

ANAHEIM COMMUNITY CONNECTION (ACC) for November 15, 2020

Our focus for worship today is: *Our Anchor of Hope*

I. **OPENING PRAYER:** Pray that we will see beyond our struggles today by waiting on the Lord and trusting in Him totally.

II. **COMMUNITY CONNECTION:**

Share what it means to hope in a person. What determines the level of trust we place in that person?
What is the difference in how we put our hope in spouse/family/friends vs. the Lord?

III. **CHRIST CONNECTION: PSALM 39:1-8**

A. THE SHREWDNESS OF MY WORDS IS NOT MY HOPE

¹ I said, "I will guard my ways That I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle While the wicked are in my presence."² I was mute and silent, I refrained even from good, And my sorrow grew worse. ³ My heart was hot within me, While I was musing the fire burned;

Psalm 39, though penned by David, was given to the director Jeduthun to be sung by a chorus of voices. While it is from a difficult and arduous experience, this is not a personal psalm but a corporate one. A song to be sung by the choir and heard by all in the assembly. It is a psalm that speaks of a hope that runs deeper and reaches higher than time or place. One that should echo in the hearts of all whose soul longs beyond the here and now.

Interestingly, the psalm begins with silence. Silence in the face of the taunts, accusations and lies from those who want to inflame and incite a defensive retort. Though we're unclear on the details of David's situation, the context suggests an experience of affliction and chastening under the discipline of God (as seen in v10-13). While he is suffering, those around him are likely "kicking him when he's down" with jeers and ridicule. With the external assault increasing, the internal pressure rises in David's heart. Instead of responding with anger, he resolves to hold his tongue. While he could have defended himself truthfully and shrewdly, he knew his response could also err towards anger, unkindness, and even belligerence. He understood the potential for sin in his own heart. Even under God's discipline, he desired not to sin and fall again. Therefore, he is defensive not towards the wicked but towards his own mouth. He uses words such as *guard* (2x), *refrain*, *muzzle* as to describe a posture of self-control and constraining his natural tendencies. If left unchecked, his words would come out as bites from a rabid dog meant to injure and maim. Still, his own effort and determination failed him as indicated in verse 3. Though he was silent externally, he was shouting internally. He struggled with the compulsion of his heart towards sin. The fuse was lit in his heart and he was ready to burst out. How does he release that pent-up pressure? Is it in a combustion of counters and comebacks? No, he directs it upwards towards heaven. He releases it in prayer, as we will see in the following verses starting in verse 4. The first words are not towards his enemies, but to his Master. He responds by beginning with one word – Lord. David knew his words would not vindicate him and, even if spoken, would likely fall on deaf ears. He would not get his peace or deliverance through his words. Rather than rush to his defense with his words, he turned to the Lord and waited for His word instead.

- Share two situations where you had a similar experience to that of David – where you felt the pressure to defend yourself against the attacks of others. Describe one instance when you responded in anger and another when you kept silent. Share the reasons for your choices and the consequences of those choices.

- How is your resolve in guarding the tongue? How can you hold your tongue "that I may not sin?" when you feel the fire burning in you?

- Why do we feel that our words can deliver us and rescue us from our situation? How does prayer factor into your responses?

What do our prayers reveal about who we place our hope in?

B. THE FULLNESS OF MY LIFE IS NOT MY HOPE

Then I spoke with my tongue: ⁴ "LORD, make me to know my end And what is the extent of my days; Let me know how transient I am. ⁵ "Behold, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; Surely every man at his best is a mere breath.

David first words to the Lord is a request in prayer: Help me grasp the brevity of his life and let its truth permeate my soul. He knew the fleetingness of life, but it didn't grip him fully. Perhaps it was intellectual but not yet experiential. *Make me know...Let me know* emphasizes the intensity in which he implores to God. He asks God to reveal this understanding so he will truly appreciate its reality. In the context of his circumstances, David may be feeling his suffering is arduous and prolonged. His mind may have wandered to visions of a better life, a fuller life or even a more comfortable life - away from the difficulties and trials. These thoughts may have been triggered by the words and enticements of the wicked as in verse 1. God answers David's prayer immediately as David sees the extent of his days in verse 5. *Behold* is our equivalent of "Look! See!" This is David pointing out to himself this reality. He sees his lifetime compared to the eternal God. It is not under David's control but is ordained by God as He is the one "made my days" and "know my end." Our lifetimes are a mere handbreadth – the shortest unit of measurement at the time as the width of four fingers or 3 inches – compared to interminable life in eternity. Compared to the everlasting God, we are negligible – a dot on a page, subatomic, unseen to the naked eye – virtually nothing at all. Those with the most successful lives with standing and position (*man at his best*) is a vapor that lasts for mere seconds and is gone. That is also how long hope will last if it is placed in the fullness of this temporal life. Mere seconds...and poof, it is gone.

- Do you think about the brevity of your life? How has the pandemic, the events of 2020, impacted how you see the fleetingness of life?
- Although we may comprehend the fleetingness of life, has it changed the way you spend your time, invest your resources, or the way you treat others?
- How would you define a full life? How is that kind of life impactful for eternity? Will you pray the prayer of David: "Make me know...Let me know how transient I am" on this day?

C. THE GREATNESS OF MY PASSIONS & POSSESSIONS IS *NOT* MY HOPE

⁶ *"Surely every man walks about as a phantom; Surely they make an uproar for nothing; He amasses riches and does not know who will gather them.*

David shifts from the focus from his life to expands the fleetingness of life to all humanity, as he introduced at the end of verse 5. He repeats *Surely* three times to emphasize its truth and universal application. This brevity and vanity of life applies to every human being. *Every man walks about as a phantom*. The image of a phantom or shadow highlights the futility even for those most respected, successful or accomplished. Their life is as anonymous as a shadow – nameless and vanishing. The expression *make an uproar* means to be boisterous and groan loudly for all to hear. It is to make a commotion to bring attention and focus. It depicts those that may cause a stir in their lifetime, even zealous for issues of their day, yet it ends up being for naught. All of that noise is for a breath. All of that perceived significance ends up exceedingly insignificant. Similarly, the heap and pile of wealth that no one will enjoy. Their possessions will be the possession of another, and the cycle will go on and on. All the passions and possessions for this life and in this life will all be forgotten. All like a shadow that will vanish in the blinding light of eternity.

- What are your passions in this life? Are you making an "uproar for nothing" or does it echo into eternity? How will you refocus your passions in light of eternity?
- While there are an abundance of relevant issues (political, social, financial, medical, etc.) that may be in the forefront of our nation's consciousness, how can we address these issues through the lens of the gospel and eternity?

D. THE PRESENCE OF MY LORD IS MY *ONLY* HOPE

⁷ *"And now, Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in You.* ⁸ *"Deliver me from all my transgressions; Make me not the reproach of the foolish.*

In the midst of difficulties and discipline, David has acknowledged the futility of his words, the fleetingness of this life and the insignificance of temporal passions and possessions. He comes to the turning point by asking a rhetorical question: *For what do I wait?* What am I trusting in? In words? In life? In the temporal? It is not in what, but in who. My hope is not in any one thing, but in one person— It is You, my Lord. Notice that he addresses God as *Lord*. This is different than the name YAWHEH when LORD is spelled in ALL CAPS. This is Lord as in a master and King. King David comes as a humble servant waiting in expectation for His King, the Lord. His hope is not just in what the Lord will do, but the very presence and person of the Lord. In other words, David is saying: "You are the one in whom I place my trust and hope. My hope is in Your character. In You will. In Your purposes. I trust it because I trust You. I have hope because I am in You."

David's posture is one that is depending and trusting on the grace that will be fulfilled and embodied in Christ. For it is only Christ that can *deliver me from all my transgressions*. Only by His work on the Cross and His resurrected life will David be saved from the penalty and power of sin. We will not be the *reproach*, or scorn, because Christ was scorned for our iniquities. He became our reproach in our place. Though he did not see the totality of the redemption plan, David points forward to Christ in his statement: My hope is in You. It is in the body and blood of Christ where our hope is found. It is through our communion with Christ in His death and resurrection that we have hope. It is being found *in Christ* through a righteousness that is not our own but given to us. There is no more searching for hope needed. It is not in us, in our words, our passions, or any one or thing this life. It is in the One who existed in eternity past and calls us, in His grace, to be with Him in eternity future. Our hope is in His presence for this life and for the life to come. Our hope is You, my Lord Jesus. It is You. For what do I wait?

- What is the difficult situation that you are experiencing currently? Is this difficulty from your sin or the sin of others? Is it a season of discipline that is guiding you to repentance? Whatever the circumstance, reorient your heart and thoughts and look to Christ again. Look to the justifying work on the Cross, the sanctifying work of His Word and the transforming power in the Holy Spirit. Trust in His Character, in His Promises, in His Purposes and in His Person.
- Share your struggles with your group and bring them all to the foot of the Cross.

1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-13

In the life of a believer there are many areas where you don't have specific biblical instructions as to what to do or not to do. These grey areas are causing grief in the community of faith. But fundamentally we are free in the Grace of Christ to be all we can be for God and for others. To balance our freedom in Christ and our responsibilities with others in our world, we make all our decisions based on 1) Love. 2) Relationship with God and 3) Build up one to another in the presence of God.

The situation at Corinth involves eating food that has been offered to idols. The decision process illustrates the value system of a believer: Knowing the truth, acting in the truth, but constantly aware of one's impact on the rest of the Body of Christ which is the Church, and all on the foundation of relationship with God and the call to pursue His glory.

- Share how our understanding of grace in Christ impacts how we make decisions regarding Christian freedom.
- What areas have you faced difficulties discerning the application Christian freedom? How do the principles from the passage help clarify your decision process?

IV. CARE CONNECTION:

Spend time praying for:

- Place our trust in Christ while facing difficulties and to live out the reality of His grace in our lives
- Unity in the church
- Care needs / concerns
- Unbelieving friends & family
- All affected by COVID virus & illnesses
- BCH & Sunday School Teachers