

Harris Creek Baptist Church

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Series: More than Conquerors

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Joy Rooted in Hope

**“ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who[i] have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.” Romans 8: 28-30**

(Artist comes on stage and paints an abstract painting on a large canvas. No one is able to identify what the painting is of). Good morning Harris Creek! (JP refers to the painting) Did he quit on me? Sometimes things don't always go as planned, and you want something to be beautiful and to stand out, and you look at it and you're trying to figure out what exactly is happening. And it doesn't always make a lot of sense... (JP turns the painting 180 degrees to reveal the painting was of the side profile of Jesus)

Until the Lord. Until the Lord flips it around. And it's like, “Oh! Oh! Oh that's what he was doing. Okay, there was a greater purpose. A greater intent. There's a clarity that's coming. It's going to make sense.” That's the scripture today. This is such an important message, and important idea. And I don't want anything to distract you, so let's get a few things out of the way: Yes there is certainly paint on my shoes now, yes there is paint on my hands, we can all

acknowledge that and not think about it any longer, because as we dive into the scripture, there's a truth here. I don't want to overpromise and underdeliver. There's a life changing reality. This has the potential to be something that you look deep into. As every verse in the entire Bible, 66 books full of verses, but there's a message in these three verses, that if we get that idea, and we push it into our heart, and we remember it—we retain it—and we apply it to the circumstances and the situations that we live in for the rest of our lives, it has the potential to cause us today to see the rest of our lives and every moment that we live in, in every circumstance and every situation, differently.

And so lean in. I call this message, “A Joy that comes from Hope.” A joy that comes from hope. We are in Romans 8, going verse by verse through this chapter, which I have said in my humble opinion, I believe it is the greatest book and the greatest collection of books and the greatest chapter in the greatest book. Okay? That's my opinion. There are others that agree, that is not an isolated opinion. And so we're going to camp out—the Apostle Paul wrote this book to the church in Rome, made up of a collection of Gentile believers and Jewish believers. He wrote it to bring about unity in the church in Rome, in a time of persecution, in a time of trials, and he's giving them deep theology and just rubbing your face in the Gospel. There's a truth and a reality for the church then, and there's a truth and reality for the church today and eternal. So there's truths in these scriptures that we can apply to our lives today, now a couple thousand years later after it was written. He wrote this in about 57AD from Corinth to the church in Rome.

And just as a reminder in this series More Than Conquerors, where we've been, week one we talked about what it means to be free from the law. **“Therefore there is now no condemnation**

**for those of us who are in Christ Jesus.” Romans 8:1** Week two we talked about choosing a driver, between the flesh and the spirit. Whose driving in your life? And then week three we talked about how we are children of God. We can cry out to him, “Abba!” A title of intimacy that we know God. The veil is torn and we have access to him at any given moment if you have trusted in Jesus Christ. And last week we talked about how we’re not where we will be, but it will be worth it. And you and I are to maintain hope—a death grip on hope. That is the context that these scriptures are written into. So the backdrop is hope! Right? And the Spirit will help you in your time of weakness. That’s the verses that we’re coming out of from last week. Some of you parents—welcome families— from other places, welcome. I’m saying that for your benefit especially, so that you know here at Harris Creek where we’ve been. The backdrop is hope. We are to have hope, and so we read these verses in context.

Really, the subject matter—there’s a joy that comes from that hope. And this is what I believe a command in the Bible that some of you—you’ve been in church your entire life, since you were little, Bible studies and Sunday School—and we have overlooked this very clear—I’m going to show you in the Scriptures how clear this idea is. It’s in command form, it’s prescriptive, it’s descriptive, he gives us examples, it’s exemplified in the text. I’m just going to give you something, this is a collection of verses that’s just a really quick like, “Joy in suffering” search would give you. There’s so many Christians that don’t follow this. I don’t think we know what to do with it. Jesus’s brother says, **“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds.” James 1:2** Consider it pure joy! That’s Jesus’s bro though. But what about Jesus? Jesus said in Matthew 5, **“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is**

**your reward in heaven...” Matthew 5:11-12. Paul to the Thessalonians, “You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.” 1 Thessalonians 1:6. Philippians, “But even if I am to be poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice [rejoice means I have joy, I take great joy with all of you] with all of you.” Philippians 2:17. Colossians, “Now I rejoice with what I am suffering,” Colossians 1:24. Hebrews, “You suffered along with those in prison, and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you know that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.” Hebrews 10:34. Peter now says, “In all of this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.” 1 Peter 1:6. Again Peter says, “But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the suffering of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.” 1 Peter 4:13. And then if we go to the book that we’ve been in, Romans, chapter 5, another well-known verse if you’ve been in church you’ve heard, “Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character, and character hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.” Romans 5: 3-5. And right about now, I hope you are tapping out in exhaustion, saying, “I get it! I get it! We are to rejoice, have joy in, suffering.” But how do we do that?**

Because when I don’t feel well, when I’m sick, man flu, I don’t feel well. How am I supposed to rejoice when I’ve got a fever, or my stomach hurts, I’m experiencing pain, when I’m suffering I can’t rejoice. When someone I love, someone I know that’s close to me—how am I supposed to

rejoice in their suffering? When marriage is hard, those early years for Monica and I, every day just felt like a grind, an uphill battle. It felt like we were going to stay in that, that we would never ever be out of that. That we would never be okay. I made a mistake, she made a mistake, we should just undo this covenant. How am I supposed to have joy in that? In some of those more challenging parenting years? Right? How am I supposed to have joy in that? We went to the doctor once to see the heart beat—no heartbeat. No heartbeat. Come back next week. That seven days, I'm supposed to rejoice in some form? How? Mom calls, "Hey I have cancer." Yay? What am I supposed to do, rejoice? In that? God how? I'm looking at the verses and I'm like, "Are you sure?" I mean even little day to day trials. One time I walked out of my house and someone had broken into my truck. And they stole my radio. \$200 radio, I wish they would have knocked in the door I would have bought it for them, because they caused \$5,000 in damage, to steal a \$200 radio, and I'm sitting there looks, I'm like, "What? I'm supposed to rejoice in this? God what are you doing?"

And we should not be okay with something that's so clear in the text, just to shrug our shoulders, say "I don't know," and move on. We've got to wrestle that to the ground, and that's what I hope to do with just the few moments that I have with you today. I will say that the Scripture does give you permission to experience an emotion tied to the sufferings of others. He says to rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn. But everything that we see in the world, this is important, everything that we see in the world says that our emotions are tied to our circumstances. If my circumstances are good, then my emotions are good. If my circumstances are bad, then my emotions are bad. Right? This is if my circumstances are does, then my emotions are down. This is what the world has taught you since the second you showed up in

that hospital room, or birthing center, or bathtub or wherever it happened for you. You come in, you breath that first breath, and the world begins to teach you that your emotions are tied to your circumstances.

The Scripture on the other hand teaches something very different than that, and we've got to figure it out today. That really, our emotions are tied to a hope that we have. Romans 8, verse 28, I'll just read the three [verses] to you, **"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those who he predestined, he also called, and those he called, he also justified, and those he justified, he also glorified."** Romans 8:28-30. Lots of theological terms to define in here, as we try to unpack this profound theological reality, that our emotions are not rooted in our circumstances, but in the hope that we have. Pray for me, and for us that we would be able to digest this accordingly. As we move through these three verses, we're going to see how all things turn out for our good, how our good comes from the inside out, and before you leave today how our best is yet to come.

We'll start in verse 28, **"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."** Many of you know this verse. Many of you have never memorized this verse, you've just tripped over it so many times that it is embedded in your heart. It can be found on coffee mugs, it is something that we want to run too and cling too. And so if we look at the verse backwards, it is God has a purpose, God has a purpose for everyone's life, and so he calls those who love him, and works out all things for their

good. In summary, He has a plan much bigger than yours. Much bigger than mine. And it says, “We know!” That’s how he starts this, “And we know...” He starts “and,” bridging it to last week, the Spirit will help you in your time of weakness. “And we know,” like we know the sky is blue, and the grass is green, and Jesus raised from the dead, and we know that gravity holds us to this earth so that we don’t float away. And we know that all things work together for the good of those who love him, who have been called... and I read that and I’m like, “I don’t know if I know, God. There’s days I don’t know.” But Paul, the Spirit through Paul just declares that over you. “And you know! And you know, as much as you know anything, you know that all things work together for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

It reminds me of this parable, called *Good Luck Bad Luck* written by Jason Buckley. *Good Luck Bad Luck, Who Knows* I’ll read it to you quickly.

This is the story of an old Chinese farmer who lived many years ago. He had one old horse that he used to plough his fields.

One day, the horse ran away into the hills.

Everyone said, “We are so sorry for your bad luck.”

The old man replied, “Bad luck, good luck, who knows?”

A week later, the horse returned with a herd of wild horses, which now belonged to the old man.

Everyone said, “We are so happy for your good luck!” The old man replied, “Good luck, bad luck, who knows?”

While his only son was riding one of the wild horses, he fell off and broke his leg.

Everyone said, “What bad luck!”

The old man replied, “Bad luck, good luck, who knows?”

One day, the army came to the village, and took all the strong young men to be soldiers for the emperor.

Only the old farmer’s son was spared, because he could not fight with a broken leg.

Everyone said, “What good luck!”

The old man replied, “Good luck, bad luck, who knows?”

*Jason Buckley*

I’ve heard that before. I was reminded of that as I studied this text, and so here’s a couple clarifying things. We don’t believe in luck. As followers of Jesus, we believe in a sovereign God who controls all things, we see that clearly in this text. We don’t believe in luck. And we do know, in the “who knows,” we do know that God is working together all things for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. And that’s my first point. All things turn out for our good.

*1. All things turn out for our good.*

Now listen, don’t go to the bathroom right now because you’ve got to hear this part. This is not the verse you dump on somebody in the midst of their suffering. It is not a kindness to anyone who feels sad, for you to tell them that they shouldn’t feel sad, right? You don’t just show up and say, “Oh man! So sorry that terrible thing happened to you, but we know that all things God works...” This is not your best pastoral care verse. I would remove it from that.



Now it is a verse, and it is an amazing truth, but you have to use wisdom in how you apply it to those situations.

This is the difference between preaching and pastoring. Now this is where I get in trouble a lot. When you're preaching, you can declare truths over people that are true, that may not be what you would cling to in the moment when you're one on one with them. That's why I'll always say after every sermon, "Hey I'll be up here if anyone wants to talk." Because it gives me that opportunity to say, "Oh you heard that through that lens of your circumstance and situations, I need to reframe that." That is true, but you received it, or I said it, unknowing of your circumstance and situation, like a pastoral care moment. That's not what I was doing. I was declaring a truth to the masses. This is the difference between preaching and pastoring. And so in those tender moments, you want to be tender. Rejoice with those who rejoice, mourn with those who mourn, experience grief, take a moment to sit in their suffering with them before you try to move them forward. Okay?

This is what Jesus did so beautifully when Lazarus died, and his friends—Lazarus's sisters—come running to him, "Lord, where were you? If you were here this would not have happened!" And Jesus pauses for a moment to weep. He cries, knowing he was going to resurrect Lazarus from the dead, but also seeing the brokenness that exists in the world, he experiences grief. But he does not experience grief without hope. He knows what's about to happen. He knows what he's about to do. So you are permitted in the Scripture to mourn. You are not permitted in the Scripture to mourn without hope. Your mourning and your grief as a

follower of Jesus Christ have to be attached to the hope that you know that you have. And I'm going to try to make sense of that.

It is not naive to say it will all work out. It's not. It's not naive to have optimism as a follower. The first message I taught here at Harris Creek was called "Gospel Driven Optimism." Gospel driven optimism. We're a weird people that have the audacity to call the day that God died "good." When there's a bloody tortured Jesus on the instrument of destruction, bleeding out—we've been inoculated to this, we've seen this so much that it is R rated. That's a corpse, that's a bloody corpse. That is violent in the most heinous ways. And we can call that "good" because God says, "No that is salvation for the world. That is salvation for anyone who would believe upon it, that would call on his name." In the Gospel we learn that he can make everything good. The worst day we call it "good." He took the crucifix, he flipped the painting. He took the crucifixion, he flipped the painting. This is different then, "Everything happens for a reason." People say, "Oh everything happens for a reason, your radio got stolen? Everything happens for a reason." I know the reason, they wanted some money, and they were going to sell my radio to somebody—I understand the reason. They like the radio, so they took it—that was the reason. This is different then, "Everything happens for a reason."

This is, "What could God be doing?" In the midst of adultery, "What could God be doing?" In the midst of a hard marriage, "What could God be doing?" In the midst of a prodigal making terrible choices that you have a front row seat of watching the excruciating pain that goes with it, "What could God be doing?" In the midst of a layoff, "What could God be doing?" Answer that. Answer that in the most—if you were just the most blessed person on the planet earth

and said, “If God just looked upon me right now and had incredible favor on me, right now, and he could do anything, what could he do with this situation?” And then begin to pray to that end, and don’t make any choices that might prevent Him from doing that, if you will. Not that you could, but meaning, you walk in obedience and faithfulness, knowing what God could do in the midst of that situation. We walk out, we see our radio’s gone. And we ask the question, “What good is God producing from this? I mean, it is just a \$5,000 sermon illustration, is that it?” Like, “Oh, here’s the redemption, you get to talk about it in front of people.” I don’t know, I’d choose something else.

First let me ask, “Is he doing good in it?” This text does not allow you to believe anything outside of “Yes!” You do not have *permission*—is the word I would use—from Scripture to believe for one second that, “Oh, God must be using this for my *bad*.” Nope. Only for your good. What things? All things. Everything. John Newton says, “Everything is necessary that he sends, and nothing can be necessary that he withholds.” Let me say it again, “Everything is necessary that he sends, and nothing can be necessary that he withholds.” Verse 29, **“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn from among many brothers and sisters.” Romans 8:29** What does that last part mean, “firstborn from among many brothers and sisters? That Jesus—As the firstborn son if you will, all the inheritance is his, and he shares it with us—those born after him if you will. He invites you into a glorious inheritance, glorious riches forevermore in the kingdom. You can be adopted as daughters and sons through the blood of Jesus.

But then you have all these words in here, like “foreknew.” We read that and we’re tempted to think, “God knows whose going to be saved.” It doesn’t mean, “God is aware of those who will choose him.” What it does mean is “God knows intimately everything about you.” He knows you. More than anyone who knows you knows you, God knows you. He’s seen the things that you were committed to hiding, he sees them in broad daylight. Completely exposed, every choice, every thought. He knows you way better than you know yourself. This is what the verse is saying, “He knows you.” Those he knew ahead of time he predestined—the word “predestinate” what it means—we want to be really confused by that word when it’s actually quite simple. It means, “pre” is like “ahead,” and “destined” means “determined.” So ahead of time, he destined you. And it is that simple. And I don’t mean to make light of an entire theology that downplays this. Because there’s those in the room and look at this and speak it away, and you say, “No no no, free will, we have a choice. We’re completely culpable for our choices.” And you’re right. You’re right. And then it says, “But God is completely sovereign. He’s in control. He’s in charge. He controls everything.” And you’re right. You’re reading the same book back to back. Turn toward each other and say, “Yeah yeah yeah. I am completely fully culpable of the choices that I make. I’m responsible. And God is completely sovereign, and in control of everything.” That doesn’t make sense, you’re right. That doesn’t make sense. And I’m okay with that. I don’t want a God that makes sense. My Labrador doesn’t make sense. Women have never made sense to me—much less my God. Like, I don’t want a God that makes sense.

To give you a word it’s an *antinomy*. Antinomy is a term that means when two absolute truths contradict each other. One in science is if anything exists in waves it cannot exist in particles.

If anything exists in particles it cannot exist in waves. And then we have light as an example, and what we've learned about light is that light exists in both waves and particles. Well that can't be true but it is true. It is an antinomy. And it's a tension and we can't figure it out. And so we sit in a little bit of the mystery, and that's the reality. And it's okay to sit in some mystery.

And so you read this and you ask questions, "Well can I lose my salvation," and I would say, "Consider, did you do anything to find your salvation?" What do people ask when you lose something, what's the question they ask, "Where did you last have it?" And so, do you know where salvation is found? There is one name in all of heaven by which we can be saved. If you know where it's found then you always know where to look, if you think for a second you lost it look at the cross, look at the Gospel, look at Jesus, that's where your salvation is found. So how do I know I'm saved, well what do you believe about Jesus? Did he die for your sins, did he raise from the dead? Well, what if I'm not predestined, you know? Again, look at the cross, what do you believe about Jesus?

And maybe you're here this morning, someone invited you to Harris Creek and you're like, "Yeah man, I hear they have good burgers!" And you're driving down the road like, "It's a little early for burgers... Ya know, that's weird." And then they turned into a church and you're like, "Woah, didn't see that coming!" And here you are and you're like, "Well what if I'm not predestined?" I would just say, consider where you're at. I mean, you did something in an act of faith to get in your car to drive to that place. It seems like God is chasing you and working in your life.

So why share the Gospel if people are predestined? Keep in mind, this is scribed by the greatest evangelist the world has ever known. It is not an invitation to not share the Gospel, it's an invitation to understand you don't control the outcome, so have fun. Share the Gospel with everyone, knowing who God saves is up to God. You just be faithful in sharing. God will be faithful in saving. And it says, "conformed to the image of Jesus," let's talk about it. My second point is our good comes from the inside out.

## *2. Our good comes from the inside out.*

Our good comes from the inside out. I'm going to explain this now after I gave you that idea, that our good comes from the inside out, it says that we are conformed to the image of Jesus. What is another theological term for that to be, "made into the image of Jesus," to be conformed into the image of Jesus? What would we call that? Sanctification. Sanctification: we're being made into his likeness. You have trusted in Christ, and now the Holy Spirit is working in your life, shaping you to be like Christ. That "conformed," if you have been in church for a while, you might recognize that from another very in Romans. Romans 12:1-2 it says, **"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world," Romans 12:1-2** And so we read *that* conform and *that* conform, and we think those are the same words, "conform." They're not. They're not. In Romans 12:1-2, that word is συσχηματίζεσθε, *syschēmatizesthe*. *Syschēmatizesthe*. In the Greek, I'm not trying to wow you in my knowledge of Greek, I know very little. But that word, it's important because what it means is to be conformed from the

outside in. Like a mold. Like you're concrete poured into a mold, and because of what your boundaries are, you are shaped by that mold and you become like that mold. Like jello. You put jello in a mold, you put it in the refrigerator, you remove the mold, the jello takes the shape of the mold. He says do not use the world as your mold. Do not be shaped by the world so that the world would tell you what you should look like. So as you are poured into the world, you begin to look like the world. Don't do that. That's that word "conform."

This word here is συμμόρφους, *symmorphous*. *Symmorphous* is interesting because this is a conformed from the inside. There's something inside of you that is shaping you. There's something side of you and you are taking the likeness of this thing. It's almost, now, be example, you look at that thing and you learn about that thing, and you begin to imitate that thing inside of you. It's a surrender, which is the last part of Romans 12:1-2, "present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God." That we would live as a sacrifice, that we would surrender to that thing. Remember that week, "Whose driving?" Is it the Spirit or is it the flesh? If the Spirit of God is driving in your life, and the Spirit of God is behind the wheel, then the Spirit of God is conforming you to the image and character and likeness of Jesus Christ.

God knew you and determined you to be shaped like his son. You see "predestined" and think, "Oh, God predestined to save me." It's so much more than that. He predestined to shape you into the image and the character of his son. And this is the good, remember? He works all things for the good of those who love him. This is the good that he's shaping you into the image and the character of Jesus. I walk out, my radio is gone, "God what is the good you

want to do here?” And he says, “I want to make you, JP, more like Jesus.” So slow down, do not sin in your anger, do not grieve without hope, and ask, “Okay God, how do you, through this is circumstance, situation, trial, want to shape me to be like Jesus.”

Let me show you this. (JP unveils complicated visual demonstration) This is my best effort to illustrate this to you this morning. So what you have here is you have your circumstance and situation, it says “Fun” and “Trials” you can watch on the screen. Fun and trials. So these are your circumstances and these are your emotions. You have “Joy” and “Sadness.” Now the world is going to tell you that these circumstances drive these emotions, so if you are having fun then you experience joy. But if you have trials, then you experience sadness. So whatever the circumstance is, the emotion will follow always. That’s what the world is going to teach you from the second that you showed up.

What the Scripture does, is unhinges these. The Scripture says, “This does not need to be tied to this.” You can experience these emotions regardless of these circumstances and situations. God is doing something in you. Whenever you face a trial, he’s doing something in you. He’s producing something in you. Our good comes from within, verse 30, **“And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.” Romans 8:30** More with the theological terms. So “predestined,” determined ahead of time. “Called” is chosen, but it’s not like (JP dog whistles), “Come here Spot!” That’s not this “called.” “Come here! Here boy!” Called, this word is powerful, it brings about the reality that it desires. This “called” is like, “Lazarus, come forth!” That’s this called.



He called you to a new life. He called you to a different living. He called you to a new being altogether. And he justified, “justified” means to declare righteous. That the righteousness of Jesus has imputed upon you, that God who sits outside of time has the freedom to look at you and see you clothed in the righteousness of Jesus. Not clothes in your sin, not clothes in your choices, but clothes in his choices through his son Jesus Christ. The Gospel. Even though you are a prostitute, paying the world to have its way with you, God declares you righteous. It says, “Now he’s righteous. She’s righteous.”

And then it says, “glorified.” Glorified means to be presented pure and holy before God. We will be glorified. One day we will stand in glory before the Lord, presented before the Lord like Jesus, pure and white without sin, completely clean we will be presented before God. But did you notice the tense of that word? It’s past. We glorified. It’s past tense. But it hasn’t happened yet? It’s as good as done. God sits outside of your chronological order. Your manmade construct. And he says, “No, you don’t understand. Those I determined ahead of time I knew and called to be with me. I declared them as righteous, and they are presented pure and holy before me like Jesus, and it is as good as done.” We say, “Oh, it will be.” But no, it’s as good as done! Even in the midst of your gross sin, good as done. Good as done. We struggle with that. That’s okay. That’s alright. His foolishness is wiser than our wisdom, the Scripture says. His ways are higher than our ways. So as we sit here as a follower of Jesus Christ, how do we live in shame if God says you’re glorified. How do we walk in shame? My third and final point is our best is yet to come.

### *3. Our best is yet to come*

We see the clay, God sees the vase. We see the blank canvas, God sees the painting. Maybe we see the painting that doesn't make sense, and God says, "No, I see it in the end." We're *this* close to the stain glass window. We just see the shards of glass. God says, "No, I'm back here back here I see the whole thing—it's beautiful." We see the back of the tapestry, the yarn woven together in just an onslaught of colors. And God says, "No no, I'm way back here and it's beautiful. It's a beautiful breathtaking mosaic that I am doing, working all things out for the good of those who love me, who have been called according to my purpose." And so you and I, we live looking forward to glory with Jesus, forevermore. So what gets you down? Why are you sad?

In the 6th grade I was dating a wonderful young woman named Jennifer. I changed her name to protect the innocent. Let me just say, upfront, you shouldn't be dating in 6th grade. That's my belief, my conviction. It doesn't go anywhere good. But I was, and she was just everything to me in the 6th grade. And I mean, she dropped me like a bad habit. In front of everyone. And she did it so cold heartedly. I mean, she just looked at me—all my friends are there like spectators in the stadium—and she just says—yeah I think I'd asked her like, go out with me or check yes or no or something. And she just says, "Oh, we're not dating anymore. I don't want to be with you anymore." I was like, "What? What do you mean by that? I mean should we pray about it or?" And I'm trying to hold it together because all the boys are watching, and all the emotions and all the feels, I'm a feeler, and all the things just hit my heart, and I've got to remove myself from the situation because I'm about to embarrass myself. So I leave and I get to the water fountains in the hallway and I move into the restroom and I try to lock the door but there's no lock! And now the waterworks are coming, I'm

weeping, I'm ugly crying, snot crying, snot running out of my nose. The hyperventilate as a 6th grader. I can't hold it together, I'm so desperate I'm like, "Oh why me!" crying in the bathroom, and I'm just like, "What is wrong with me?" And everything from here on out, every single woman moving forward will be a giant step down from Jennifer!

And you feel the freedom to laugh right now, but in that moment in that 6th grade restroom it was anything but funny. The pain that I felt was so real. Okay? The desperation and despair as a 6th grader who has no idea how to control their emotions was so real. It was as real as your layoff, as real as your miscarriage, as real as the death of a loved one, as real as your cancer diagnosis. The despair that I felt in that moment, it was so real. So why would we feel the freedom to laugh this morning? Perspective. We have perspective.

You're like, "Oh, but you're with Monica now. Upgrade!" No offense Jennifer. But upgrade.

And it's perspective. We have a perspective. Like, "Oh, gosh, you moved beyond that."

Right? We know it worked out. And so our emotions are not rooted in our earthly circumstances. We can tie these to something else. (JP refers back to the visual illustration)

We can bring this around and we say the Scripture says, your emotions are actually rooted in a future joy. If you focus—this is it. Okay, this is the "set your mind on things above," repeated in the Scripture. Do not be conformed any longer to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Where is your mind at? How often are you thinking about the kingdom of heaven? The glory of God through Christ: your glorious inheritance. It can be rooted in a future hope when you root this, your emotions, on earth, to your future glory. When you're focused on, "Oh I'm going to heaven. I'm going to be with

God 100 years, 1,000 years, 10,000 years, 10,000,000 years, 10,000,000,000 years. Forever and ever and ever, still there.” As long as I suffered in the 6th grade, so like it is my suffering here. One day God will make sense of all of it. So if my earthly emotions are tied to my future glory, you are glorified. Right? This is what he’s saying. This is the life of the Christian. This is the thing that we’ve overlooked.

Are you saying that I can’t experience sadness? No. I’m saying that you can’t experience sadness without this *hope*. Right? You can experience sadness, but “You don’t know JP, I’ve suffered!” I understand. And I’m sorry. I’m sorry for your trauma, I’m sorry for what drove you there, I’m sorry for what they did to you. I am not trying to make light of those things. I am holding fast with you to the hope that one day God is going to work it out for your good. Even that? Even that. All things! Is that me making little of your circumstances? No, it’s me making much of God. Me making much of God.

This is the truth. You read it, you see that, and it feels impossible. Everyone has experienced this though. Like, you’ve all been the day before vacation, that’s what I like to talk about, because the day before vacation nothings going to get me down. Because tomorrow’s vacation! Today, it’s like, “Hey, you’re fired!” And I’m like, “Yeah, but…vacation! Glad I paid for the trip already!” Like, maybe you’re going to see someone you love. We’ve all experienced this, right? You have to maintain that reality. In summary, all things work out for our good. Our good comes from the inside out. And our best is yet to come.

Okay, how many of you, you saw that up top (JP points to the painting from the beginning of the sermon) and you're like, "What did he paint? I'm confused." How many, by show of hands if you were confused. Okay now how many of you were like, "Oh, I've seen this illustration. I've seen this, I know what's going to happen." You knew what's going to happen. Raise your hand—it's okay. It's alright to know. You're both in the same room, watching the same thing, and you experienced something very different, very different emotion. Why? One is confused, it's a little awkward, right? And the other is like, joyful, hopeful, right? When we flipped it you experienced that "Ah!" Everybody's got this unanimous, "Oh!" maybe we call that joy? Because you knew then, but some of you knew before then. "Oh just wait, just wait I've seen this. Just wait he's going to flip it!" You knew that, you knew that was coming! That's it! That's it! That's what it's saying. That's what he's saying, like, "All things. Every ugly nonsensical painting in your life will be flipped and it'll be "Oh. I see what you were doing now!" Forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever. I see what the depression was. I see what the despair was. I see what you're doing now. Live with that. Live with that.

Father, would you help us live with that. As we worship you, God, would you help us live with that. Father, we just ask that you would help us to hold fast to the hope in our circumstance. In whatever we're doing, in whatever we're experiencing, in whatever's going on. I pray that we wouldn't feel like this is trite cliché platitudes, bandaids over gaping wounds. There's hard things here this morning. There's hard things in living rooms, people that couldn't even get here today because their situation is so filled with weight. So weighty. Would you help our hearts to hold fast to hope. In Jesus' name, Amen.

