

The Moon is Always Round

01 March 2020

Psalm 89:1-8, 24-48

Pastor Alex Watlington

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
– CG Mission Statement*

Icebreaker: What song have you been singing in the car lately? Or in the shower. (Do people still do that?)

Worship: Read or sing through the words to the Hymn, Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus by Helen Howarth Lemmel

O soul are you weary and troubled?
No light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the Savior
And life more abundant and free

Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace

Through death into life everlasting
He passed, and we follow Him there
Over us sin no more hath dominion
For more than conquerors we are

And turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace

His word shall not fail you, He promised
Believe Him and all will be well
Then go to a world that is dying
His perfect salvation to tell

And turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace

Bible Passage & Guiding Question (*The following question is intended to help frame your discussion. Keep it in mind as you read the bible passage and review the sermon summary together.*)

Bible Passage: Psalm 89:1-8, 24-48

Guiding Question: How does the Cross of Christ help us to trust God when things are cloudy and we can't connect the dots of life?

Sermon Summary

Psalm 89 shares thoughtful insights into the depths of our pain and the struggle to find hope in the midst of it:

Stare Into the Promise (v3-4, 28-33) – When gripped by darkness, we are called to look outside ourselves to the love of God for hope and comfort. Though we may be inclined to rely on our strength of will in such times, only the light of our Lord will shine when all else fails. And as we look to Him we will see that He is:

Gracious: Our God's love is steadfast. He has sworn Himself to His people; wholly and irrevocably. Our impulse may be to "effort" our way into rekindling our love for God when He feels distant, but this misses the heart of the Gospel. It's never about our need to be more spiritual or better behaved. What we need most when God seems remote is to bathe in His unwavering, enduring love for us.

Permanent: Our Father's grace cannot lapse or run out. No matter how far we stray. No matter how poorly we measure up. God promises He will always welcome us home. He is a Father whose desire to shower His children with love never ceases. In Jesus, God is "forever" with His love.

Trust When It Is Cloudy (v38) – Knowing deeply that God's love for us is eternal – it's incredible. Life altering. Even so, there will be seasons where the Bible's promises feel hollow. Christianity does not exempt us from suffering or perplexity; in fact, it's normal to have seasons where we search for anything to be true while nothing feels like it could be. This is when we must hold fast to God's promises.

When the present is darkest, we must cling to truth: God is gracious, caring... and He is also wise. He knows what's best for us – infinitely better than we ever could. Trusting God's providence allows us to connect His promises to our confusing circumstances. Life might not make sense right now. But God loves us, He is good, and He cares for us. We see this in Jesus, and through Him we find the confidence to trust, even when life gives us no reason to.

Sing So That We Can Stare (v1) – If we are to turn our hearts toward God in difficult times, we have to practice and prepare now. To praise God when He seems to have left us means proclaiming and hearing the truth of His steadfast love today. Psalm 89 is a call to do this together – to sing of God's mercies, even when we don't feel them. We gather as a church – not because we feel like praising God – but to train our hearts for when we feel distant from anything that reminds us of His love. Just as we would continue to train our bodies (especially when we don't feel like it) if we want to get in better shape. And so we take to heart that we as a community are the support and encouragement needed by our brothers and sisters as they wander in the darkness... just as we will rely on them when we experience such times. This is how we press on – as believers, as a community, as a family.

Discussion Questions (*It's better to wrestle deeply with a few good questions than to gloss over many.*)

- "Stare into" the covenant promises of God in Psalm 89:3-4, 28-37. Can we earn more of this covenant love or un-earn any of it? Why or why not?
 - On what grounds are these promises not conditional and never negated?
 - Feel the emotions and think the thoughts of the psalmist as you read Psalm 89:1-2. Are your emotions and thoughts the same or contrary and why?
 - What can you do to better appreciate and trust the Lord's steadfast covenant love?
 - How does the phrase "the moon is always round" help us understand the doctrine of God's providential care and covenant love?
 - How does the Cross of Christ help us to trust God when things are cloudy and we can't connect the dots of life? Can you give an example?
 - What is the theme of Psalm 89:5-8? Have you ever praised the Lord like this? When and Why?
 - What might keep you from singing of God's greatness? Why?
 - Name the benefit of singing about God's steadfast love to others, in our church and community group? Why is our presence important?
 - Who do you know that you can "sing to" right now?
 - How will this Psalm influence your prayers and life going forward?
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What Can We Be Praying For?

Turn any insight you have from the sermon or discussion into a prayer.

Engage & Experience

Be intentional about speaking to those who are struggling with seeing God's everlasting love in ways that strengthen, encourage, and comfort them. Commit to saying at least one encouraging thing to another at church or in your community group during the coming week. Talk about it when you meet next.