

The Promise Keeper

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Word of Encouragement: Some of you walked in the doors this morning and you need to know:

- God is saying I am the God of new beginnings and endless do-overs.
- I am with you in the messy middles.
- I am crafting glorious ending! (He writes the final paragraph.)
- Alpha & Omega.

“Hold” – “keep holding” when the chips are down.

This is a relevant word for all of us, and a timely word for some!

When you’re in the middle of a losing streak, in a decade of losing. When life is going sideways—out of your control. When you strike out. When you’ve given it your best and it’s still a mess. Disappointment.

When bootstraps break.

- A spouse who is losing their battle to cancer.
- A child who is losing their battle with mental illness.
- When my friends and neighbors are being infected by malicious ideas.
- My friend or my body that has rheumatoid arthritis.
- When all you can see is the long dark tunnel. (I’m talking to someone this morning)
- The Lord wants you to know when you don’t feel like you can hold, he can hold on to you. He’s the promise keeper.

This morning the Lord wants to give us a Defense Against Discouragement

Isaiah 25:3-8

Therefore strong peoples will honor you;
cities of ruthless nations will revere you.

God is not a pushover. His silence today does not mean his silence forever. There will come a day when evil men can’t get around his justice. That day isn’t here yet, but it’s coming.

⁴You have been a refuge for the poor,
a refuge for the needy in their distress,
a shelter from the storm
and a shade from the heat.

Have you ever been caught in a hurricane or violent storm without a shelter? It’s a scary thing.

For the breath of the ruthless
is like a storm driving against a wall

⁵ and like the heat of the desert (the heat of an Israeli desert can reach 125. Few things I hate

more than sand and heat. Some of you call that vacation. Just because there's water you call it the beach, I call it the desert.)

You silence the uproar of foreigners;
as heat is reduced by the shadow of a cloud, (relief)
so the song of the ruthless is stilled.

Notice God doesn't fully take away the suffering. But he does shield us from its full withering oppression.

1. God is with you in the messy middle!

Psalm 34:18

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Ill: Grandma laying next to her granddaughter in hospital bed.

What a picture of Emmanuel—God is with us. God didn't say good riddance, you deserve. He enters into our affliction and carries it with us.

Ill: Voice of Discouragement

Started talking to myself: Pastor Brian do you mind helping out? I'm getting beat up over here. I don't know how to make this stop.

Felt like God said, "*Whose voice are you listening to? Is it my voice?*"

"If it's not from me, you don't have to believe it."

When you feel powerless, and your bootstraps break, take shelter in your Father. Isaiah said, v.4 [He is a refuge for the needy in their distress](#)

So God doesn't always remove hardship. But he does shield us from its full withering assault.

God pivots...now he sees the vision, the finish line...

⁶On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare

a feast of rich food for all peoples,
a banquet of aged wine—
the best of meats and the finest of wines.

⁷On this mountain he will destroy
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,
the sheet that covers all nations;

⁸ he will swallow up death forever.

The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears
from all faces; he will remove his people's disgrace
from all the earth.

The LORD has spoken.

What is Isaiah promising? What is our hope? How do we handle... When things are tanking—what are we clinging to? When calamity knocks at my door. When ridiculous or even savage people control my government, when violence and evil become a new normal in our town. God's story is much bigger than this "dip" in the market.

2. Remember that God's story is much bigger than this life, or just your life!

In God's story, injustice, violence, evil, disease, that's only a part of chapter 1. Death is only the end of chapter one.

Jesus' story didn't end on a cross. He's standing next to his Father in heaven.

John 11:25

Jesus said... "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die."

- It's estimated that in the first three centuries of the Christian Church close to 1 out of every 5 believers were martyred for their faith.
- Their hope wasn't in the American dream -- May the Lord bless me in this life!
- It wasn't that maybe they could rescue their democracy from the brink of injustice and chaos.
- My hope is that my life—no matter how small and fleeting it may be, no matter how much pain or suffering I have to endure—my story may tell God's story accurately.
- None of this is about me. All of human history is about man's treachery and God's mercy, man's hubris and God's humility, man's selfishness and God's faithfulness...
- Nobody will stand before him and boast about what we could do for him. It's only been about how much he loves you—That He's a Promise Keeper. That he has made a covenant with himself to do good to you.
- Eternity will be about being treasured by him and treasuring him.
- In Isaiah 25 he sees the finish line...very specific. If I asked you to close your eye and go to your happy place,
For most of you there's going to be food. There's going to be friends. V. 6 "[the best of meats](#)" Austen Steak house is going to be there. Aunt Sara's ham balls. Maria's burritos.
- God has a happy place. And he wants you there. You're a part of his story.

But we're not there yet. Some of us are still lost in the long dark tunnel, you're in the middle of the furnace, and you feel powerless, the enemy is pounding you with discouragement... personal or relational crisis, maybe it's health, political realities.

What can I do in "the dark place?"

5 things you can do in "the dark place:"

1. **Ask God for help.** God is waiting for you to invite him into the messy middle with you.

2. **Celebrate God, and not your losses.**
 - Some of us like to talk about all the things we're losing, everything going wrong.
 - The true warfare is not over the suffering, but over what you're focusing on.
 - Give thanks to the Lord for the simple things. What can I thank him for right now!?
3. **You need encouraging and prayerful community!** – I don't think that churches and individuals disconnected from committed spiritual relationships are going to make it in the next 40 years in America. The pressure will be too great.
4. **Discern the difference between what is out of my control and what is in my control.**
 - I can't control people. But I can control my attitude towards people or how I treat people.
 - We often see all the things we are losing control. My health, my freedoms, my children, someone is controlling my job. That leads to discouragement.
 - Jeremiah! Difference between faithfulness and fruitfulness.
5. **Stop blaming God for things that aren't his fault.**
 - Sometimes I blame God for things I brought on myself. Or my neighbor brought on me. I blame God for the weather. Market.
 - Hardship doesn't mean God is angry with you or trying to correct you. It means we live in a broken world, and it hasn't been totally fixed yet. Don't let the accusation of this age destroy your faith in your loving Father.

The Lord wants to encourage you this morning. Keep Holding!

We know from scriptures that the long-dark tunnel is still ahead of us.

The Promise Keeper told us in

[Psalms 46:10](#)

[I will be exalted among the nations,](#)

[I will be exalted in the earth.](#)

Our spiritual enemy is trying to tear down every sacred symbol in the earth because it looks like God, and he can't that.

- The image of God in every unborn human life, the holy union in marriage and sexuality, the temple of the human body, the freedom of conscience to think and choose for yourself, God's eternal covenants with the Jewish people, the power of the resurrection that transcends the natural order, and the sacred authority of scriptures.

Stand with your fathers and mothers in history, and cling to the historical truths of our faith. They are your good confession. The tyrannies of men and of monsters may throw down every noble truth God has erected, but they can't take your worship! Nebuchadnezzar may throw you into the furnace and even in the furnace God still dances with his children.

Closing Worship Song