

# Hope In The Midst Of Troubles

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Date: 12 April 2015

Preacher: Pastor Tom Kraft

[ 0 : 00 ]     Good morning. This is the day that the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it. If any kids would like to come up and sing, they're welcome to join us. This is the day that the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it. This is the day that the Lord has made.

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Good morning. Welcome to Pendleton Center United Methodist Church. I'm Kathleen, affiliated with Connectional Ministries. The congregation, pastors, and staff are thrilled to have you here this morning.

If you've never visited our sanctuary before, be sure and pick up a welcome bag and also fill out a friendship card. We'd like to know about you and what your interests are.

[ 1 : 21 ]     We hope you come again and visit us and God bless. We are glad to have you here this morning. I have a couple of ministry opportunities on our clipboard. One is for our Seneca Street dinners.

If you'd like to help support that, you can bring the food and put it down by the windows in the fellowship hall. And the other is for our rummage sale, which is happening in a week from Saturday.

A week from Saturday. So after next Sunday, not this week, but after next Sunday, you're welcome to bring all your junk, I mean all your treasures, and not your garbage, but your treasures, the things for the ladies, and put it in the back of our sanctuary.

And then that'll be available for sale, I guess, in a week or two. I did want to mention that in your bulletin, there's an envelope. We're trying to see if we can't replace our pews, particularly with the chairs that you see out in the back of the sanctuary.

Our trustees have picked out some chairs that they think are durable and will look good and be reasonably comfortable. And so if you'd like to take a look at that, if you can help and support that effort, we're trying to get some idea of what kind of commitments we'll have by the end of April.

[ 2 : 25 ]     So we appreciate what you can do for that. This week, we have a lot of programs going on. You can look in your little good news and see all the things and activities going on. After the late service today, our confirmation class is going rock climbing.

So you can look into that if you happen to be in the confirmation class and join them for that. Shall we? What's it? Oh, and after the late, well, this afternoon, what time is it, Pastor Lisa?

At 1.30, we have an opportunity to explore ministry with our Native American populations in our area. And we're hosting that here at our church at 1.30 this afternoon.

If you'd like to know more about that, you can see Pastor Lisa about the details for that. Shall we turn our hearts to the Lord in prayer this morning? Dear God, there are so many things that flood through our minds when we come into this place.

We ask that you just push them out, Lord, and just fill them up with you. Bless us in this place to experience you, to feel you, to know you more completely, to worship you. In Jesus' name we pray.

[ 3 : 25 ] Amen. Amen. I'd like to invite the kids to come up and join me. Any kids want to come on up? Come on up, guys.

Anybody else want to come on up? You know what I got in this box? I got part of the ocean. I got part of the ocean in this box.

Do you believe me? No? That sounds crazy that I got part of the ocean in this box? But I do. Would I lie to you? No.

So I must get part of the ocean in this box, right? You know what I've got? Seashells. And I picked those out of the ocean myself down along the North Carolina Seashore.

Okay? And I found those up in my office and I haven't brought these in a while. So you all can have a seashell in a minute. Not right now yet. Okay? You guys can pick one out and take a piece of the ocean with you.

[ 4 : 31 ] Yeah. You know, sometimes we hear things about God that might even seem like they're just too amazing to be true. But that doesn't mean they're not true. If we believe in God and we trust in God, God will always be there for us.

So all we have to do is believe. Now, I've never lied to you and I won't lie to you. Okay? So if I say I got a piece of the ocean, I got a piece of the ocean, don't I? Yeah. Yeah. Okay?

And if God says he's going to do something for you, God will do it. We just have to trust him. All right? What are you guys thankful for this morning? You want to raise your hand if you want to share something? My mom and dad, my guinea pig.

My family, my mom and dad. My Nana, my Nana, my friends and family, my sisters, friends and family, my mom, my mommy and daddy, my mom, my dad, my mom and dad.

Dear Lord, we thank you for our parents, our friends, our family, even our guinea pigs and all the blessings you give to us. We thank you for your promises. Help us to always believe. In Jesus' name we pray.

[ 5 : 50 ] Amen. Now, if you come back out here as we go to church school, you can have a session. Okay? So all the kids are welcome to go to church school now. I don't know.

Yeah. I'm a little afraid to do it now. See, yeah. All right, fine. So we're going to have to do this then. All right. There was one thing.

When I hit about 35, there was a thing that I noticed, you know, dancing. Going up into the air, like for some big jump or something, was still just as easy as it ever was.

It was the coming down that got bad. And yeah, I remember one time that I went up and I just, I lost, I lost my senses for a moment. I just lost my mind and went way up into the air and I thought at the top of this jump, I thought, oh no, I'm coming down now.

And it was just very bad. But I am grateful. I am thankful for all the children. That was the thing that just struck me this morning is I saw them all up here and watched that little girl just, you know, jump right off the, right off the platform like that.

[ 7 : 13 ] And what a blessing it is to see them all and to have them all, to have this wonderful place to teach them and to bring them up in the Lord. Let's be worshipful as we bring our tithes and offerings and offer up all of the gifts that God has so richly blessed us with.

Yes? All right. There. There. There. There. There. There. There. There. There. There. There. There. There. There.

There. There. There. There. There. There. There. There. There. There. There. There. There. There. Dear Heavenly Father, we do give you thanks and praise for this day and for the opportunity to gather together and worship you.

We thank you for your presence among us, that you come here and bless us and bind us together in your great love. It's too wonderful, too wonderful for words.

Lord, we ask in Jesus' name that you bless this offering and give us wisdom to know how to best use it for the furtherance of your kingdom. By your Holy Spirit, many will be drawn to faith in Jesus Christ and be saved.

[ 8 : 46 ] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please be seated. Thank you.

We do have some concerns to share this morning and hope that you will keep these families and their loved ones and all in our prayers. We do have a couple of families that we are aware of right now who lost loved ones this week.

DJ Mahars' cousin Debbie died, and I understand that was a sudden thing, and Errol Zook's mom died. We are also in need of prayer for healing for Scott Jane's father and Kristen Heumann's grandfather.

They're both very ill. We do have some folks who are recovering from surgery as well that we know about, Jan Inwards and Bonnie Loring and Debbie Joseph, all of whom are in need of our healing touch as well.

So let's take these concerns to the Lord in prayer, along with all the concerns you have in your hearts. Amen. Heavenly Father, we are here together, and we are in awe of your presence, in awe that you, the creator of all that is, come into our presence, come into our midst, that you want to be with us, that you want to touch our lives, to walk with us wherever it is that we go, to lead us and to guide us.

[ 10 : 35 ] God, we are grateful that you hear us and that you answer our prayers. Lord God, we pray now in Jesus' name for all those who are in need of a healing touch from you.

Whether it be in their spirits or their souls or their bodies, we just ask that you would touch them, bring healing, bring peace into their situations.

And pray, Lord God, for all of those who are caregivers as well, for doctors, for nurses, for medical professionals of all kinds, for family members, for friends.

Give them patience. Give them endurance. Give them compassion, Lord. Help each and every one.

And pray in Jesus' name for those who are grieving losses. And pray that they will be comforted. Send your spirit, Lord.

[ 11 : 48 ] Let them know that you love them. We pray, Father God, for all of those people in the world who don't know you.

We just pray in Jesus' name that you would continue to draw them by your Holy Spirit. We pray for all of those who are bringing the light of your gospel, the light of your good news.

into their lives, into the world. We pray that the hearts of those who need you for their salvation would be softened.

That their hearts and their minds would be open to receive from you. We pray that they would turn from the sin in their lives. We pray that you would transform us and make us to be a shining light brighter than we were last week.

Brighter than we were yesterday. Give us boldness, Lord, and courage. To allow your spirit to speak through us.

[ 13 : 20 ] To people who are hurting, to people who are dying, to people who are in need. God, we pray for all of those.

All of those of your children in the body of Christ who are suffering persecutions of all kinds. We pray for deliverance, Lord God, and we pray for your sustaining power, for endurance, for peace in the midst of the storm, for each and every one.

Now, Lord, we pray for your blessing. We pray for your blessing. Now, Lord, we take a moment and lift up those names and those situations that are on our hearts that have not been spoken out loud today.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.  
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 14 : 50 ] Amen. would be of a blessing to you, Lord. And we pray that you bless Pastor Tom too. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Shall we hear from the word of the Lord? Good morning.

Good morning. This morning's scripture reading is from James, the first book, verses 2 through 8. Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt. Because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord.

[ 16 : 31 ] He is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does. This is the word of the Lord. Amen. Thanks, Jim. A number of years ago, there was a fellow by the name of Howard who had a best friend named Don.

Howard was a super salesman, and Don was a super mechanic. Howard knew nothing about mechanics, and Don knew nothing about sales. But they got together and decided to start a business selling springs for trucks.

Now, most of you may not even know what that means. But these are heavy-duty things that hold up trucks. And there was a business for it, and they figured that they could make it work between the two of them.

So they started into business, and after about two or three years, things were going so well, they needed somebody to handle the books. And that's when my mother came into the picture, and that's why I know about their business.

And things were going fantastic. They had the super salesman, the great mechanic, and somebody to take care of the books. And they said, Don, life was good. Things sailed on like that for about five years until all of a sudden, Don dropped dead of a heart attack.

[ 17 : 43 ] Don passed away and left Howard with nothing but a couple of junior mechanics who had worked a little bit with Don and a business he knew really very little about.

The stress and the strain and the anxieties of this situation started to wear on him. He now had a widow and Don's wife who needed an income from his business, even though there was nobody there to actually produce that income with him.

His marriage fell apart. His business struggled. He had lost his best friend. He had lost his partner. And it looked like life was just kicking him in the tail.

And his future looked him. James says to us, Consider it pure joy when you face trials. When you face troubles and struggles, consider it pure joy.

Wow. Didn't see that coming. Is it pure joy? Imagine you're going about your life and everything's calm, everything's good.

[ 18 : 51 ] You're taking a cruise out in the harbor and all of a sudden, a storm comes up. Just sit right back and you'll hear a tale, a tale of a fateful trip That started from this tropic port aboard this tiny ship The mate was a mighty sailing man, the skipper brave and sure Five passengers sent sail that day for a three-hour tour A three-hour tour But when they started getting rough, the tiny ship was tossed If not for the courage of the fearless crew The minnow would be lost The minnow would be lost The ship's aground on the shore of this uncharted desert isle With Gilligan, the skipper too The millionaire and his wife The movie star

The professor and Mary Ann Here on Gilligan's Island Who hasn't seen Gilligan's Island?

I mean, really, it's iconic. Gilligan and the crew went out for a little three-hour tour of the harbor.

A storm comes up, they find themselves on a deserted island, they don't even know each other, they have no idea what to do about how to survive, and they're stuck.

How do we hold on to joy, and hope, and faith, when life hands us tragedy? We can have all sorts of things happen to us.

[ 20 : 41 ] Someone we love dies, unexpectedly, or even if we expect it. Changes everything. We find our relationships, our marriages, our romances falling apart.

We lose our job. It may even just be a life change, and the next thing you know, we have an empty house. And our life has changed, and it just feels as if somebody's turned our world upside down, and James says, consider it pure joy.

Not in my world, it's not pure joy, to face troubles and trials and tragedies. How about you? Pure joy. How can he even say that? Struggles are a test.

Temptation. To see whether or not we will, in the midst of them, grow closer to God, or push away from God. In Corinthians, they talk about it in chapter 10, where it says, there's no temptation that people have not faced.

And God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you're tempted, he'll provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. Under it. Not it'll go away.

[ 21 : 50 ] Not you'll have no problems. Not you won't have these pains and struggles. But you'll be able to stand up under it. Trials give us a choice. Are we going to let them crush our lives and crush our faith, or they can strengthen us?

We're in Easter season. Right after Jesus was resurrected from the grave, it says that the disciples, the apostles, his closest ones, were up in an upper room with the doors locked out of fear.

Some women had told him Jesus had resurrected from the grave, but, you know, it was just some women had told him this. So they really weren't sure what to believe. They were hiding. They were scared. And it says Jesus appeared to them.

And he says to them, I'm here. Don't be afraid. And he breathed on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of God was pushed into them. That's what it means to be inspired, to receive the Spirit of God. But the best name of all the apostles of history was not present.

[ 22 : 56 ] St. Thomas. He had missed this occasion. And so he shows up a little late, and they say to him, we've seen the risen Lord. And he says, I'm not falling for this again.

Unless I put my hands in his wounds, and my fingers in his side, I won't believe. Thomas had been disappointed. He had put his life in this man.

He was his Savior, his Lord, his leader, his friend, his future, his dreams. Everything he had was in Jesus.

And he saw him die on a cross. It's hard to take. In the midst of struggles, it's hard to have faith.

And these trials can strengthen us, or they can rip us away from God. Trials, believe it or not, are actual opportunity. If we learn to persevere, faith produces perseverance.

[ 24 : 04 ] Let perseverance finish its work, that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If we persevere, we have strength. We become stronger through the process.

It develops character. We read in Romans last time, about a month ago, in chapter 5, where it said, we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character, and character hope, and hope does not disappoint us.

Because God has poured out his love into our hearts, by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. When we go through troubles, and struggles, and trials, it actually makes our life stronger.

I used to work for a company called Chemlon Lawn Care Company. We would work about 80, 85 hours a week in the season. Sometimes we were talking about 80, 90 degree weather.

[ 25 : 00 ] And out there in the blazing sun, we'd sit in the cab of the truck that went up to 100, 110 degrees. And after about 7, 8, 9, 10 hours of hard, heavy work out in the sun, you'd sit in that cab and say, I don't want to get out.

You'd pull up to a house and say, I don't want to go out there. I don't want to do it. I want to quit right now. The problem is, I had a family.

And that family depended on me bringing home a paycheck. So you'd figure out a way to muster up enough strength to go ahead and do it one more time. Again, and again, and again, even if you're facing exhaustion.

Later in the day, we had the joy of going back to our branch location where we had to call the customers who hadn't paid their bills and try and collect money. Anybody here ever do collections? Talk about a miserable job.

That's about as miserable as it gets. I did not want to make those phone calls. I really didn't. Now you might ask, what's that got to do with anything? Well, that lesson I learned when I was young has affected who I am even today.

[ 26 : 15 ] There are times when I work 12, 13, 14 hour day. It's 9, 10 o'clock at night. I finally settle down to just relax a little bit.

I get a phone call. Pastor Tom, something's happened. Someone's in the hospital. Someone's died. He needs you. They can come in the middle of my sleep.

I never know when it's going to happen. And I'll tell you the truth. What I want to say is, yeah, well, call me in the morning. My day's over. But you don't. You dig a little deeper and you get dressed and you go.

Sometimes, I don't even want to answer the phone. Sometimes, I hear about a problem you have. I don't want to make the phone call. I don't want to call you.

I don't want to hear it. I really don't. Imagine listening to not just a few complaints or concerns from your friends and family, but from a couple thousand people.

[ 27 : 19 ] You realize I hear about tragedy and problems and disappointments and discouragement and things like this every single day of my life. over and over and over again.

But I make the call. And by the way, I'm not saying any of this because I want to discourage you from calling me or don't call me when it's late. You're supposed to. It's my job. Really.

You're not doing anything wrong. That's not the point. The point is that because I went through that trial and that struggle earlier in my life, now I know how to handle this today.

because I've walked through hundreds of funerals and deaths, I know how to walk through the valley of the shadow of death with people. It doesn't get easier.

But I get stronger and more able to do it. See, trials can strengthen us. They can make our lives stronger. They can teach us how to persevere. They can teach us how to hang on to hope even when we feel like giving up.

[ 28 : 25 ] God gives us little trials. God's wisdom. So that we'll be able to face the bigger ones. Trials also open up our minds and our lives to God's wisdom. God's wisdom.

In this passage, in verse 5, it says, If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

God will give us wisdom. By the way, wisdom is actually a woman, Sophia, in case you were wondering. So it says, God will give us Sophia.

God will pour it into us. Not something that we will learn. Not something that we've accomplished. It says it's not based on who you are and what you are.

He won't find fault. He'll just give it to you because you asked for it. And we need wisdom. Wisdom helps us accomplish things we otherwise wouldn't be able to.

[ 29 : 24 ] Wisdom is not knowledge. Knowledge is a bunch of information. Wisdom is the ability to take that information and use it in a valuable way. Otherwise, we may not perceive the world as it really is.

Sometimes, even the trials are not what they seem. Last week on Thursday, I went up to Niagara Falls for the dinner and I saw a sign on the sink that the sink was out because it was all clogged up and I asked them and they said, well, they're going to have to get the renal to pour it down there.

Well, the renal works on a little clog, not a big one. So I said, this is easy enough. I got some time. I'll take apart the trap and do a little snack and get this fixed, right? It's not a big job. I can do this. I got the time.

So I got down on my hands and knees and I put a bucket underneath the trap and I grabbed the hole of the little nut there that holds it together and I turned it and the whole trap came apart and shattered in my hand.

The whole thing just boom, smashed into pieces in my hand. Water came pouring into the bucket. I pulled it out and looked at it. I got this smelly goop on my hand and I got this broken trap.

[ 30 : 28 ] But imagine if they poured renal down it. Now we got acid sitting in the midst of all of this. Somebody was still going to have to pull that trap apart and it would have broken free with acid shooting all over the place.

So it was a blessing that I broke it for them so that somebody else can fix it, right? Wisdom is knowing, okay, I'm out of here.

I'll fix it if nobody else does. I don't care. The point is that sometimes God just gives us wisdom and helps us to understand what we see as trials may actually be a benefit which is why James says to us consider it pure joy when you face trials.

We're going to be looking at James for the next few weeks. We're actually doing a Bible study on the book of James and yes, we're going to be looking at Gilligan's Island and the seven deadly sins. If you didn't know it, the seven deadly sins are the basis for each character in Gilligan's Island.

So each week we'll look at a character, not today, but in the next seven weeks, from Gilligan's Island and how that relates to our relationships with each other and what James talks about our relationship also with God.

[ 31 : 42 ] There's actually going to be three or four Bible studies on this too with a whole different set of stuff so you can go to one of those if you want to. You see, trials, they cause us to really look at our lives, to evaluate who we are and they either make us draw closer to God or push away from God.

Otherwise, we just wander through life aimlessly. like when it says in here, but it's like the waves of the sea blown and tossed by the wind, double-minded, with no direction.

Trials challenge our lives. They're not just like wandering around. So many of us go through life really, truly like a ping-pong ball just bouncing off of things, going from one place to another with no direction, no goals, no purpose.

When we face a struggle, when we face a trial, when we face these kind of challenges, it causes us to have to dig deep and say, why do I exist? What is my purpose? What am I about?

What am I going to be able to push aside that doesn't matter and what do I need to hold on to because this is the most important thing? The characters from Gilligan's Island had one purpose. They had one absolute purpose since the moment they landed on that island.

[ 33 : 00 ] What was it? Get off the island. That's right. They knew exactly what they were doing and it drew them together. It caused them to be people who were stronger, who were using all of their resources and all of their gifts to make something happen.

They climbed up in trees to watch. They climbed mountains to look. They set signal fires. They listened to the radio. They came up with schemes. They built the boats. Mostly what they did didn't work, but they worked at it every day, every week and it made them stronger.

It gave them purpose and those trials do the same thing to us. They cause us to have to make a decision. Trials force us to trust God or give up on God.

See, when we're not struggling, when everything's going well, we don't really need God. I know that's going to sound bad, but that's the truth. You know, when we're just cruising along on our three-hour tour and everything's going great, we're out sailing on the boat, it's real easy.

When we've got the money in the bank, when we've got a good job, when we've got skills, when we've got our help, when we've got family and friends all around us, we just turn to those resources when we have a problem and we assume we can make it through this world ourselves.

[ 34 : 21 ] We turn to God when those things crash. The trials actually push us towards God because we have to make a decision. When we don't have those things to count on anymore, when those things start to crumble and fall apart around us, the only thing sometimes we have left is God.

And we have to decide whether we're going to follow God or whether we're going to push away. When you ask, you must believe and not doubt because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea blown and tossed by the wind.

that person won't receive anything because they're double-minded, going off in all kinds of directions. You know, the devil wants to make you doubt everything.

The devil wants you to doubt God's very existence. Ask a little child if they believe in God. They don't even think about it. Of course they don't. We're born to believe in God.

It's natural for us. And then as we grow through life, we work harder and harder at trying to create doubts. And the world around us does it too. Science is based on the idea of doubt.

[ 35 : 27 ] We're going to put out a theory and then we're going to do everything we can to knock it down to see if it's going to be real, right? The media is based on doubt. Let's create problems and tell people about all the troubles and struggles going on.



How about politics? Politics are not about let me tell you how good I am or what I can do. It's about let me tell you what's wrong with that person, why you don't want to vote for them. Isn't that what most of it is? 80% of campaigning is telling you why the other person is a bigger bum than them.

Don't trust that guy. That woman, you've got to watch out for her. Right? It's not about what builds up. It's about what rips down and makes you doubt everything. And the advertising.

Oh gosh, the advertising. Did you actually buy the right car? Do you use the proper toilet paper? Have you bought the good dog food for your poor little doggy?

They're giving bad dog food too. How could you be such an awful order you don't take care of the poor little dog? If you don't buy the right beer, those horses won't come down your driveway.

[ 36 : 33 ] Oh my gosh, all they do is make you doubt and question whether or not you've got the right soap, you've got the right product for this, for that. Did I buy a phone and I'll regret it tomorrow?

Oh no, I have doubts. And there are things we should doubt. But not God. Not God. We need to hold on to God.

They went on a three hour tour of the harbor and life crashed into them and everything changed. If not for the courage of the fearless through the middle would be lost.

The goal is to believe. To hold on to hope even when it seems like it's not possible. Because God wants us to believe. And God can bring victories out of our trials.

God can turn our struggles into blessings. God can make death into resurrection. And when we come through the struggle and we overcome the pain and the difficulties of life we end up with more more character more strength and more trust.

[ 37 : 52 ] Doubt is the enemy of our faith. God wants us to have a blessed assurance that he's with us. Not to take away all our problems it's delusional to believe that somehow if we believe in Jesus all our problems disappear.

Anybody who's a Christian knows that's not true. Amen? This is just not real. The power of God is that he carries us through the valley of the shadow of death and strengthens us in the process.

Thomas. Thomas went to that room every day. The Bible says Jesus didn't show up for a whole week.

Now think about that. Every day he shows up and the other disciples say, no really we saw him Tom really we really did. Yeah I don't believe it. I don't believe it. Where is he? Every day Jesus could have shown up the next day.

He could have shown up at that very moment. Right? He waited a whole week to test Thomas. And then he shows up. He says, dude, you want to put your fingers in my hand?

[ 39 : 03 ] Go for it. You want to put your hand in my side? Reach right in there Tom. Stop doubting and believe. Thomas said, my Lord and my God.

He changed because he believed because he stopped doubting and he changed because he had friends that held him up in the midst of his doubts and his struggles.

Because that's what a church is. A supportive community that holds each other up. Relationships are built on common goals. Just like they wanted to get off the island we all have common goals and principles that draw us together.

I tell couples when they're getting married that going to church actually strengthens their marriage because they start hearing the same values, the same principles, the same goals, the same directions and little by little they start to grow closer together.

If we live in separate worlds we'll blow our relationships apart. But God gives us a place where we can intentionally work on a purpose and possibilities.

[ 40 : 16 ] James starts this out by addressing it to brothers and sisters. This isn't to anybody. This isn't to whom it may concern. This isn't to the general culture. This is to the gathered people who we call believers in God.

Psalms 68 tells us that God puts us in a family when we're lonely. He leads us forth like the prisoners being released in singing. But if not, if we doubt, if we push away from God, He shoves us out into that sun-scorched land.

Instability comes when we're trying to go in two directions. James talks about being double-minded. It can't be going two ways. It will rip you apart.

It's true of churches. It's true of families. It's true of people. You can't go in two directions. It will tear you apart. We have to be surrounded by people that support us, that strengthen us, that give us a goal.

What was their goal on the island? To get off the island. To get off the island. And you know what? We got the same purpose. The purpose of this life is to get off this island and get to the next one.

[ 41 : 36 ] Only a fool thinks that this is paradise. We got these bazillionaires who are trying to figure out a way to stay alive in this world forever. I don't want to stay alive here forever. Heck, I just read an article that said if I get fat, I won't get dementia.

Seriously. But then you'll die of a heart attack so it won't make any difference. Really? Who wants to live in this crazy world? Talk about going in two different directions at the same time.

I can't win no matter what I do. It's a setup. This world's broken. It's like living on Gilligan's Island. We don't want to stay here. The purpose of this life is to figure out a way to take this little tiny journey we have here and stretch it into eternity with God and having others that strengthen us and support us and encourage us.

It gives us hope. And we have possibilities that are unimaginable. You know, alone, you can only do so much. And even if you have a partner, you can only go so far.

But the more you add, the stronger it gets. When Don died, Howard felt alone. And I really never thought about it until the other day that he wasn't alone.

[ 42 : 54 ] In the Bible, it says a cord of three strands is not easily broken. because even if you bust off one, you still have two wound together. I never really thought about what my mother meant to that man.

She was a mother to those guys in the shop that didn't know anything. Kept straight in the mouth. Encouraged Howard along the journey. When my mother died, even though she had been retired for 20, 25 years, Howard was at the funeral in tears because in the midst of the brokenness, he needed somebody to hold him up and help him rebuild his life.

And he did build his business and he did get it back together. But he didn't do it alone. And we don't do it alone either. We need other people that will hold us up and strengthen us and give us possibilities we didn't know we could do alone.

Imagine. Not what one person can do. Not what a couple people can do. We have power and energy of a couple thousand people working together.

We can transform this community. And we belong to a faith that has two billion people. That can change the world if we work with each other or each other.

[ 44 : 16 ] And by the way, a community is not just about what you get from it, but it's also about what you give to it. Second Corinthians chapter one tells us this.

God of all comfort who comforts us in all our troubles does it so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.

God inspires you, fills you with that Holy Spirit so you can push it out to other people. You want to know how to feel better about yourself when your life is falling apart?

Go find somebody else who's broken and help them. Go find somebody else whose life is crumbling and pick them up. We're not meant to just receive. We're meant to receive and give it out.

That Spirit's supposed to so overflow from us that it goes everywhere. Life will beat you up. People will disappoint you.

[ 45 : 23 ] They'll betray you. And just this world we live in in itself has enough disappointment and brokenness and pain to destroy our spirits.

I know that. But we have to decide whether we're going to get closer to God or push away. and God is the one that can carry us through if we believe more.

What was the name of the boat? Minnow. Who names their boat the minnow? Seriously. Oh, I got a minnow up a boat.

I mean, who would do that? Look how ridiculous that is. I wouldn't have my name name my boat a minnow. Would you? I'd name it the bear the buffalo I'd name it the whale the resurrection the open tomb or just plain believe.

Can life come out of brokenness? How many of you lived in the Buffalo area for more than 10 years? Well, you know what brokenness is. I mean, we decided a few years ago that our city was still going down the hill that we just all put a border there and said, we're not going near that thing.

[ 46 : 38 ] What a mess. Tragedy. Disaster. It'll never come back. That place is done. Toast. Write it off. The world broke Buffalo off. Have you been downtown lately? Building cranes and stuff going on all over the place.

Not because of what one person did or one effort. It's happened from all sorts of different angles. One thing wouldn't have made it happen. It's happening here. It's happening there. It's happening here. It's happening there. And all of a sudden it's changing.

And the darkness and gloom breaks forth into the light of the resurrection. The sun will come out tomorrow. Bet your bottom dollar. Well, the sun's out.

See? See? Winter is gone. Amen. Winter is gone. It's not coming back. For what? For what?

Because God always has a promise. A promise and a hope and a dream. If we just believe.

[ 47 : 39 ] Thomas believed in God. And St. Thomas went on to India where he actually changed the people and there's still a church today in India.

I don't mean a little church. I mean a whole group of people who worship God in India where we would probably think there are no Christians. There's Christians who go back as far as our faith does. Because Thomas believed.

Stop that and believe. Believe not in what you got in the bank account. Believe not in your health. Don't believe in your intelligence. Don't believe in even the world around you.

Believe in the one that controlled the winds and the waves in the past. And can push your storms aside as well. You know so many times when we come to confess before God we focus on the things we've done.

The little things where we've made a mistake in our behaviors and that's important. We need to do that. But probably bigger than that is we need to confess our doubts.

[ 48 : 44 ] We need to confess that sometimes we just don't really believe as we should. we've spent so much of our life trying to figure out a way to forget and doubt our God and count on us.

And when it all comes down and everything crashes around us really the thing that's there to hold us up is that God. So let's put that before God this morning shall we?

Dear God in heaven I have sinned by my actions by my thoughts and by my doubts.

Forgive me Lord. Teach me how to live my life truly believing trusting you living for you and experiencing that hope that only you can give.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Today Jesus says to us stop doubting. Just put that doubt out of your mind and believe.

[ 49 : 58 ] Believe in a God that can carry you through the valley of the shadow of death. That can carry you through the brokenness of life. That can carry you through this broken life. and get us off the island and into eternity.

In the name of Jesus Christ your sins are forgiven. In the name of Jesus Christ your sins are forgiven. Glory to God. Amen. We come to the table this morning.

We celebrate Holy Communion. Holy Communion is one of the places where we know that we can come to the God in whom we can trust. It sometimes is hard to believe what we can't see.

But God through this sacrament has given us something to touch. Something to taste. Something to really really feel that connection.

God does enter into us through the sacrament of Holy Communion. We can be affirmed in our faith. We can be affirmed in knowing how much God desires to be in our lives.

[ 51 : 12 ] How much God loves us. How much God wants to lead us and to guide us. We don't have to doubt. We can receive God this morning.

we can be sure of every hope that we have in God. Everyone is welcome at the table.

Whether it's the first time you've come into the church or you've been coming all your life. Whether it's the first time you've ever come to any church. You are welcome at the table. You are welcome to receive the blessings God has poured out.

all you have to do is catch him and come and get him. You are welcome at the table if you love God if you earnestly repent of your sin and seek to live in peace as a disciple of Jesus Christ come this morning and share the hope that is a sure hope.

the Lord be with you. Lift up your hearts. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to you Father Almighty creator of heaven and earth.

[ 52 : 31 ] You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away and our love failed your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity made covenant to be our sovereign God brought us to a land flowing with milk and honey and set before us the way of life.

And so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of power and might heaven and earth are full of your glory Hosanna in the highest blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord Hosanna in the highest Holy are you and blessed is your son Jesus Christ by the baptism of his suffering death and resurrection you gave birth to your church delivered us from slavery to sin and death and made with us a new covenant by water and the spirit by your great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of your son from the dead and to an inheritance that is imperishable undefiled and unfading once we were no people but now we are your people declaring your wonderful deeds in Christ who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light and on the night in which he gave himself up for us he took bread and gave thanks to you and he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples and said take it eat this is my body which is given for you do this in remembrance of me and when the supper was over he took the cup and gave you thanks and praise and gave it to his disciples and he said drink from this all of you this is the cup of my blood the blood of the new covenant poured out for you poured out for many for the forgiveness of sin do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me on the day you raised him from the dead he was recognized by his disciples in the breaking of the bread and in the power of your Holy Spirit your church has continued in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup and so in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith

Christ has died Christ has risen Christ will come again pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and wine make them be for us the body and blood of Christ that we may be for the world the body of Christ redeemed by his blood by your spirit make us one with Christ one with each other and one in ministry to all the world until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet through your son Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit in your Holy Church all honor and glory is yours almighty Father now and forever amen shall we pray together as disciples of Jesus Christ his children the prayer he taught us our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever amen across the sea somewhere waiting for me my Lord will stand on golden sands and he's got ships we'll go save

Bobby Darin anybody remember Bobby Darin I know that takes us to the old folk remembering Bobby Darin you know why I didn't know this Bobby Darin died when he was 37 years old he had a congenital disease his wife never got over it his family never got over it tragedy it can happen when we're not even expecting it my sister-in-law died at 36 we don't know when life is going to kick us so hard that we're not sure if we can get back up again I can tell you God can always give us possibilities God can always give us hope God has a promise for us for this life and even more importantly God will get us off the island and get us to the next place where there's no sorrow or pain struggle or mourning or death that order will pass away hold on to God hold on as hard and as strong as you can stop doubting and believe

God will make your life full of miracles may God be with you may God bless you may God pour over you all possibilities he has God bless you Jesus God bless you to watch you OK God bless you ahora may not have experiments that were all you know and you all we are amazing