

Sermon Transcript from September 4th, 2016 Hope Pastor Bethany Allen, Bridgetown Church

If you're new to Bridgetown or you're visiting tonight, we've been in a series called "Creative Minority" or "Becoming a Creative Minority." It's becoming, and it has been – at least to us on staff and those of us in leadership – more and more increasingly clear that we, as people who follow Jesus, as people who follow His teachings, are becoming the minority. The minority in the world at large, particularly in Portland. And I think maybe a few of you would agree. So, we have been walking through the book of Daniel and we're wrapping it up. We've got one more week. But, we're going to sit in it tonight, learn some more, hopefully, and hear from the Holy Spirit.

But, we along with Daniel, are asking questions about how to be faithful, how to live in a time and a place like we're living in now and to do it really well, to do it as the people of God who are thoughtful and intelligent, who are well spoken and also who are living in line with the heart and the teachings of Jesus. So, we've been sitting in that. And, if you have missed any of the podcasts or any of the teachings, I am going to exhort you now, with all of my pastor of announcement authority, and I am going to say to you that you should go and check them out. We're going to conclude the series next week. But, if you missed any of them, you've got to listen to them. This is probably – and this is probably because I'm teaching for the first time. Whatever. But, I'm really stoked about this series. I think it's my favorite series that we have done at Bridgetown. I've been here a long time. So, that's saying something. It's incredible. So, make sure you check it out if you haven't yet.

All that to say, we're going to be in the Bible tonight. So, if you have one, I'd love for you to turn to Daniel 12. This is the last chapter in the book. And some of y'all are like, "Amen. Yes. Good." Which is good. I was kind of like that too. Particularly when we read through it. Do you remember that, when we read through it together? Mhmm. Yes. I know. Mhmm. Y'all all read through it. I believe that with all your faithfulness.

I actually think that the book of Daniel is awesome. I just did a Beth Moore study. If you don't know who she is, she's like this old southern woman who talks about things of the Bible. She's actually really awesome. But, she's almost, sometimes, unbearable to listen to. So, that being said, it was actually really good. But, I feel really equipped to teach this. So, I think the book of Daniel is actually really awesome. But, it's definitely not lacking its weirdness. You know? It's kind of weird like Portland. There's stuff in here we're like, "Mhmm. Flip. Mhmm."

You know? We're kind of reading it going, "This is a little bit weird." But the reason it's weird, largely the second half of the book, why it's so weird, is because it's something that scholars call "apocalyptic literature." This is literature – it is what it sounds like. Apocalypse. Apocalyptic. Are you tracking with me? It's pretty easy. It's like the end of the world. There's no zombies, but it's about the end of the times or the end of the world or what's going to happen at the last days or the end of days. So, that's what the book is about.

And there's visions that talk all about those things. I think John Mark talked a little bit about it last week. But, that's why this book is super weird. Now, before we read – we're going to read this chapter together – there's a few things that I want to note. First, we are actually going to be stepping into a vision. So, strap your belts on. Here we go. This is going to be really fun. We're strapping ourselves in because we're in the last part of Daniel's third vision. Daniel was given three visions over the time of this book and this is his third and what we believe to be his final vision or the final vision that we, at least, have a record of that Daniel had in his entire life.

So, it's significant. There's important stuff to listen to in this text tonight. Now, if you want to go back and reread about the visions and all of that, you can do so starting in Daniel 7. And I know for sure that Gerald would love to explain all the prophecy to you. Yeah. We talked about that. So, he's right on it. It's strange, but he knows all the answers. So, we're going to step in to Daniel getting his final message from an angel of the Lord or a heavenly being. We're going to see what he has to say.

Now, we are going to zip through the text tonight. Because, if you haven't noticed, I like to shout and talk a lot at the end. So, I've been exhorted strongly to zip through the text. I'm not going to do it injustice, but I promise to try to move a little bit quickly. So, I'm going to ask that you keep up with me. I'm kind of a fast talker. So, I think you can do it. But, we're

going to read through it. First four verses first and then the second half we'll check in with in just a moment. So, let's read together.

Daniel 12:1-4: **"At that time Michael,"** – so, this is the angel speaking, if you didn't know. The angel's speaking to Daniel.

"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of the nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge."

Now, I've got to be honest. This is not an easy text to jump into, nor is it the funnest text I've ever taught in my entire life. But, I'm going to blow your mind. So, stay with me. The first part of this text is about the prophecy or about the future of the people of God. And the people of God in the next pertain to not only Israel – so, right, we're stepping in and we're talking about Israel. Daniel is a Jew. He's an Israelite. He's in exile. He's in Babylon. Right? So, he's saying, "We're going to talk about the future of your people."

But, the angel isn't just speaking about the Israeli people, he's speaking further, he's speaking into the times after Messiah has come. We've already heard a reference to the Son of Man, which would be, as we know, Jesus, who's going to come and bring and inaugurate a new kingdom, which we're totally into. Right? So, he's going on and he's speaking to them and he's saying, "Hey, this is to you, the people of Israel, and it's also to those who will come later; those post-Messiah coming."

So, here is a prophesy about the end. He talks about this dude Michael, and there's not a lot you need to know about that except for he's an arch angel who is super tough and he is taking care of and protecting the people of Israel. So, he's like, "Michael's going to stand up and he's going to get his, I don't know, spiritual guns ready. But, in a passivity kind of way."

Right? Yeah. So, he's going to go on. So, Michael rises up and this is just a queue to us to lean in to listen. He says, "Hey, listen, Daniel. Things are going to get really bad."

In fact, you know how – and Gerald was just talking about it – the people of Israel have this weird story where they're constantly in bondage to somebody or something, right? He's like, so, remember how Israel was bebopping along and they got captured by the Pharaoh people – the Egyptians, that's their name – and they were put in slavery and that was really bad and then they got released out of slavery and they were moving trying to find this land of milk and honey or the promised land and that took a really long time and then it took more of a long time because they were terrible and all this bad stuff was happening? So, that was really bad for the people of Israel. Not to mention, you guys had a lot of kings and a lot of bad stuff happened. And now, here you are living your consequence out in Babylon. Because, once again, you have not trusted in me.

He's saying, "You know how bad all that is and how you were lifted from your home like a refugee and plunged into a totally different culture where you don't know anything – the language, the people. You know how bad all that was? It's going to get worse."

So, he just said that. He's like, "It's going to get bad. There's going to be a time coming where it's even worse. A greater distress," he says.

And here's the thing: that can sound really terrible to most of us. But, the beauty is that at some point, something has to give. Right? So, when we find ourselves in the text, we see there's like, "These people are in distress. That's terrible." And what the angel is saying isn't just that it's all going to get worse, so buckle up because it's going to be bad again. He's saying there's an end point to this. That the suffering that your people have experience, not only your people but the people to come, when the times get really, really bad, there will be an end point. There's a culmination of all things and something has to be done.

So, the author is calling our attention to that. Something has to get done. Something has

to annihilate this weird, cyclical cycle once and for all. So, we read on and he says, "Listen, there's going to be all this bad stuff that's going to happen. But, at that time, your people, everyone whose name is written in the book, will be delivered."

So, this is our first glimpse of hope in the text. He's saying, "Listen, it's going to come to an end. All this bad stuff will come to a head. And hear me when I say, Daniel, your people will be delivered."

And this, again, is another moment where we're pausing and going, "So, there's hope." But, what does deliverance look like? Because they know deliverance, right? They were delivered out of Pharaoh's hand out of the promised land. They were delivered over to the Babylonians and to the people who've oppressed them. They get the word "deliverance." Here, there's a deeper meaning. Here, he's saying, "You will be delivered."

And it's a finality kind of word. It's a once and for all kind of language. So, that's exciting. Daniel 12:2. Just look real quick.

"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, and some to shame and contempt."

So, this is really cool because you and I naturally just wouldn't read this into the text. But, let me tell you something I know that's really smart that I actually heard from Tim Mackie, who's a pastor somewhere else. So, anyway, I learned it from him. But, this is really cool. It's like this cool nod. He said, "Multitudes who are asleep in the dust."

Isn't that weird language? What's he saying? He's saying, "All those people who have died before you," – and how do we know that it's about all the dead people? Well, if we were Hebrew people, if we were reading this as faithful Jewish people, we would know this was a nod to Genesis 3 where Adam and Eve took power into their own hands, sinned against God, declared that they could determine good or evil. And this is where death entered the scene. And, in Genesis 3, this is the consequence: the Lord says to Adam and Eve, "From dust you are and to dust you will return."

So here, this language of dust, for the Hebrew, as person who knows this, is people who have died. So he says, "All the dead people, multitudes," which is just like this language or like, "A billion, squillion people who are dead in the ground, all those people who are asleep will awake."

So we know that this is one of the first nods in the Old Testament to the resurrection, a physical, bodily resurrection from the dead. So we see that and we're like, "Wow."

So he's saying, "Not only will you be delivered, but you will be resurrected. You will be brought back to life and all the people who have followed the way of Yahweh or the way of the Messiah Jesus will be raised to new life."

So, there's this huge, huge promise. So, Daniel's taking all of it in. The guy's still taking to him and it's pretty exciting. He said, "Some are going to be raised to everlasting life, which is life forever with God. Some, however, will be raised to everlasting contempt and shame, which basically means, if you translated it in Hebrew, separation from God into judgment."

So, he's saying, "There's a time coming at the end. All this bad stuff is going to come to a head. And listen, the promises of the people of God will be delivered. And, on top of that, there will be a resurrection from the dead. And, at the resurrection from the dead is where I declare either those who are in Christ will live forever or those who are not will not live with Him forever. They'll be separated from God."

So, Daniel's taking all this in like, "That, again, sounds good. But, not super awesome."

He goes on to say, and there's this great reference to the wise. And we've been talking about wisdom throughout this book, particularly as we look at Daniel's life and at the wise, those who are radiant with the truth. These are the people who shine like brightness. There's this kind of reflection back to Daniel that those who are wise, those people who walk in the truth, who walk in the way of Yahweh, the way of the Messiah Jesus, those people will shine like the stars. And he's not super lyrical here in trying to queue up a jazz song. He's

saying, "These people are who we will deem worthy. These are people of influence. These are people with great value."

He's reiterating that to Daniel. Something we already know. Something we've been learning week after week. But, here he is saying it once again. And, in Daniel 12:4, he says, "Daniel, roll up that scroll and seal it until the time comes."

So he's saying, "Listen, that's it."

That's the way of him saying like, "And the vision is over."

And Daniel's like, "Okay. Great. This is good."

And the text is about to turn. So, he said all these things to Daniel. He said a lot of stuff. If you go back and read, there's a ton of stuff. But, in this last chapter he's saying, "This is all going to happen to the people. This is all coming. This will come to pass."

So, the camera kind of shifts over to Daniel in Daniel 12:5. Let me read it for us.

"Then I, Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on the bank of the river and one on the opposite bank. One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, 'How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?'

"The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, 'It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.'

"I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, 'My Lord, what will be the outcome of all of this?'

"He replied, 'Go your way, Daniel, because the words are rolled up and sealed until the end of time. Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.

"From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.

"As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will be raised to receive your allotted inheritance."

Now, that's a lot of information that I'm not going to share with you about this. But, there's a ton of prophecy about times and dates and all of those things that are important and there for you study in your free time. But, what's really important is that the camera has now turned to Daniel and Daniel could see opportunity to respond to these angelic beings. And there's two figures that join, now, the vision. One, the man clothed in linen, the one that the text references, a lot of scholars believe is actually Jesus before He had His physical body. That's something we call a theophany. But, there's no actual proof that we know it was Him. But, it could have been and this is the guy who was speaking who has a lot of authority. And what we do know, as we read this text, is that we need to pay attention to Him, because what He's saying is really important for Daniel to get.

So the figure asks and Daniel gets to witness these things and he says, "How long before these things will happen?"

And the response is a little bit frustrating. I can imagine Daniel, when the being is talking to the other being and he's like, "How long before these astonishing things happen?" that Daniel was going, "Yeah. Mhmm. How long? Because, I've been here in Babylon for quite a while. There's been a few things that have gone down and I'm ready. When are these things going to happen?"

Because, Daniel's life was no small thing. He had seen heartache and hardship and frustration and suffering in a way that most people have not. He was transferred out of his home into this foreign place, groomed and became pedigree. And granted, he had a

lot of good things going for him, but a lot of opportunities to die. And I'm sure there was a part of Daniel where he was going, "Excuse me. I'm wondering how long before these astonishing things happen, because I'm tired. I know the suffering of my people and I know the suffering I've experienced."

So, it was funny because the man with the linen, he says, "Yeah, but it's going to happen." He just reiterates. "It's going to happen for a time, a times and half a time."

And I'm sure Daniel was like, "Huh?"

Much like you and I. Which is why he said, "Huh?"

He said, "I hear you, but I certainly don't understand you."

Anybody been there? Sometimes with the Lord I'm like, "I'm sorry. I didn't hear You. What did You say? I heard You, but I could not understand. Did you...? Okay."

So, sometimes that happens. So he speaks up. Finally, we hear from Daniel and he says, "What will the outcome be?"

I don't know. I can't frame his emotional state at that point. I can't frame what he would've been feeling or thinking, but I cannot imagine the desperation in his voice saying, "What will the outcome be? How long and how does this end?"

It's so weird, because the heavenly being, to me, responds super weird. He responds oddly. He just says, "Go your way, Daniel."

Which, in other words, that translates to us, "Keep doing what you've been doing. Continue to be faithful. Continue to live the way I've asked you to live. Continue to trust that at the right time all of these things will be fulfilled."

The final piece of the text, this is the grand finale, if you will, the angel says a few more encouraging things to Daniel. First being that he's going to die. So, he's like, "Hey, Daniel. You are going to rest."

Which, in our terms, means you are going to die. And Daniel knew and we could read from the text that that meant Daniel was going to die. It meant he was going to die in Babylon. It meant that he was going to live out the rest of his days in exile and he wouldn't get to go home. Now, to you or me, that doesn't seem like a big deal. But, in Hebrew culture, in Jewish culture, it is a huge deal to be buried in your home town. So, not only does the angel say, "You're going to die," but he also says, "And you're not going home. You won't go home via death and you won't go home alive."

And for Daniel, I mean, I just can't even imagine. Just a big 'ol sucker punch, right? "What?" And he goes on, thankfully, and has a few more encouraging things. Actually, I think, one of the most encouraging things. He says, "You're going to die, but listen to me: you will be raised and then you will see the fulfillment of every promise I have spoken. You will see it in your eyes, in your breathing, living body. Daniel, you will see what has been promised. All the things that we've been talking about, all the things we've been reading about with the weird statues and the kingdoms that would come to pass, you will see and know, not in part, but in full."

And this, my friends, is hope. This is where it's starting to seep into the text. Now, if I'm totally honest with you, I was hoping deep down in my heart for a little bit more glitz and glam at the end of the book. You know? Like, I can't remember the first time exactly that I read it, but I just remember always stopping at the lions' den and I was like, "Yeah, that's good. The den. He didn't die. Wonderful."

It was like, once we get to chapter 7, we're like, "Okay. I'm going to leave that one for Gerald and for John Mark and for people who care about that." Or, if you grew up like I grew up, they were like, "Watch the video and it's about the end times and how you're all wearing white and eating mush."

It's really weird. Anyway, we were doing that. So, for me, I was really hoping that it would end a little bit more robust. And even when they assigned me the text I was like, "Good."

"I'm going to land this plane. I'm going to land it hard. You know? For the Kingdom of God. For God's glory."

So, I was hoping for that. You know? This is Daniel. This is the guy who hung out with some of the most historic, remarkable kings in the history of the world. Like, no joke. He's hanging out. He's their right hand man. He's their advisor. He's interpreting their weird dreams. This is the guy who sat in the lions' den with real big lions. I mean, we think we're like reading the story books to our kid, but, legitimately, like, "Rawr." Like, could've eaten your whole, entire body in a moment. Hung out, gets lifted out and then is like, "Hey, what's up?"

You know? I mean, this is awesome. This is Daniel. He sat there and didn't die. This is the guy who, over and over again – the Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, he could've been a part of that. He could've been killed at that point. He could've been killed at any moment in time. And yet, he wasn't. And, we've got to mention it, he also saw the future of the world as well as a few heavenly beings in his lifetime. More than I can say for myself or others. And that's a pretty big deal. So, here I am looking and I'm like, "Daniel's this faithful guy. He's pretty remarkable. And this is it. You're going to die. But, you're going to come back to life. So..."

I mean, I was like, "This guy should get a crown or something. A parting gift or some kind of thing. Or even, it sounds so silly, but to have his body buried back in Jerusalem would be a really nice thing. It's not that big of a deal, or I think it wouldn't be."

And that's what's significant about tonight's text. I know it's like a lot of weird information. But, in Daniel 12, we're joining Daniel, not only at the end of the book, but at the end of his life. Scholars believe he was somewhere between 80 and 90 when he received this final vision. It's always baffling to me that he doesn't get to see the fulfillment of these things that he has worked hard for; he's been faithful in. That he has led by example, that he has demonstrated to the people of Israel. That he, Daniel, this one raised with authority and with influence, doesn't even get to see the reward.

So, I had to ask myself – and maybe you're asking yourself or maybe I'm just implying that you should ask yourself – "Is this really it? Is this how the whole thing ends?"

And I'm not talking just about the book, but I'm talking about for the people of God. Because, if I'm being honest, this is a little bit lackluster for me. I like the finale, I like a big show, I like some dresses and some pearl earrings. I like something big. Like, something bigger. And yet, this is it. And if this is how the whole thing ends, then we have to ask ourselves, "What hope is there from Daniel's point of view?"

I mean, can you imagine being Daniel? You know how the whole thing's going to go down over the next umpteen years. He's the guy who knows for certain. He knows the future and the prognosis of the people of God and it's not good. He knows that suffering is come. More suffering than what they've already endured. He knows that more exile, if you will, is coming for the people of God. He knows that it's going to get far worse before it gets far better. So, my question, this question I've been asking myself, "What in the world would move this man forward? What in the world would give him hope?"

And I think we've all experienced things like this, right, in our own lives? I think about men or women who are working really hard to get that promotion. They're showing a ton of integrity. They're staying late. They're going the extra mile. And yet, they see the promotion pass them by only to go to someone who's a little bit more corrupt or not faithful or hasn't been that good of an employee, and disappointment ensues. It's like, "What good was that? What good was there in having integrity and being faithful and all these things that I'm called to do? What good is that?"

Or maybe it's for the people who wait in the bathroom and have been praying and fasting and seeking the Lord, hoping that this time they're going to see a pink line on that little weird wand after they wait for three minutes only to find out that once again they are not pregnant. And again, it's like, "I've been waiting. I've been seeking. I've been shaking. I've been having other people pray. I'm doing the things that I know I need to do. I'm being faithful. I'm reading the Word. I'm meeting with Gerald. Whatever. I'm doing all these things and it's just not happening."

And I think all of us, at some level, can relate. I've wondered what kind of hope would not only motivate Daniel, but thousands and thousands of Jews who would come after him, to move forward beyond their extraordinary cost. And we know that they have

continued to have great cost. We know that we encounter great cost. What would propel them to move forward beyond suffering, beyond disappointment, beyond piercing denial of their personal desires? And what would compel them to persevere and to do so with great resolve? What is it? Because, if I were Daniel, I would've been like, "Ugh. This? That's it? That's what you have for me? Ding, ding. Where's the bell or the knocker on this God gave me a vision thing. Like, something has to connect. I need a little bit more."

So, what keeps them going? What kept him going? What keeps us going? Why should we have hope? Why do we hope in the midst of exile, present and future? Because we're not different from the people of Israel. In fact, in our day and age, we're experiencing similar realities, right, to being in Babylon. Life is still happening. Sadness is still happening. Disappointment still ensues. So, we ask, "What hope do we have?"

In this series, we've talked a ton about the great cost of living as a creative minority. Week after week, John Mark and other teachers have worked hard to communicate that at the heart of living as a creative minority and at the heart and rooted deep into that place is a call to live faithfully to the way of Jesus, to live sacrificially to the way of Jesus, to live in a way that honors our King in every way, no matter the cost, even unto death.

And listen, the call is unapologetic and it is certain. And I don't know how it's hit you. I know it's hit me a lot of different ways. I know it's convicted me in a lot of ways of these small things, you know, that sneak in and try to steal things. But, there's one thing I would hate for you to miss out of this whole teaching, this whole series, that's easy to bypass. You can go on and go, "Gosh, there was such a call to live faithfully and to give up my secular music or whatever."

Anyway, that's a joke from the 90s. Anyway, I thought that would – that didn't land at all. Anyways, so, give up your whatever. I don't know. Your third drink or your second drink or whatever. And that's not a small thing. I'm not minimizing that. But, I know that you can just relate all this. You can look at this series and go, "Yeah. It was a call to be faithful to the hard things. To maybe not sleep with my boyfriend as much, or whatever."

And that's not what we're calling you to. That's not the only thing we're calling you to. Because, the other side to faithfulness, on the other side of this coin that demands your entire life, which is the call, by the way, of the disciples of Jesus. On the other side of this coin is something called "hope," and it is guaranteed. It's an inheritance thing. It's a true gift from the King and it exists in your reality whether you acknowledge it or not. Hope is defined as the absolute expectation of coming good, based on the character of God. Hope: the absolute expectation of the coming good, based on the very character of God.

It has been said by many that what you hope for shapes how you live. Which, if it's even partially true, we know that Daniel was a man who lived a life marked by hope. And while there are few of us who could perfectly relate to Daniel and his circumstance or the Jew's circumstance as exiles in Babylon, all of us, I would imagine, can relate to the need for hope. The need for hope. Particularly as we try to live faithful this side of Jesus coming again. As we try to live in a creative way, in a thoughtful way, in an intelligent way in Portland, Oregon in the year 2016. And maybe even beyond that.

Some of you just need plain old hope, because you've got none. Because some things have been crushed, some desires, some hopes, some petitions that you have prayed over and over and over and over and over again. Nothing's happening. Nothing moving forward. And you know what? You're like, "I'm done. I can't."

And you, tonight, just need hope. Now, hope, as we see it in the life of Daniel, I think, is marked by four things. And this is where you little note takers are going to love it. I'm going to give you some notes and they're going to be on the screen, which is awesome. But, before we do that, I want to say two things. Okay? Stay with me.

First, I want to say that hope, despite what culture tells us, despite what we're told over and over again, hope is not optimism. It's so easy for a ton of us, particularly people of God, to cling on to those weird phrases people throw at us when we're going through a gnarly time. And trust me, nothing makes me more annoyed than when people are jamming that stuff down my throat. Sometimes it's like left and right. Like, "God's going to be faithful, girl. He's got this."

And you're like, "Okay. Thank you."

It's hard. Or, "Girl, God is gonna make a way."

You know? And you're like, "That is good."

Or maybe it's "boy."

"Boy, man, He's going to come through."

I don't really know what boys say. "He's so tough."

I don't know why he has a southern accent, but whoever it is that's encouraging him does. Let me know his name when you find him. Okay. Yeah. It's so easy for us to mistake optimism for hope. And let me tell you what optimism is. Optimism thinks the best – it does. It's a glass half full kind of mentality. It's rooted, though, in itself and what it can think up and accomplish. Optimism thinks the best. But, it is rooted in its own ability. It's that weird Oprah crap. You know what I'm talking about? Where he's just like, "Think it and unlock it." I don't know what it's called. The book or the script. I don't know. If I'm offending you, you should be offended, because that stuff is garbage.

No, I'm serious. It is. But, you know what I'm talking about? "When you think it, it can happen. I'm sending you good vibes and good vibrations."

Whatever. And listen, I'm not trying to dishonor anybody, but I'm telling you that's not hope. That's a false hope. That's based on what it can accomplish or what you can accomplish in your own strength, and that is not what hope is. Hope lies in what we believe, rooted and dependent on and in another person to accomplish."

And the way they accomplish it is not based on what we can think up about what that thing is, but about what He can. Okay. So, let me say that again. Hope lies in what we believe, rooted and dependent on and in another person to accomplish. Not only what we can think up, but what He can. That's why it's better. That's why Jesus of Nazareth deserves all of our praise, He deserves all of our adoration and He deserves for us to place our hope in Him.

So, the other thing I want to say is this: what we hope for and hope in is vital to what we understand about the power and value of hope. A lot of us are living in the land of hope deferred. Which, by the way, the Scripture says, "Hope deferred..." – which means it's just been put off and put off and put off – "...makes the heart sick."

And I've been there. A lot of times. A lot. I'm there a lot. So, if you just bump into me I'm probably there. Right? Hope deferred makes the heart sick. And when our hearts get sick and we get disappointed or discouraged, that's when we start jamming our hope into other things and other people. In our marriage, in our kids, in what they can accomplish and what I'm going to accomplish and how I'm going to do it and where I'm going to do it and all that. And we start putting our value in what we hope for, which is the new car. Or hoping for a husband. "He's going to fix this."

I mean, he might. He might help. Right? We're putting our hope in the desire for a perfect spouse and we're putting our hope in the desire for the perfect dream job. "If only I could just get that job, then things would look different. If I put my hope in the American dream, if I put my hope in the things I think are good and give me life. It's about what I'm thinking up and about what I'm determining is good."

It's weird. Hope in the Scriptures calls us to place our faith and trust in God. To count on Him to deliver us, as the text says. And to do so through the resurrection of the dead like He's going to do that. Like, one day we're all going to wake up. We're all going to die. We're going to wake up and we're going to be awoken to a life that we could've never dreamed up. A greater and better reality. This is what propels us forward.

What we hope for isn't about what we want or about our personal satisfaction. Hope reflects the deepest heart and part of God. It's rooted in His desires for us, not our desires for our own life. And let me tell you, that messes you up. I am constantly disappointed in Him. Our daily conversations are like, "Bro, that is not what we talked about. You know? I

mean, you're like nine years late on some things. I love you, but you're late."

If we build Him into our expectations, we will certainly be disappointed. But if we, as the author of Hebrews says, fix our eyes, fix our hope on Him, circumstances and things change. My ability to trust Him and believe Him for more in the Kingdom of God and more for my life and the life of people I love changes. And that's what we're being called to. So, let's talk about what hope is and what we see in Daniel.

Hope is rooted in a person and a promise, not a circumstance. Right off the bat in verse 1 we read that the circumstances for the people of God, it's going to be really bad. But, Daniel was told – this was this moment of hope – that no matter what, deliverance is coming. It's a guarantee. And, if you did a little bit of work and you dug into the text like I did, you'd know that this word "deliverance" is actually projecting an image to the Hebrew reader of a woman who's about to give birth; a woman who's pregnant.

So, the deliverance, when you think of that word "deliverance" here in the text, you should imagine a woman who's like 38 weeks. Something ginormous. Like, almost ready to go. Not ginormous. You're beautiful. But, whatever. You know what I mean. Like, big. Ready to go. Ready to do this thing. Yeah.

So, that. That's the image. And the reason is, as the author's saying, just as certain as a woman will give birth – some of y'all are like, "I'm 42 weeks." Bless you. I mean, I don't know what's going on. But, we can pray for it. Right? If you're there, we want to pray for you. But, it's that thing, right? It's imminent. This baby is about to come. It will come. And, just as certain as a baby has to be born, it can't stay in there, so your deliverance is sure.

So, the call in the text is for us to look at the person and the promise, not the circumstances. Because, man, circumstances are pretty depressing and discouraging. You walk around here in the streets of Portland for five seconds – okay, like five minutes – and you just hang out outside for a little bit, you're going to be a little bit bummed out and discouraged. There's a lot of reasons to feel hopeless when we look around and see how the Kingdom has not yet come. It's easy to lose hope when we're looking at our waves; the waves of the storm. You've heard it like a bazillion times, but some of you need to hear it tonight. When you are looking at your circumstances, when you're going, "Look at all this garbage is happening. Look at how this is falling apart and how they're leaving and how they're not trustworthy. And, once again, I'm let down."

Over and over again. And you're not looking at the person of Jesus who is declaring over your life that you are a delivered individual. That you are a person who has a rescuer coming. That no matter what, there will be a day where He will vindicate and set things to right. When you're not looking at Him, you lose hope. And let me tell you something: lost hope is no hope at all. You don't have hope anymore? It's probably because you didn't have hope in the first place. Real hope fixes its eyes on the person of Jesus and the promise that He gives. And that's where we stay. That's how we move forward. Hope is that. It's in Him.

Next thing: hope requires patience. If you haven't picked up on it by now, Daniel was a pretty patient dude. I mean, he's walking through this incredibly long – seemingly long life. It felt like a seemingly long book that would be only 12 chapters. He's got this whole life going on and constantly I wonder if he's like, "If we go through this interpretation with Nebuchadnezzar, then things could really turn around. I mean, it seems like a pretty big deal. I'm interpreting this thing and it seems like that would give way to going back home or maybe just a tiny bit of favor."

Daniel, over and over again, I can't imagine that, in his humanity, he wasn't going like, "Hello? I mean, this is like the perfect moment for you to get us out of here."

You know? After nobody got crucified or murdered at the burning of the people ceremony? Remember that, when they were going to get burned up? It seems like that would've been the time God would've been like, "Now, go back to Jerusalem. Yeah. You did it."

And He didn't. And we laugh, but I relate to that. Because, oftentimes I'm like, "Hey, God? Listen, I have been doing this for a long time, okay? I am pretty faithful. If you haven't noticed, I'm doing really well. But, I'm really tired of praying the same prayer. Okay?"

I mean, this is me. I don't want to say I'm not. But, I'm going, "Don't you think this time? I mean, look at all this stuff I've done. Look at how I give my life up to follow you? Look at all the things I've sacrificed and laid down. I mean, man. I'm living here in Oregon. I don't

even know how. I'm just a baby. Help me, God."

I'm saying, "God, I've sacrificed so much for you."

And yet, I'm trying to barter with Him and say, "Can it end now? Please. We have prayed a thousand prayers over her body and she is still not healed. Where are you? Listen, we have done everything you've asked us to do. We've gotten prayer from the elders. We've done all this stuff. Where are you?"

Hope demands that you are patient. Hope needs the future in order to exist. Does that make sense? Hope needs the future in order to exist. Which means there will be waiting. That's how that translates. If there's a future thing happening, it means I've got to wait to get there. You know what I'm saying?

I was in line at Universal Studios this weekend. Yeah. You can be jealous right now. Because, the lines were about 10 minutes for each thing because there was a hurricane in Florida, but we didn't care. But, it makes me think of that, right? We're waiting. Yeah. That's what weird Floridians do. We're like, "Yeah. We're going to Universal. There's a hurricane."

Yeah. That's true. Come on. That's the secret. So, we're waiting in line waiting for this future thing to happen and some lines we were waiting 20 minutes, which was awful. But, the other lines we were waiting was 5 minutes. Right? The future demands that we hope for something. I was hoping I was going to get on the ride, on the Hulk, on these different rides. This is where patience has to play its part. Because, waiting is really hard. Not for lines at Universal, but waiting for your mom to come home is really hard. And I don't mean after school. I mean after seven years. Waiting for this thing, this baby you've been praying for over and over again for 10 years is a hard thing to do. And to be hopeful amidst it, waiting for the cancer to be gone, to be rid from our bodies, waiting for that moment is a hard thing to do. Waiting is hard. And this is where hope comes in. It demands that you have to wait.

Romans 8 tell us that if we wait for what we do not have, we wait for it patiently. What's he saying? He's saying waiting is a part of hoping. Waiting is a part of hoping. And listen, there's beauty in patience. As we wait, our dependence is declared. Our dependence that only God can do it. Our dependence that if He doesn't touch this life, if He doesn't reconcile all things to Himself, then it won't happen. And waiting, we often think, is wasted time, but it is not. Waiting is the place where God gives extraordinary gifts to His people of great proportions. And if we miss it, we miss the beauty of hope. I know it's annoying. I know it is so annoying to wait for something you've longed for. I'm doing it all the time. Constantly. I mean, I have a feeling, I mean, I like to think that, "Oh, once this hope is fulfilled or this hope is fulfilled, then things are going to change."

But listen, we're waiting and longing for something greater. And I believe as the people of God, we will always be waiting and hoping for the day that Jesus returns. So, my encouragement is for us to get used to it.

Third, hope demands that we look forward. Daniel, early on, was introduced to hope that looked forward. Early on he was thinking about home. Early on he was looking at the information from the prophet Jeremiah going, "How long and how many days and when did you say and how?"

He's constantly thinking about what is going to happen in the future days and, "What do you mean by that? What does this mean?"

He's asking questions. Eager to return. The crazy thing about Daniel is he didn't squander his time talking about what wasn't. He just kept looking forward to what was. And we even see at the end of his life – thankfully the writer didn't put, "And he put his hands on his hips and walked away."

Like, they didn't put that in there. He just said, "Listen, you will be raised."

And the book ends with this extraordinary promise. Hope demands that we look forward. Daniel longed for a different day. And a lot of us can relate to that, right? We long for the day when cancer's no more. We don't say that in a pithy way or a cute way. When we say it we actually think of someone. I think about my grandma, whose body was ravaged by cancer in a matter of eight months for no reason. She wasn't like, I don't know, jamming Diet Coke into her veins or anything weird. There's no judgment there. That was a joke because I

drink a lot of Diet Coke.

Anyway, we're waiting for the day when the addiction doesn't rule our house anymore or rule our life or rule our family. When that bottle of alcohol doesn't have more power and authority over us than Jesus. The day when we're finally reconciled to our mom or our dad; people we haven't been in touch with that we know we want to be. We long to be. The day we stand face to face with our spouse. The day that we meet our baby. There's a day coming for that we long for. And hope demands that we look forward to it. We expect and believe that all things are possible. We expect and believe God and His goodness towards us. Hope demands that you look forward, not backwards. You look backwards and you're going to get caught up in a mess of stuff. Jesus is saying, "Look forward."

Number four. Hope shows us our place in redemptive history. Hope has always marked the people of God and our world and our culture reiterates hopelessness. We stand out like a sore thumb, right? I come into a room and people are super bummed out about the election and I'm like, "Hey, what's up? Jesus is the King," and things change. No. It's not that easy. It's not that simple. I just got back from the South. Definitely not that easy. I was like, "Hey, y'all. But, we pledge our allegiance to God."

They're like, "What? No. Mm mm."

Hope is showing us that we actually play a part. It's really easy, when we're in a time of distress or disappointment or whatever, we start getting like this. You know what I'm talking about? And then we start getting like this. "It's about me, what happens to me and how things happen to me. I'm sorry that happened to you, but me. Can we talk about me a little bit? Because, really, I know this thing didn't happen for me and I'm still waiting for the thing about me. How are you? I don't really care. How about me?"

Right? Hope demands that we look other places, that we stand up and we look around and we go, "Wait a second," and we speak to one another in such a way that we believe that your hope, your faith and where you place it impacts not only Portland, but the entire universe. Your hope, your place in redemptive history, this thing that you long for, changes the game. Not only for you, but, just as we sang, "For the generations who will come after us."

And, if we don't live that way, then it will impact them another way. They will not believe Him to be who He is. God uses His people to demonstrate to the entire world. By the way, he's been doing this for a squillion years. He just, across the generations, He's like, "Hey, be the people of hope. Tell them why the election isn't everything. Right? Tell them why the end of the world doesn't happen when so and so doesn't get with so and so and whatever."

He's saying, "Look. You have a part to play in the Kingdom of God. Look around you. Take responsibility. Be people of hope to a world that is totally and utterly hopeless."

You know, I heard someone say, "It's so weird that we are..." – I don't know if I heard it here on stage. That would be weird. Anyway, if I did, just pretend I said it. But, these people were walking around people who were sick. It's like they have cancer and we're just like, "Hey, how are you doing?"

We're at the grocery store and we're exchanging money and doing whatever. And we have the cure. It's like I'm walking around with the cancer cure in my purse and I'm like, "Hey, man. How are you doing? Great. Good to see you."

And I can do that, but I've got the cure for the problem the world has. And so do you. We don't see death. In our reality, death is dead. Paul says we go from glory to glory. People out here are terrified about death and terrorism and all these things that are happening. We have the cure. You, me, we. We are the people of hope. We don't fear these things and we're not ruled by these things as people who are living faithfully. We know our place in exile.

There's this scholar, his name is Joel... Musvosvi. Your guess is as good as mine. No idea. There's probably someone in here who knows how to say it. So, come bless me afterwards. He says that one of the functions of biblical apocalyptic literature, all this weird stuff we've read, is to remind the remnant, to remind you, the people of God, of your unique and special place in God's plan. Surrounded by the enemy, the remnant or the people of God, may be in danger of relegating themselves, their function, their significance to the

role of insignificant, minor players of a local drama. But, the apocalyptic reminds them that they play a key role in a cosmic drama. Now, that's a lot of words. But, what he's saying is this: it's easy to discredit ourselves from this cosmic narrative. In fact, sometimes we prefer it. Sometimes I prefer it. Sometimes I'm like, "Please. I don't want to be in charge of impacting people like the way I think you're saying I am or responsible for."

But here, God's saying, "Listen, you are a vital part to my story. You, as the people of God living in exile and living faithfully, it matters in my entire narrative."

And one day, we will see in full what that means. Now listen, I know none of this is new to you guys and I know that the message of hope is one that we need to hear over and over again. If I'm totally honest, I was really annoyed that I had to teach this text. Not like in an overt way. Like, nobody actually knew. But, in my heart, with the Lord, I was wrestling a little bit about why I had to teach this text. Because, this past Summer, if I'm being totally frank with you, has been one of the most discouraging summers as a pastor I've ever had. And I've only been here on staff four years, but I've been loving the people of God for a lot longer. For like 15 years. In a jobish setting.

And I'm a half glass full kind of person. I'm super optimistic, I generally believe the best about anything. And that actually bodes well in my job. Right? Because, what I basically get to do is believe God in front of other people and for other people. That's all I do. I get to just say the things back to them that are true about God and true about them. It's really awesome. But, this summer has just been weird. Because, where I usually have words, like I'll sit down with Gerald or any of the boys, especially on a Monday, and I'll be like, "Blah blah blah blah."

I actually say words and I say stuff like, "God's really doing this cool thing," or, "You wouldn't believe how amazing it is," or whatever. I feel like this summer I've just kind of had the wind knocked out of me and I don't have words anymore. And I honestly haven't wanted to talk about what I've been seeing or what I've been experiencing as a pastor. But, what's so weird is that my job, no matter what, no matter what day I show up, demands that I'm an encourager. Every day, my job demands that I show up and say, "This is true about God. This is true about you and God."

And I'm never going to do the lying thing. I'm never going to be like, "God is super awesome."

It's just not in me. I don't know why. I mean, I'm sure I've got some of it. But, I don't like that particularly in what I do because I take it super seriously. But, it's so weird because every time I'd show up to a meeting this summer I'd call my mom and be like, "I can't. I have nothing left to give these people."

The stuff I saw this summer, the pain my women have encountered without any resolve, without any answer. I mean, they've been suffering and there's nothing I can do except plead with God and yet I see Him not responding and not acting the way I normally do. And, I mean, I was just plumb, I am plumb, I have been plumb out discouraged. I mean, just, "Where are You?"

And I'd show up to these meetings and be like, "Ugh."

And in the moment that I needed it most, I would say, "Listen, God is who He said He was," and I believed it. And I kept wondering, especially in light of this teaching, like, "What in the world was that?" You know? Because, what I'm looking at in people's circumstances in their life, I usually get to see things wrap up really nicely. Like, I get to see marriages put back together and people delivered from demonic power. I mean, stuff that's like super awesome. But, this summer I've had no resolve. All these people having terrible experiences with the enemy or with their family and I'm just like, "God, how long? I can't keep hoping. I don't know how to hope for them, which is what I love to do and which is what I'm build to do. God, how long?"

And it'd weird, you know? He's working with me and He's speaking to me and this teaching has been really helpful because He keeps reminding me over and over again that hope is not about my circumstances. It's going to require a ton of patience. It's going to demand that I look forward. Not only for myself, but for the people that I love. And hope is going to show that one day, in this whole cosmic journey that we're on with the Lord, one day it's going to prove to be a good gift. Not only to me, but to the Lord. And I'm just being reminded of that over and over again.

I think about Hebrews 11, which we can't talk about hope without talking about that. That's like this hall of fame, as people call it, for people who are really faithful to God who had a lot of hope. And I love that chapter because it talks about how there were a ton of people who never got to see what they had been promised. But, it's cool because it says they were people who didn't live for the present, but for the future. They didn't look at the things that were here, but they looked for a home that would be coming. And it says, "God was not ashamed to be their God."

That has really pierced me. God is not ashamed to be their God and I want that for us. I want Him to look at us and know that we're people full of faith, full of hope in Him and expecting in His good character to come and deliver.

Now, I know for some of you tonight – I just really feel like, at least, for some of you that this has been a hard season for you too and that we need hope. And I think the best thing to do when you need hope is to ask for it, although that's annoying. I just wish it could be doused on us, right? So tonight, I want us to do that. We're going to ask God to give us hope. And some of you are in the camp of hope deferred right now and you're wondering if you should keep asking or keep hoping. I think God needs to talk to you about that. Some of you have just no hope in general and you need the Lord to open up your heart and to tell you, maybe even show you, where your hope is placed and what you're hoping for.

Because, my friends, I speak out of a place of weakness, I speak out of a place of discouragement. I'm not coming in here like, "God is..." – and I know I was shouting a lot, because I believe all that. But, I'm speaking from a place of humility and of desperation, because I need Him to be who He has said He is and I want my hope to be centered on His character. Not on my circumstances, not where I find myself tonight, not where you find yourself tonight.

So, the prayer is that we would do that. We keep asking ourselves what kind of hope moves us forward. And, my friends, I believe fully that is the kind of hope that is guaranteed. And that's what we have.

Would you pray with me?