulness of our nation.

We are going to be in laments today. If you have your Bible, turn to Lamentations 3. We are going to be talking about grief and loss and sorrow. Next week, we are starting an 18 part series on the Book of Job. Just kidding, we're not starting an 18 part series on the Book of Job. But where the Book of Job focuses on personal suffering, we are going to look today at the Prophet Jeremiah who's talking about national suffering and how you grieve when you look around at the sinfulness of a nation.

This is not democrat, republican, independent. This is for every person who has placed faith in Jesus that says "Yeah I'm feeling something; I don't know what I'm feeling." So we are going to talk about the emotions of where you may be at personally and as a citizen of our country, and where you go with that in 2016.

Last year, I had the opportunity to visit a national ministry. I took one of our elders, R.G. Yallaly, and his wife, Karen. We visited and had a great time in meetings and all that. At the end of the day, the founder of this ministry pulled me into his office to talk to me for a little bit. I went into his office and he just asked me the question that I've been pondering for the last year and a half. I don't know if you've ever had a job interview where you are asked a bunch of questions and then when you leave the job interview and you're in the car ride home, you realize "If I would have said that one thing." I think the best job interviews are where they give you a list of questions to have ready to go and not spring anything on you. I am great with the answers about 30 minutes after you ask me the question.

I'm on the phone a week or two later with this same leader and I'd had a year and a half to think about it. Here's the question he asked me. He said, "Ted, why is your generation so mad at us?"

I said, "Mad? I've never thought of it that way."

He said, "With your generation, I feel there is a lot of frustration towards your parents and your grandparents. I don't think it's anything new, but I want to know why your generation is mad at us."

I started to go there and shared some ideas and thoughts with him. Then I simply shared with him that grandma and grandpa built a great nation, but we've made a lot of poor decisions in the last couple of decades and things aren't going all that well. We're trying to have hope for a future. A lot of us hear all the time "Don't burden your children or grandchildren with this debt," yet nothing is ever done to really fix it. I gave him a bunch of reasons.

As we were driving home from this ministry, I was thinking those were the worst answers I possibly could have given. It was terrible. I've been pondering it for a year and a half now and do you know what I believe the answer truly is? It's misplaced hope. I believe it's okay for us to grieve over our nation right now. We need to be grieving over the sinfulness of our nation and each man and woman doing what's right in their own eyes. We need to grieve over that. But what do we do with that grief? That's the question. I'll be honest with you. I fight bitterness and resentment and a hard heart and frustration when I turn on the television and watch it all. I want to make sure that as I grieve, I take that primary emotion to the next level, to the proper secondary emotion. I don't want it to be unresolved anger.

Today, in the life of Jeremiah, we are going to see a man who is grieving. This message is for anyone in here who has experienced loss this year. It's not just over our national situation. I think 2016 is going to be a roller coaster. I think it's going to be a ride. But this is for anyone experiencing loss. Maybe it's the loss of a job, loss of a home, loss of a family member, and maybe there's a loss of a relationship and maybe you felt the pain of that, the sorrow of that this Christmas. So we're talking about mourning, grief, sorrow, bitterness, and resentment. What do you do with all of that? What do you do as you look around and you experience tremendous loss?

I'm going to take us to the Old Testament and if you are brand new to studying the Bible, the Old Testament... We have the historical books early on that tell the story of the nation of Israel and the children of God. Then, as you get to the back part of the Old Testament, it's the prophets. The prophets are speaking of judgment and destruction. I just want to kind of paint the picture of this before we jump into Lamentations 3, this chapter on deep, emotional pain and what we should do with that. So it's finding hope in the new year.

Moses clearly instructed the Israelites on the blessings of obedience and the consequences of disobedience.

If you start with the idea of the children of Israel, you read in Deuteronomy 28, through Moses, he clearly instructed the children of God. He clearly instructed the Israelites that blessing would come from their obedience. That's the first half of that chapter. The second half of that chapter is that there will be consequences for their disobedience. And as you read through the nation's history, there were some kings that did right in the eyes of the Lord and some who did evil in the eyes of the Lord. Sometimes it was every man doing right in his own eyes. We read about that when we studied Judges last year.

When the people turned from God, prophets brought a message of judgement.

Whenever they would disobey and choose to go their own way and go away from God, he would send a prophet. They brought a message of “You have done this; now this will happen to you.” Some of the prophets would prophesy, they would give a message of what was going to happen to the nation, but they never actually saw the destruction come. Jeremiah is one who prophesied of the destruction and he witnessed it with his own eyes. The pain we read today in Lamentations 3 is the pain of him mourning over his nation.

Now this next one, I don't think we'll be able to relate to, but...

The leaders had brought the nation to the brink of disaster.

I want to be very careful here. I actually don't. Here's what we are going to talk about as we discuss this. Our hope is not in the next president of the United States of America. Our hope is not in the will of the people. Our hope is not in a majority. Our hope is not in our economy. Our hope is not in our strength as a nation. The only hope we have is Jesus; that's it.

The leaders brought the nation to the brink of disaster... When you read in Jeremiah 52... If you haven't found that book yet, I'm encouraging everyone to turn there. If not, it will be on the screen. In the book right before it, 52 chapters of Jeremiah, we read of the downfall of the city, the destruction of the city, the burning of the temple. It was under King Zedekiah. King Zedekiah took office when he was about 30 years old. Nebuchadnezzar brought the Babylonian army up, besieged the city, and starved them out. We read about this in Jeremiah 52. Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC. You can read about it right there, just a few chapters from where we are today. It was destroyed and Jeremiah witnessed it and he is mourning.

Jeremiah is grieving the loss of his nation and his place of worship.

I think that's the first emotion we have to deal with this morning. It's okay for us to grieve what's happening in our nation. It's okay for us to express that. Sometimes people are cheery and I don't think the Christian clichés are what we need right now. I know some of you love your bumper stickers, but I've yet to meet a person who has come to faith in Jesus over a bumper sticker. I've never met one person that their story starts with “Well, I was driving down the strip. I pulled up behind a car that had this really condescending bumper sticker and I was convicted and I placed faith in Jesus.” No! We don't need more yelling, screaming, and nastiness. We need to take our grief and do something with it.

I'm grieving over our nation. I turn on the television and I think *we have lost our minds. This is not called tolerance; it's called ignorance. It's not called tolerance; it's called stupidity. And the fact that you had a speechwriter figure out how to say that as nice is way is beyond me. I believe the person who just wrote that doesn't believe what they just wrote.*

This is what fascinates me. Last year at this time, what was the number one thing on the minds of most Americans? It was the economy. If you looked at all the polls... I love the polls because they change

every day. It proves to us that we are changing every day. I don't think that what was important to me yesterday should not be that important to me today. I don't feel that's how life usually works. If something is important to me and is of a value to me yesterday, it should be of great value today. But now, a poll came out this week. The number one thing on the minds of most Americans is national security. With that is ISIS and with that are borders, immigration, and all that. Then the economy is behind that and the environment is behind that. I just watch those polls and see how quickly we change. That's the problem when you and I are the ones who are determining what is right and what is wrong. We get confused. We believe it's about us and we do what's right in our own eyes.

I think that as Jeremiah grieved the loss of his nation and his place of worship... I love hearing Christians say we are a Christian nation. I hate to break it to you; I'm grieving over the fact that we are not a Christian nation. I'm grieving over that. We look to the Lord and say, "Forget you. We don't need you. We are going to do this our own way." I think this is the powerful point we have to learn from Lamentations today.

Jeremiah mourned over the sinfulness of his nation more than his personal suffering.

We tend to mourn more over our suffering. I don't care about our economy unless that means I get a little more home equity. I'm more concerned about my retirement and my home equity and my job and my income than I am about the sinfulness of the nation. We get focused on the nation when we know it can fix our personal suffering, but Jeremiah is experiencing grief over the sinfulness of his people turning from God and God saying "Now I will come against you."

The Prophet Isaiah referred to the Assyrians as the rod of God's wrath, the one that he used to correct his children. The New Illustrated Bible Commentary puts it this way. *"Rather than explaining away pain, this book helps us face pain. By avoiding cheery clichés, the Book of Lamentations provides companionship for those who are suffering and plants seeds of hope for rebuilding after the suffering is over."*

This is a great book because it answers a lot of questions. How do pain, suffering, and hope go together? How can God, being full of love, be also full of justice? How does that work? Another great question that Jeremiah and Lamentations helps us work through is: How can a nation so quickly fall right after it had a season of very godly kings? When the nation was following after the Lord, how quickly it can turn to no longer following the Lord.

We're going to jump into Lamentations 3: 1. In the first 18 verses, we're going low, so Merry Christmas from Woodland Hills Family Church. What we are going to experience in this text is emotional pain. The reason we had to give that much context before we got into Verse 1 was that we need to feel this. He uses figurative language. It doesn't necessarily mean that he experienced every single thing he's talking about, but he's using this language to express his pain over the sinfulness of his nation.

1 I am the man who has seen affliction... This whole chapter, leading up to verse 21 and on, is leading up to this crescendo. Chapters 1 and 2 build to this crescendo in the middle of Chapter 3 and then 4 and 5 come down off of the crescendo, but for 18 verses, were going to look at the affliction and where this

affliction comes from and why he's experiencing this pain. **...by the rod of the Lord's wrath.** We understand. If you have followed Jesus for any time, you know that discipline doesn't mean unloving. Discipline means loving. Discipline means, "I told you what would happen." Every loving parent in here, as hard as it may be for us as humans... We know a loving parent disciplines. That discipline says I'm involved. So we know this affliction is from the hand of the Lord.

2 He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness rather than light; 3 indeed, he has turned his hand against me again and again, all day long. So we get the idea that this affliction is not letting up. The sorrow and the pain is not letting up. It's repetitive and constantly coming against us.

4 He has made my skin and my flesh grow old and has broken my bones. 5 He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and hardship. This is very important because this was a tactic of the Babylonian army. I can't even get into the cruelty of this army, but a lot of times the way they would bring death upon a group is they would just bring them all together, build a wall around them, and just wait for them to die. This was one of their tactics of execution. He's saying, "This is what I feel like now. I have been besieged just as the City of Jerusalem was besieged in the day of Zedekiah."

6 He has made me dwell in darkness like those long dead. Now he's expressing that it feels like he has been dead for a while. If you've had that kind of pain and that kind of sorrow, it's not just what happened to you in the last couple of weeks, but you have been carrying around this sorrow and this grief for years. "There is a sin in my life that has just weighed me down and, as the Psalms talk about, has crushed my bones. When I conceal it, I feel even more crushed. I'm under the weight of my sin and I'm tired of it; it's exhausting." And the grief that comes with it...

7 He has walled me in so I cannot escape; he has weighed me down with chains. 8 Even when I call out or cry for help, he shuts out my prayer. Some of you have felt the sorrow and grief over your sin and the destruction that your sin has brought upon your life and your relationships and you cry out, but nothing is happening.

9 He has barred my way with blocks of stone; he has made my paths crooked. Now look at Verse 10. This is powerful language, speaking of the Lord. **10 Like a bear lying in wait, like a lion in hiding...** So it's like the Lord is ambushing them. **11 ...he dragged me from the path and mangled me and left me without help. 12 He drew his bow and made me the target for his arrows.**

13 He pierced my heart with arrows from his quiver. 14 I became the laughingstock of all my people; they mock me in song all day long. You can read about this in Jeremiah 20. He got to the place as a prophet where bringing a message of judgment and destruction upon the Nation of Judah was just too much; "I regret the day I was even born. If I was born for this task and this assignment, I don't want it." He said, "I hate the day I was born" and he even goes beyond that. He said, "I hate the man that came out of the delivery room and told my dad I was a boy." That's pretty dark. "I hate the guy who brought news to my father that I was born. I wish that announcement had never been made because I'm the laughing stock of all my people."

15 He has filled me with bitter herbs and given me gall to drink. 16 He has broken my teeth with gravel... This is very important to understand because in that day, you would mourn in sackcloth and ashes and you'd be on the ground, sitting in the dirt. He's saying, "We've been in the dirt for so long that we've started eating the dirt and we've started eating the rocks and eating so much of it that our teeth are now getting worn down." ...***he has trampled me in the dust.***

17 I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is. He's saying I don't even have a memory of good times. I don't even have memory of the stories of when we were brought into the land flowing with milk and honey and we were going to eat from vineyards that we didn't plant and we were going to drink wine from vineyards we didn't plant and live in houses we didn't build and drink from wells that we didn't dig. **18 So I say, "My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the Lord."** This is emotionally low. I can't get any more distraught than this; this is despair.

19 I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. Now this is important because the tone of this chapter is going to begin to change a little bit and he's going to say when I focus on... When I think about the affliction... When I think about the pain... When I think about the temple being burned... When I think about thousands being sent in exile to Babylon... When I just think of nothing left... When I think about that all day long, **20 I will remember them, and my soul is downcast within me.** When you think and dwell on your circumstances, it leads to despair. And then I like this in Verse 21. This is the key. This is the turning point. This is the pivot verse of the whole Book of Lamentations. **21 Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope:**

For you grammarians in here, that's a colon so we are going to see what brings hope. He says when I think about my circumstances, I'm in despair and my soul is downcast, but when I think about this, I have hope. Here's what he's saying as you look at Verses 19, 20, and 21. Focusing on your circumstances leads to despair. Out of Verse 21, we are going to see that focusing on the Lord leads to hope. You can't change your circumstances. I feel pretty powerless to change our nation, but I can change my outlook. I can completely have hope in the midst of the sinfulness of our nation.

22 Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. There is a lot of meaning in this Verse 22, because the scripture talks about a righteous, a faithful remnant. Judah was unfaithful, they were disobedient and disrespectful of the Lord, but there was a remnant, a small group, a faithful group.

We live in a country where we love the word majority, but that's not what Jeremiah is talking about. He's saying there are still a few who have faith in the Lord. They are the remnant. We are not all consumed. There are some left who know the strength of the Lord's hand. We know and we've heard it when our sons would ask us why we follow all the laws and decrees of the Lord. We were slaves; we were in bondage and He delivered us from slavery. His compassions never fail; they are new every morning.

We are trying to teach our kids this. No matter what happens today, tomorrow is a brand new day and we are going to spend today looking for evidence of his mercy. This gets fun. When you find evidence of his mercy, involve everyone you can: your family, your friends, and complete and total strangers.

Have you ever brought a message of hope to someone who was struggling? Have you ever brought a message of hope to someone who had a bad attitude in the store? I did. I want a look at them and they are all dressed like Christmas, but there were some bad moods out there this Christmas. I don't know if you met them and I know they are stressed, but I want to look at them and go "You're an angry little elf; you shouldn't be that way. You should be more happy". But, instead, you can speak blessing over that person.

23 They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 24 I say to myself... Does anybody here talk to themselves? You have a verse now. This is your go-to verse if you want to talk to yourself. The Prophet Jeremiah is talking to himself. "***The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.***" The word *wait* there is where we get the word *hope*. Hope is waiting. One commentator puts it this way: *It's a waiting attitude*. It's waiting upon the Lord. This is important because what are you saying to yourself all day long? We have words for it. We can use the word *focus*. You can use the word *meditation*. You meditate on something. What do you say to yourself all day long? Eventually, what you say to yourself all day long, you believe, and then the rest of your life flows out of that.

So your sitting in here and your saying "I'm worthless." Maybe it wasn't you that started that message in your heart. Maybe it was a parent. Maybe it starting as simple as a parent saying, "We never really wanted you; you were an accident. We didn't mean to have you. Sometimes I regret the day you were born." Then you begin to develop these messages from the time you are very small, but now, every day, you focus on this.

I have a friend who I'm trying to tell him "You were made for more than this." He never graduated high school. I'm trying to encourage him to get his GED, get going, and make this happen. Somewhere along the line... I'm trying to find out who the family member is that told him "You can't do it." No one's ever been in his life to tell him "Yeah, you can. You can come up out of this mess that you're in."

He makes a lower level of income and I believe he has enough smarts to make a higher level of income, but he doesn't believe he can make a higher level of income and until he believes that, he not going to go out looking for something. The problem is you sit at home all day long and you tell yourself "I'm not worth it. I'm no good."

Jeremiah is saying ***I say to myself "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him."*** Lord, I can't make sense of all this mess, but I know you. Great is your faithfulness. Your mercies are new every morning. I'm going to wait. Show me something today. When I go to bed tonight and I didn't... Okay, show me something tomorrow. When I get up this morning, show me something again today. I want to see evidence of your faithfulness. When you begin thinking about it and you begin looking for it, you find it. You're reminded of it.

My friend, Margaret Feinberg calls this "the sacred echo." I've talked about this a lot. You begin thinking and meditating upon the Lord's word and you begin studying and your amazed how things pop out at you. You read something in quiet time that you have in the morning and a verse pops out at you. You begin thinking about that verse or meditating on it. You go over to your parents' house and their cat calendar has that verse on it. That's the sacred echo. You see it and you're amazed.

You see somebody with a bumper sticker. The Lord can speak through cars, but... Or, you'll meet a friend and the friend will say, "Do you know what I was thinking about this week?" And without even talking to you, without seeing anything that you've shared about it, he begins talking to you about something he's been finding interesting in the word and you're like "No way! I heard that exact same thing! I saw that exact same thing!"

Do you know why you saw it? It's because you were looking for it. Your eyes were open and you weren't sitting at home watching Fox News. Because you're watching Fox News and guess what? It will only take one presidential candidate tomorrow to change the entire tone of our nation and get you thinking about something tomorrow that you didn't think about today. I'm not mentioning names, but Donald Trump is going to share something tomorrow that some of you go "I haven't thought of that!" And then you're going to spend the rest of the day thinking about it. And then guess what? The poll that comes out next week will be entirely different from the poll I read this week.

It's what you think about all the time. It's what you focus on. If you are focused on your circumstances and if you are focused on how bad life is and how wrong it was for that person to divorce you, how wrong it was for the bank to take your house, how wrong it was for your boss to fire you... If you spent all of your time focusing on that... and some of you hate your last boss and you haven't been effective in another job because of it. You sit around all day thinking about how evil that man is. She was horrible to work for. I'll never work for another lady like that. Your mind goes there and you live in despair, frustration, and bitterness, and resentment sets in. So this book now pivots.

25 The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him... This is different from the first 18 verses. I don't know if you've picked that up. This is very different from the first part of this chapter. **26 ...it is good to wait quietly (on Facebook) for the salvation of the Lord.** This is the NIV, but I think what I just quoted is in The Message. But this is interesting. We are going to end with Verse 27 today.

27 It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young. Yoke is like a burden, the weight of something. It's good for you to have this weight upon your shoulders while you're young. Some commentators say it has nothing to do with age and everything to do with vitality. It's the spirit of "I've got energy in me; what am I going to do with this energy?" What Jeremiah is saying here is that some of the lessons we are talking about this morning... Young people, please hear me. They are best learned young. They are best learned while you have the energy to do something with them.

That's because as you grow older, you lose energy, and all the old people said... Amen. They are very open in this church about telling you that. In about 40 minutes, they're going to be slurping soup at Cracker Barrel because they don't have the energy to chew. That's a true story. You wonder why the old people love soups on buffets? It's because it's less work than what you're going to do. Ecclesiastes 12 talks about that. As you grow old, you have diminished appetite. When you grow older, the affliction weighs on you and he's just saying when you're young, you can bear that yoke, you can learn from it, and it will change the course of your life when you truly understand the faithfulness of God and you keep your focus on him.

So here's summing up Verses 21 through 27.

Hope comes from meditating on the character of God, not my circumstances.

Some of your circumstances you may be able to change. If you hate being unemployed, get a job. You could probably change that circumstance tomorrow. Some of you are in a struggling marriage. That's a circumstance you may not be able to change today, but maybe you will. You could spend all of your time focusing on the circumstance and what you are going to do or you can meditate and spend your time focusing on the character and the goodness and the faithfulness of Almighty God.

Now I'm not giving up on our nation. Some of you gave up on it a long time ago. I asked this question to my parents and in-laws at Christmas because you know you have to keep the holidays interesting. It gets a little slow sometimes. When there is a lull in conversation, I bring up something political just to wake them all up and get them all going again. I asked this question and I'm going to ask it to you just because it's fun. What if next month... Just for one month. I'm not talking about the whole year, but for one month, the month of January, the government said there would be no social security checks in the mailbox for one month. I'm just kind of looking around. Some of you are like "No way." Don Bevins, how would you do back there? Don's going "No way, we want that retirement."

I just wonder what would happen if some of the things we've come to count on... Because some of us are just like "I'm just going to ride this out." I meet senior adults... I hate to pick on the old people, but here we go. I feel sometimes when I talk to you, you have no hope for the future. And do you know what I sense in you in the conversations that I have with you? You're just going to ride this thing out until you die. That's a little depressing for me. I'm just going to be really honest with you. I don't think that's the message you want to give your grandchildren: "It's too hard. So long as I keep getting my check once a month and can live out until the end and so long as there is enough money to get me paid until I'm dead, I'm good." You need a bigger picture than that. That's a pretty limited worldview and it's pretty sad and it's pretty full of despair.

One dad at Family Kamp said... This is such a great quote. He said, "Really, all the news has become today is waking up and turning it on to figure out what you should be outraged about today." Then that news cycle gets in your head and you go to work and you think about it all day long. You don't have a sacred echo going on in your life; you're talking to your co-workers about what you heard someone say and then you tweet about every negative thing. Then by the time you get home, you're a bucket of sunshine.

Instead, we turn from our circumstances... I clearly understand the sinfulness of our nation. I don't spend my days focusing on it though. I spend my days with an attitude of waiting upon the Lord. My prayer is simply "Lord, do whatever you have to do to teach us. Do whatever you have to do to wake us up." I think this is the hard part for Christians. We understand grieving. Mourning a death, as we read about in 1 Thessalonians 4 which we studied about last month, we understand because every human mourns, every human grieves. But there are really only two ways to grieve. You can grieve with hope or you can grieve without hope. Christians often think either you grieve or you hope. We need to be reminded that grief and hope are often travel companions. I go with both of these today. I'm grieving

over the sinfulness of my nation and yet I have great hope. Where is my hope? It's not in horses or chariots; it's in the name of the Lord our God. He is our hope. He is our hope and we stay faithful with that. It's not like today is a day of hope and tomorrows a day of grief... No, I want to be emotionally healthy and part of being emotionally healthy is being able to grieve and hope all at the same time.

Here's what the Lord's faithfulness has taught me. Here's what his word says about his faithfulness. This is why we sing about his faithfulness. I don't want you to leave here today with just a little bit of hope. I don't want you to be like "Okay, so we just say the name of Jesus, profess faith in Jesus, we go home, we watch Fox and see the news cycle repeated, and we're going to try to... Ted, just give me enough hope to get through the next week."

I don't want you leave with a little hope. Who wants a little bit of hope? I don't want a little bit of hope. That's like saying I want a little bit of eggnog. I don't want a little bit of eggnog. I want overflowing. We love the word overflowing. This is Romans 15: 13. ***May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*** Not your elected leaders, not you, not your will and the will of those in our party, not our economy, but in him so that you may overflow with hope. That's what we want. Overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. We don't want a little hope; we want a lot of hope.

In the midst of all the chaos we are heading into in 2016, be very careful where you place your hope. If you hope is in your home equity recovering and you live in Branson... they tell me five years, but I don't know. If it's in the economy, if it's in the strength of our military... and we are grateful for our military and the safety we have because of them, but as strong as our military is, my hope is still in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. With that, I'm going to ask you to pray with me as we close out 2015 and head into 2016.

Father, we are grateful for your faithfulness. We rely on your faithfulness. We wait upon your faithfulness. We have hope in you and not in us. May our hope never be in us. May our hope never be in what we think is right for that leads to destruction. Our hope is in you. I pray for the one who has lost a job or a home because of it. I pray that in the middle of that circumstance today, they will have hope in the name of Jesus.

For the one in the difficult relationship right now and they are estranged from their mom and dad or son or daughter... in the midst of that, as they grieve that broken and hurting relationship, I pray that they would have hope in the name of Jesus.

For the one who is feeling the weight of our nation and the sinfulness of our leaders choosing to do what is right in their eyes rather than what it right in your eyes, may they hope in the name of Jesus today. Some trust in horses and chariots, but we will trust in the name of the Lord our God. We place our faith in you and we are grateful for our time.

I ask for a blessing on 2016 that our thinking will be different, that we will have a great expectation upon you and what you are able to do in our lives, that every day when we get up this new year, we will have a great waiting attitude that is looking for mercies new every day.

I pray that we would start looking for them and when we find them, we celebrate them. Help the one right now father who is in despair that today, even though their circumstances may not change, they would move from a place of despair to a place of hope because of the substitutionary and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross for us.

It is in the name of Jesus that everyone agreed and said... Amen.