

This morning we are celebrating a milestone in the life of New Hope Community Church. I don't remember exactly when I met Max Brand, but I think it was around the time that God put into his heart to establish a new church body here in Navasota. I remember hearing him telling me that the name was to be "New Hope." That is not a whimsical thing to do. It can only succeed through the calling of a true pastor to lead. There must also be a congregation of believers that is called and organized to see the vision of leadership and to work in harness with the man God called to lead such a work.

New Hope is a great name for a work of God because life gets rough. We all need new hope all the time, don't we? The Prophet Jeremiah tells us that God's mercies are new every morning. That means that *every day we need God's mercies*, and He is there to give them to us when we feel like we cannot go on (and even when we don't know we need it). Most of us are aware of Jeremiah's lovely words telling us that the love of the Lord is steadfast and never ends. He says to us: <sup>22</sup> *The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;* <sup>23</sup> *they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.* <sup>24</sup> *"The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."* (Lamentations 3:22-24, ESV). We quote this verse often, but we seldom quote the twenty-one verses that come before those verses of hope. There are 21 verses that state trials, trouble, suffering, and feelings of abandonment beyond imagination.

Jeremiah lists woes that, frankly, are hard to listen to. He speaks of his flesh and skin wasting away, as well as a body of broken bones. He speaks of being walled in with chains and unable to escape. He speaks of shouting out to God and feeling like his prayers were shut out. He says that it seems like God has pounced on him like a lion and a bear tearing him into pieces. The misery reaches a crescendo when Jeremiah says:

<sup>14</sup> *I have become the laughingstock of all my people,<sup>[a]</sup>  
the object of their taunts all day long.*

<sup>15</sup> *He has filled me with bitterness;  
he has sated me with wormwood.*

<sup>16</sup> *He has made my teeth grind on gravel,  
and made me cower in ashes;*

<sup>17</sup> ***my soul is bereft of peace;  
I have forgotten what happiness is;***

<sup>18</sup> ***so I say, "My endurance has perished;  
so has my hope from the LORD."*** (Lamentations 3:14-18, ESV).

Those last two verses describe a helpless, hapless, hopeless state for any human being. Friends, do you ever feel like your endurance has perished, and you no longer are able to hope in the

Lord? Jeremiah describes a condition without peace with no memory of what happiness even is. And then he says, “My ability to go on has perished, and so has my hope from the Lord.”

David is a person that often stated that same kind of hopelessness. In Psalm 22:1-2 he writes: *<sup>1</sup>My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? <sup>2</sup>O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.* (ESV) David lived through some very challenging circumstances. He was probably running for his life for 10 to 13 years. He was a fugitive, on the run trying to escape King Saul. Think about the fact that as he ran from Saul, he already knew that he was God’s choice to be King of Israel. Sometimes you must wait a long time to see God fulfill a dream or a vision that He has given you and put in your heart. You learn a lot when you go through those kinds of difficulties such as David went through. It is so hard in those times, but God is refining us when we’re amid the fire. I think we could all benefit from spending a day with David just to have him tell us how to get through life’s problems. God described David as “a man after My own heart,” so if we listen to King David’s words we can learn much about how God wants us to go through life.

Our circumstances are all different than David’s. You may never have been anointed king or faced the temptation of adultery or killing the husband of your illicit lover, but you have still had your temptations, trials, and difficulties. You and I can learn from David even if our obstacles and problems are different. The challenges and difficulties we face as humans are, in reality, all the same. We have the world, the flesh, and the devil as our adversaries. We can learn the principles of our relationship with God and the things of God through David’s life and writings. If you will please, open your Bibles this morning to Psalm 37. Max asked me to use this passage as the theme for this message this morning. David wrote this when he was an old man. After piecing together clues from 1 Kings, 2 Samuel, and 1st Chronicles we find that David died as an “old man” at the age of 70. I guess that makes Max and me old men because we’re both on the cusp of reaching that milestone. He tells us in verse 25 that he was an old man when he wrote these words. Let’s learn from David. These are probably some of the last words that he wrote, and they are a handbook for every believer.

**37** *<sup>1</sup>Fret not yourself because of evildoers;  
be not envious of wrongdoers!  
<sup>2</sup>For they will soon fade like the grass  
and wither like the green herb. (Psalm 37:1-2, ESV).*

David tells us not to worry about those who are out to do wrong. Why? Their days are numbered. Why would you and I ever fret because of evildoers? It’s because it is normal for us to be afraid of what evildoers can do to us. But David is saying not to worry yourself over all the bad that’s going on in the world. He’s telling us this so that we won’t live lives of fear. Curiously, he goes on to tell us not to be envious of wrongdoers. What an odd admonition. Why would we ever be envious of the wrongdoers? Because when wrong becomes prosperous, we start to question whether it is really wrong. Then we drift into compromise. David is warning us about

two things: (1) not to be eaten up with fear that will emotionally paralyze us, and (2) to never be envious of that which will morally compromise us. Don't get distracted.

In a nutshell, don't worry over the evil that you see other people doing, and don't ever envy their seeming success. Their day is coming. They will not last long. They will dry up like fresh spring grass in August. I would add that a practical way to avoid getting overly concerned about everything going on is to not be too invested in it. Keep the news of the day at bay from your soul. What do I mean by that? Don't get too wrapped up into thinking that you need to hear every problem in society and it's up to you to fix it! You'll end up being paralyzed by fear and confused as to what your priorities need to be. This is the secret of finding new hope again when you've lost or are losing hope. Next, David gives the antidote to a life filled with fear and envy.

**<sup>3</sup> Trust in the LORD, and do good;**

***dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.***

**<sup>4</sup> Delight yourself in the LORD,**

***and he will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:3-4, ESV).***

Verses 1 - 2 tell us what to avoid, but verses 3-4 tell us exactly what we're to grasp and take hold of. That is our way out of hopelessness. This is the beginning of David's great advice on how to live a wonderful life at peace with yourself and the God who made and loves you. Trust the Lord and do good! Trusting in the Lord means making a conscious decision to believe that God is good, that He is who He says He is, and that He will do what He says He will do. He said that He'll never leave us or forsake us, and He has promised us an eternity with Him after our journey here on earth. That's what it means to "trust in the Lord." These two verses are the answer to the problem we get into when we are fretting over evildoers and being envious of what the wrong crowd is doing.

David is saying that the only person and the only thing that matters is the Lord. Trust the Lord, and do good. Dwell in the land. Feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. I'm telling each of you today to get out there and do good in the face of evil. Ask the Lord what task you are to do and do it. It might be to just be lying in the bed unable to do anything but pray for others. Trust the Lord and do good. This is the antidote to envy. This verse is easy to quote out of context. It is not saying to dream up whatever fleshly desire or imagination you can come up with and expecting God to give it to you. This is one of those promises I just talked about that states that God will do what He says He will do. WHEN YOU DELIGHT YOURSELF IN THE LORD, He will give you the desires of your heart. Why will He do that? He does that because you are so aligned and in step with Him that what you are desiring is exactly what He wants for you and that is what is good for you. David then dials in on a life that is committed to the Lord.

<sup>5</sup> *Commit your way to the LORD;  
trust in him, and he will act.*

<sup>6</sup> *He will bring forth your righteousness as the light,  
and your justice as the noonday. (Psalm 37:5-6, ESV).*

This is a reiteration of that promise. Trust in the Lord, and HE WILL ACT. So often we try to fix our own problems because we don't believe that He will act. We're filled with unbelief. We become so despondent. David is clear that if we trust in the Lord, He will perform and bring about what He wants to accomplish in our lives. But how will He perform? He will bring righteousness as the light. **The light of His righteousness will displace the darkness that creeps into our hearts.** He'll bring it out of your life and my life.

<sup>7</sup> *Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;  
fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way,  
over the man who carries out evil devices! (Psalm 37:7, ESV).*

BE STILL BEFORE THE LORD AND WAIT PATIENTLY. We must be able to be still before the Lord. Being still and waiting is hard for us. Psalm 46:10 instructs us: <sup>10</sup> ***“Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!” (ESV).*** Sometimes (perhaps most of the time) when doubt, confusion, and suffering come our way, just be still before the Lord. Tell God, “I can't do this on my own. I need thee every hour. Lord take my hand and walk me through this valley.” David gives us clues as to how a person who is still before the Lord will act.

<sup>8</sup> *Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath!  
Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. (Psalm 37:8, ESV).*

This means don't try to get back at people. Don't grow angry with your situation. If He brought you to this, He will give you the grace to get through this. If it involves you having been wronged by others, leave vengeance up to God. You just commit your way to Him, and He will direct your paths, AND HE WILL PROTECT YOU.

<sup>9</sup> *For the evildoers shall be cut off,  
but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.*

<sup>10</sup> *In just a little while, the wicked will be no more;  
though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there.*

<sup>11</sup> *But the meek shall inherit the land  
and delight themselves in abundant peace. (Psalm 37:9-11, ESV).*

Two times David makes a promise. Those who wait and those who are meek will inherit the land. This reminds us of Jesus' words, “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth” (see Matthew 5:5). We as New Testament believers don't inherit the land. That is not an inheritance that was promised to us as New Testament believers. The Jews were promised land, a physical inheritance, but the Gentiles were not. Our inheritances are in the spiritual realm. The deposit on our inheritance is the precious Holy Spirit who indwells us, comforts us

through difficulty, and guides us in the way. Ours is a spiritual inheritance. God promises us treasures and an inheritance, but they are in heaven. David is saying not to focus on evildoers. I might add that when we find ourselves ill and infirm, don't blame God. In reality it is Adam and Eve's fault. They are the ones who brought sin into the world. YOU have an inheritance when you commit your way to the Lord. It is an everlasting and permanent inheritance which is yours and mine forever. Now David describes how the Lord does battle for you and me.

Verses 12-15 speak on the violence that the wicked want to foist on the people of God. Christians can become confused by the hatred they feel from the world. This was the reaction of those believers in Minneapolis who had their services interrupted by leftists during a church service. Jesus tells us that the world will hate us. Those who are accepted by God will be rejected by the world. Jesus tells us that we will be hated just like He was hated. Paul reiterates this to Timothy when he states: <sup>12</sup> *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, (2 Timothy 3:12, ESV)*. If you want to live for Jesus, people will hate you. Hatred will come to you just because you belong to the Lord. David then returns to the subject of what we have in this life and what we desire.

<sup>16</sup> *Better is the little that the righteous has  
than the abundance of many wicked.*

<sup>17</sup> *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken,  
but the LORD upholds the righteous. (Psalm 37:16-17, ESV).*

These verses remind us of the value system every believer should have. Even if we possess a small amount materially compared to the people of this world, we actually possess a lot. We are blessed. We don't have a wealth problem. We have a sight problem. We fail to see the riches and glory that God has given to us. We are heirs with God and joint heirs with Christ, but we often wrongly think that we are impoverished. That is a poor mindset. The truth of the matter is that we are not mired in poverty. We are rich in our inheritance. As we used to sing at camp when I was a little boy:

“He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, the wealth of every mine. He owns the rivers and the rocks and rills, the sun and stars that shine. Wonderful riches more than tongue can tell, He is my Father, so they're mine as well. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, I know that He will care for me.”

In verses 18-22 David contrasts the life of the believer to the life of the unbeliever. There are great benefits and joy in serving God. The seeming advantages to a worldly life are but an illusion. True prosperity and true blessings come only in that commitment to God.

<sup>23</sup> *The steps of a man are established by the LORD,  
when he delights in his way;*

<sup>24</sup> *though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong,  
for the LORD upholds his hand. (Psalm 37:23-24, ESV).*

These are beautiful verses that promise that when we've committed our way to the Lord, He will indeed guide and direct us. I teach the young adults in our church and I often explain to them that the Lord may not tell you exactly what you are to do with your life, but He will tell you exactly HOW to live out your life. God delights in directing us in our lives, and He delights in us when we're following the course that He has set out for us. Yes, we will stumble. Yes, we will fail. Yes, we'll get hurt. Yes, we'll get sick. But when we stumble, we're not going to fall onto our heads. We are not permanently affected. Right before our head hits the sidewalk, He'll reach out and take our hands. You just do your part and He'll do His part. Take it all a day at a time. Remember Peter walking on the water? When he began to sink into the water, it was because he was no longer walking by faith but was walking by sight. He was trusting in what was familiar to him instead of trusting in God. Don't ever let the enemy convince you that you're forgotten because of your suffering, or even your own failures. The fight is not over. And I'll add that the Lord can come to rescue us even when we've gotten into trouble and the fault is our own.

*<sup>25</sup> I have been young, and now am old,  
yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken  
or his children begging for bread.*

*<sup>26</sup> He is ever lending generously,  
and his children become a blessing. (Psalm 37:25-26, ESV).*

Good things are laid up for the people of God! And what is your part?

*<sup>27</sup> Turn away from evil and do good;  
so shall you dwell forever.*

*<sup>28</sup> For the LORD loves justice;  
he will not forsake his saints.*

*They are preserved forever, (Psalm 37:27-28, ESV).*

The next few verses proclaim the victory of the believer over the unbeliever. I want to talk for a minute about waiting on the Lord. It may be that God put a dream or a vision of His plan for you into your mind a long time ago. You know, He may yet be working that plan out. You need to trust in the Lord, and do good.

Joseph had a dream of His final glory DECADES before it became a reality. He was thrown into a pit by his own family. They then sold him into slavery in Egypt. He was falsely accused by his master's wife when he refused to compromise his master's trust and his own faith in God. But in the end, Joseph was second in Egypt only to Pharaoh himself. Joseph started in the pit, but he ended in the palace.

David was anointed king by Samuel DECADES before he sat on the throne. He was reviled. He was chased. King Saul tried to kill him, and then His own son tried to kill him. He was a fugitive for over ten years, but in the end, he sat on the throne and was the greatest king of Israel, only to be surpassed by Jesus Himself who will someday assume the throne of David.

As a young twenty something year old, I was in Ireland with my young bride when we walked into a shop. I bought a pewter chalice and a communion plate, sensing in my heart that someday God would call me and use me to be a shepherd to His people. The fulfillment of that calling came over 4 decades later.

Max came from a difficult childhood with no real father figure other than his godly grandfather. He learned to be a mechanic, picked up a set of tools and started working on cars. Eventually, he bought a garage, and found himself working on the pastor's car. This deepened his relationship with the pastor, leading him to discover that his true calling was not working on pastor's vehicles, but being a pastor himself. His calling was not working on engines and transmissions, but working in partnership with God to do spiritual heart surgery on God's people.

God is working His purposes out in your life and my life. So, what's the big idea today? Do your part in leaning on and relying on God through whatever you're going through. And then, do good. Get aligned with Him by spending time in the word and in prayer. Your desires will soon line up with His desires for your life.

David's words are worth repeating once again.

**<sup>3</sup> Trust in the LORD, and do good;  
dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.**

**<sup>4</sup> Delight yourself in the LORD,  
and he will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:3-4).**

Let us each do those things today. Now, let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at [uniongrove362@gmail.com](mailto:uniongrove362@gmail.com) or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.