

# Hope in the Face of Hurricane Florence

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[ 0 : 00 ] All right, everybody. Thank you so much. Yeah, I realize that it's a packed house today. If you're new, this isn't our normal way of setting up. We usually have rows of chairs and a lot more room, but hey, this is hurricane time, special occasion. So thanks for coming, letting the kids sit in with us. I'm going to give us a short little talk today. It's not going to be long. And so kiddos, just bear with me. I'm going to do my best, okay? So let's just jump right into it.

My name is Jesse Kinzer. I have the privilege of leading this side of One Harbor Church, and usually what we do is we go through books and we go through series and it just felt inappropriate to just kind of plow through on what our normal thing that we do is. And so we wanted to stop and just say, hey, you know what? This is a special time. It's a difficult time for many of us.

And what do we do and what do we say in times like this? I think of that as myself, man, just preparing for this morning. How can I come as a pastor and provide comfort and encouragement to all of you here? And so for many of us, this hurricane has wreaked a lot of havoc in just varied measures of ways. And I know for a lot of us, we've lived without power, probably for the first time in a long time for successive days on end. And that's including internet. I don't know. I'm like barely surviving still without internet. That's been horrible. But we realize at these times is actually how little we can get by with, you know? And for some of us, man, it hasn't been just power and internet that we've been missing. It's been a lot worse. I've been with people the last couple of days who have lost so much. They've lost their homes. They've lost their memories. A life that's been built up in 20 years has been wiped away in two days. And standing with those people and talking with them, it's just so tragic and it's painful. And them just weeping over those things. And the pain is real. Trials like this, man, we look around and it can make us feel overwhelmed. It can make us feel out of control, confused and angry and anxious. Just the sense of being troubled within, troubled in our spirits is an easy way to kind of explain how we feel. And our response can be to get upset.

We can get upset at the situation and the circumstances. We can get upset at people. We can get upset at our insurance company who is, we're trying to get the claims going, but they're not showing up. We can get upset even at God in these times, right? But here's the thing, guys. Jesus was intentional about telling his disciples and through his disciples telling us that we're going to experience our fair share of troubles in this life. Just because we believe in Jesus doesn't mean we get to live on easy street this whole life. That's not how it is. We're not guaranteed to pass on our problems just because we believe in Jesus. And while Jesus assured us that, hey, guys, you're going to face trouble, he also taught us that it didn't need to make us troubled. And so John 14, 27, Jesus says this to his disciples, peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you, not as the world gives do I give to you.

Let not your hearts be troubled. Neither let them be afraid. And in this passage, Jesus was facing the cross. He was moments away from the cross. And he's telling his disciples and readying his disciples for his departure. And that in his place, the Holy Spirit was going to be coming. And he's telling him in this passage, the Holy Spirit, I'm going to give to you. I'm going to leave with you my presence, the Holy Spirit, this peace. And it wasn't going to be like any kind of gift that has been given to us.

[ 3 : 33 ] And it's given to us in a different kind of way. And so we know that the Holy Spirit is with us. If you're a believer, that's, you know, he dwells in you and lives with you and guides you. And he's your comfort. He's the way we experience God's love and comfort and goodness. And he's the one that teaches us and guides us in our life. And in the face of every trouble, we know, because of this promise, we know that we never walk alone. Despite what our circumstance, despite what your circumstance may be today, we never walk alone. As one pastor said, the Holy Spirit inside us is better than Jesus beside us. And that's actually what Jesus was saying in that passage to his disciples. But how does this make you and I deal with trials? In a way that when they come, they don't overcome us, but we can overcome them. And so I want to look at two passages today, give us some little good, just pastoral comfort and counseling to you guys, some handles on how we can look to God's written word, his wisdom to us, and just pray as we look into these truths that the Holy Spirit will tattoo them on our hearts so that we can go and we can live in this reality that Jesus said we can be amongst suffering and trials and difficulties, and yet we could have peace and we could have joy.

So James 1 to 2, I want to start there. It says this, count it all joy, my brothers. Right? Count it all joy, my brothers. Awesome start, right? Sweet. Count it all joy. We love some joy, right? Want some joy? Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet. Bring it on. What are we going to meet?

Trials of various kinds. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds. It's like, wait a second. What? How does that work? But James 1 to 3 goes to explain on how this can work. It says, for you know. For you know. So what's that telling us is my joy in trial is based on me knowing something. It's based on my understanding. Am I believing? Am I holding on to a truth? Okay, so what is it? What is that truth we're meant to be holding on to? And he goes on to say, so you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let that steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete in lacking in nothing. And this is what James is telling you. This is what God is saying. This is what you need to know to have joy despite the trial you're facing. God has a purpose for every trial we face. Every situation, every circumstance, no matter what it is, God has a purpose in it. See, God puts our holiness before our happiness.

That's the truth. That's what he's saying to us. But here's the thing. God knows that our holiness will actually lead to our true happiness. Our happiness that can never, our joy that can never be taken away. And God uses trials, therefore, to transform us and change us. That's what he's on about. So trials, what do they do? Trials bring pressure. They bring pressure to our life. They squeeze us, right? And I liken us to like a sponge, right? Trials, they come and they squeeze us like a sponge. So what's inside of us actually comes out. That stuff that's been building up, that's been lurking inside us, that stuff that's been building up and unhealthy, we actually see it squeeze and come out of us. We get to know what that is. And so God uses trials to get our attention. C.S. Lewis said, man, suffering is God's megaphone to his people. Suffering is God's megaphone because oftentimes we drift away from God, we walk away from him, or we start plugging our ears because we don't want to hear what he's saying. And so God overcomes that through trial. God overcomes that through suffering to get our attention. And our sanity as Christians is this, is that God has a greater purpose for every trial. So our suffering isn't meaningless. Our trials can be an opportunity to glorify God and for God to change us to be more like Jesus. See, here's the thing, guys. Pressure can crush things, but pressure can also produce diamonds. Pressure can crush things, but pressure can also produce diamonds. And who you and I turn to and who we look toward in the trials of life determines whether we'll be crushed or whether there's going to be treasure produced in us. And so my last and final scripture that I want to bring to us today is this, Jeremiah 17, 5 to 8. Thus says the Lord, cursed is the man who trusts in man, who makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord. He is like a shrub in the desert. He's basically like a tumbleweed. And he shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness in an uninhabited salt land, uninhabited salt land. But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water. He's like a mighty oak tree. He's like a tree that sends out its roots by the stream and does not fear when heat comes.

It doesn't fear when the trials of life come and we feel that heat of life on us. For its leaves remain green and is not anxious for the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit. So consider the stark contrast we're given here, right? We got the tumbleweed and we got the fruitful tree. One withers in heat and doesn't see any good come, lives in an uninhabited land, no joy. And then the other, and there's no flourishing in the heat. And that one trusts in man for salvation. But then we see the other one, man, it's the fruitful tree. It flourishes in the heat and it trusts in God. It looks to God.

[ 9 : 12 ] The tumbleweed, how it approaches trials, the one who puts their faith in man and the strength of man, how it approaches trials is it looks to itself to solve the problem of the trial, to get itself out of the trial. Or it looks to man. It looks to the insurance agent to bail us out and bring happiness back to us. It looks to the government to fix our problem or FEMA. Where are you at? Fix it. And if that doesn't work, what happens? Well, when that fails, we can become angry and confused and bitter and we get mad and we start to see no higher purpose in the trial. The tumbleweed doesn't. You don't see any higher purpose in the trial. We just see this moment is impeding our happiness. And we even start to think, man, God, where are you at? But the fruitful tree and how it approaches trials, it looks to God.

It's rooted in its faith. It's looking to God. And it sees the trial as an opportunity to glorify God, an opportunity for transformation, an opportunity for those things. And it knows beyond a shadow of a doubt, regardless of the circumstances, you know what? God is with me in the trial.

Israel. That's what the fruitful tree does. Man, God is with us. And he never leaves us and he never forsakes us. If you see the story of Israel in the beginning, when God takes them out of Egypt, they wander through the wilderness, a desert area, a parched land for 40 years. And yet they know God is with them the whole time. He's there as a cloud during the day to take off the edge of the heat as they're wandering through a desert land. He's there with them as a cloud during the day for them to see.

And he's there as a fire at night. They're not alone in the darkness at night. They're not cold and without. God is caring for them. And so the fruitful tree knows that and he can hold onto that and he could have peace and joy within the trial. And then what we can do is we can look and see, man, Jesus showed us this best. And he faced the greatest trial. He faced the greatest heat that anyone could ever face because of the cross. And he knew it as an opportunity to glorify God.

He knew it would bring about salvation. He understood the purpose in the trial. And Hebrews 12, 2 says this, looking to Jesus, saying, guys, believers, look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, it endured the cross. See, Jesus could look and he could say, here's the circumstances I'm heading into. They're going to be hard. They're going to be extreme. There's going to be extreme suffering for myself. But I can approach this with joy because I'm looking through the cross to what God is going to produce on the other side and I can endure. I can endure with great patience and I could even have joy in my heart for what is going to happen on the other side because of this. Friends, God sees and God knows. He knows what each of you are going through. He sees. He's not blind to it. He's with us in this. And he can use this moment. He can use this disaster to make us more like Jesus. Right? I'm going the wrong way with my notes here. And so I want to encourage us today.

[ 12 : 20 ] As we go, listen to the Holy Spirit's guiding. Listen to what he's teaching us. Listen to what he's guiding us into. And remember this truth that I'm hoping that he puts into our hearts that we don't forget that, man, we can endure with joy. Any trial that comes our way, whether it's this one or one into the future, another one you may be facing now, any trial that comes our way, as you look to him, as you look to God, you can endure with joy. And you can serve others sacrificially. And I want to say, man, it's been amazing, amazing, guys. Just the stories I heard of all of you guys going and helping others in so many different ways, shape, and form. So thank you for doing that. But this is how we can look to Jesus in this moment. Man, look to him, the founder and perfecter of our faith. Endure with joy, serve sacrificially. Trust in him and follow his ways. And guys, as we do this, we will not only abide in him, but we're going to abide in his peace. We're going to know that peace, that fellowship of the Holy Spirit. God can use the trials, the pressure of the trial to form treasures of godliness within us. And that's what it means to overcome in the trial, regardless of the outcome, that God forms the treasures of godliness within us. So I just want to take some time for all of us, just we're around tables and stuff like that. I thought it would be appropriate as a response, one way that we can just show some love to each other in our community right now is just to spend some time praying. And we're going to throw up some prayer points right now. And then we'll just take a few minutes right now, as in the tables that you're at, just pray together. I realize that there's kids around, it's going to be a little noisy, but just do your best. And we'll spend a few minutes praying. They're going to have some prayer points up here. And yeah, we'll just pray into those things. If you're up here, maybe just split up into groups of three or four. And let's go for it. And then I'll get back up and I'll close this out. Okay? Thank you.