



SABBATH & WORK

Working Through Hope

May 12, 2024

[Worship Music Playlist](#)

Prelude – Your Work Is Happening Here by Porters Gate

Welcome & Mother's Day Ceremony (**Jeremy**)

..I have calmed and quieted my soul. Like a child content in its mother's arms, my soul is a child content.
(Psalm 131:2)

Moms, by their God-given nature, are protective. Like a hen who covers her chicks when the weather sours, moms step in to ensure their children are able to grow up well, having every opportunity to experience a good and full life. Whether through spoken comfort, assuring hugs, or aggressive defense, moms are always on the lookout over theirs, soaring high, keeping a watchful and ready eye! And while most moms will say they don't want their children to grow up, the truth is, everything they are doing is so that their children actually do grow up. As much as Deedra talks about wishing Cohen and Lily would stay the age they are today, whatever age today is (!), her heart desires to see both grow up whole and holy into who God has crafted them to be while never forgetting that part of His crafting is the inescapable reality of always having her as their mother! Psalm 131 honors both the tremendous responsibility and loving desire of such mothering.

I am amazed by this psalm. It's one of my favorites, in part because it describes our relation to God in one of the most freeing metaphors in our scriptures. In turn, it describes how God relates to us in one of the most assuring analogies. Even if we have not known good mothering, what we have known allows us to recognize the true, good, and beautiful when we see it, hear it, and even long for it in our souls.

The Jerusalem Bible, attempting to retain the literalism of the Hebrew metaphor, translates verse two this way:

"[It's] Enough for me to keep my soul tranquil and quiet like a child in its mother's arms, as content as a child that has been weaned."

I think that's every mother's vision. For her child to grow up, to be weaned to take appropriate responsibility, to become one who can be whole and holy, but one who never outgrows the relationship, even if the way we interact changes. We can admit that our human aspiration for this honorable desire can twist into helicopter parenting, passive-aggressiveness, constant meddling, or even a justification of absentee-ish. Yet the truth is, the image of God mothering us is the vision of a complete and free life as it is meant to be, a life of relating to God as a growing-up kid.

What an honorable image and vision for mothers on this day. Your care, protection, affection, and embrace keep us growing up but not being all grown up; the picture of our soul at peace and mature. What an honorable image and vision for the greatness of mothering others, our own or others. Your care, protection, affection, and embrace helping our children live life like it really is, in relationship, free because of

relationship. Mothering your child(ren) to be “impatience with mediocrity,” to develop a dissatisfaction with the way the world is and a desire for it and us to be better, to develop “a hopeful striving for the best God has” for them, from a place of loving security, with calmed hearts and quieted souls, like children content in their mother’s arms.¹ We honor this vision today as we honor all those here and those who are not. The delights (in & from) and difficulties (loss, in, of, of becoming) testify to the significance of mothering and this vision, and why today is a worthy but too small a gesture of gratitude to the Maker of mothers and mothers (physical and spiritual, practically and truly) who make us.

Invite the kids up front to take flowers to their moms and the women of the church.

Pray and then read the Call to Worship.

CALL TO WORSHIP | Psalm 131

God, I’m not trying to rule the roost, I don’t want to be king of the mountain. I haven’t meddled where I have no business or fantasized grandiose plans. I’ve kept my feet on the ground, I’ve cultivated a quiet heart. Like a child content in its mother’s arms, my soul is a child content. Wait, Israel, for God. **Wait with hope.** Hope now; hope always!

Song #1 – Kids by Citizens

Song #2 – Hope Has Come Near Us by Paper Horses

Dismiss Kids

¹ Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience In The Same Direction: discipleship in an instant society*, 152.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & INTRO | Entering Awareness Sessions 2-4 & “Saved”

Entering Awareness **May Plan Slide**...Sessions & **GROUND RULES AGREEMENT** (**QR Code Slide**).

We are Entering Awareness together so that we respond to the reality of living life post-Easter morning.

Easter is a return, a restoration to life whole and holy in rhythm with God’s very good creating and re-creating: our resting with Him in His work and our joining Him in our working. Easter is a return, a resurrection of this established good relational order because of what the events of Easter accomplished.

Easter morning brought salvation. Sin and death judged, overcome, defeated; and life forever, life with God, whole and holy, bright and beautiful breaking forth into every crevasse and corner of despair and darkness. That’s why we celebrate Easter so. Through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, we are

...set free from [our] bondage to corruption [what perishes] and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God...**For in this hope we were saved.** (Romans 8:20-21, 24)

The full grandeur of this salvation, ours and the world’s, is why we say to one another what the psalmist said:

Wait, Israel [Christ City Church], for God. **Wait with hope.** Hope now; hope always! (Psalm 131:3)

Waiting, as we know and the psalmist implies, is not to make a life passively or hesitantly, but freely, contented in the care and security—the salvation—of whom we make a life good with/through. Which is why as the pastoral note mentioned this week, we wait through hope.

Hope is a force drawing us into the fullness of what we see in faith, compelling us towards the completion of the love of God made manifest amongst us that first and final Easter weekend. This is why, as Dylan began unpacking for us last week, we can say that...

HOPE is powerful, inevitable, and embodied... 'forward looking and forward moving, and therefore...revolutionizing and transforming the present.'

Hope is why we can pray and be prayed for as Paul prays for the Colossian faith family, those learning to work (make life good) through hope. We’ve invited _____ to read Paul’s prayer for and over us.

PRE-SERMON READING | Colossians 1:9-14

Be assured that from the first day we heard of you, we haven’t stopped praying for you, asking God to give you wise minds and spirits attuned to his will, and so acquire a thorough understanding of the ways in which God works. We pray that **you’ll live well for the Master, making him proud of you as you work hard** in his orchard. **As you learn more and more how God works, you will learn how to do your work.** We pray that you’ll have **the strength to stick it out over the long haul**—not the grim strength of gritting your teeth but the glory-strength God gives. It is strength that endures the unendurable and spills over into joy, thanking the Father who makes us **strong enough to take part in everything bright and beautiful that he has for us.** **God rescued us from dead-end alleys and dark dungeons. He’s set us up in the kingdom of the Son he loves so much, the Son who got us out of the pit we were in, got rid of the sins we were doomed to keep repeating.**

SERMON | Drawn to Completion

I think it is safe to say that at some level or another, each of us desires Paul's prayer for his faith friends to be prayed over us and **be answered**. Knowing us, I can attest that we wish to please God and be attuned to His will and understanding of His ways. You, like me, long to "live well for the Master, making Him proud as you work well in his orchard" so that we might "take part in everything bright and beautiful that He has for us."

In faith, we pray this prayer and believe this prayer will be answered, that we'll learn how to do our work as we learn more about how God works, for that is what faith is: "an attitude, the joy of living a life in which God has a stake [as Easter demonstrates most clearly and eternally], or being involved with God,"² that is making a life good with God. As we've said, work is the making, crafting, forging, and sustaining of life. **Work is everything we do in words and deeds to make a life in our everyday roles, relationships, and responsibilities.** It's not just or even primarily what we get paid for, but our efforts, attitudes, and affections that shape our existence with God, others, the earth, and even ourselves. Which is why good work, work well done, is the work of faith.

Working through faith, we said, "...is to respond to what we see,"³ in the life and love of Jesus. To respond as enginers and husbands, nurses and mothers, counselors and children, co-workers, roommates, friends, spiritual companions, neighbors, executives and administrators, MMA fighters and missionaries, and the like, to God's love for us in Christ dead and alive, salvation's arrival, God for us, and God with us...God for the life we are making, God in the lives we make life with.

Yet, there is more required than faith to work well. Faith keeps us focused and responsive to the reality that we see in life with Jesus, but as we know and Paul said, there is a stick-to-it-ness, a patient endurance, a strength required to do good work:

We pray that you'll have **the strength to stick it out over the long haul**—not the grim strength of gritting your teeth but the glory-strength God gives. It is **strength that endures the unendurable and spills over into joy...** (Colossians 1:11)

The strength that Paul prays for, that accompanies, energizes, and completes our faith, looks like the contented soul the psalmist described and _____ read for us. **Souls contented are in a state of self-sufficiency** in relationship with Life itself. To be contented is the experience of being sufficient within, possessing the ability/competence to flourish in my life, in every circumstance in which my life is lived, because my life is lived in God's life, bound in His ever-being, in His starting and His finishing. Our souls are content because we are free within God's caring, secure, sovereign, and mother-like love as children of God like Paul said:

Like a child content in its mother's arms, my soul is a child content. (Psalm 131:2)

...set free from [our] bondage to corruption [free from being bound by what decays, what is being destroyed vs. lasting (i.e., unrighteous)—free from bondage to things like fear and fantasy, from the necessity to control and succeed, and freed from the bondage to temporal satisfactions and even

² Abraham Heschel, *The Insecurity of Freedom*, 66.

³ Frederick Buechner, *The Clown In The Belfry*, 20.

anxious survival, and instead...] and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God...For in this **hope** we are saved. (Romans 8:20-21, 24)

“Now faith,” says the author of Hebrews, “is the assurance [entitled to what is guaranteed under a certain agreement⁴ (i.e. “new covenant” of Jesus’ life)] **of things hoped for** [that freedom from the bondage of corruption into the bright and beautiful life as God’s own], the conviction [the in-the-soul persuasion (i.e., strength in the Spirit)] of things not seen,” (Hebrews 11:1) but to which we are being drawn...taken forward to and so revolutionizing and transforming the present. Isn’t that how Dylan described hope for us last week?

HOPE is powerful, inevitable, and embodied... 'forward looking and forward moving, and therefore...revolutionizing and transforming the present.'

If faith is an attitude of joy at the realization and in response to true life even in the muck and mire because we see that God has a stake in our eternal and daily living, that indeed we are freed to be involved in our daily labors with God, **then hope** is the force that completes faith, allowing faith to be lived rather than merely confessed or shared.

Remember where we started this series and where we have concluded each Gathering,

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three, but the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13)

Faith allows us to see, to know that God desires all persons to be saved, freed from the bondage to corruption, and to obtain the glory of the children of God, to discover who they truly are in relation to Him, and to live out the soul-satisfying fulfillment of that discovery within the bond of His sacrificial, parental love. Yet, says Thomas Merton, echoing Paul, “...**faith** must be completed by the **hope** God wills **me** to be saved [freed from bondage to corruption, free in glory obtained], and by **love** that responds to His desire and seals my hope with [faith’s] conviction.”⁵

While faith gets us started and keeps our eyes focused, it is hope that moves us forward and keeps us reaching for that which our faith has entitled, assured for us (Heb. 11:1). Historically, hope was a virtue, a character trait of one who strove for what was desired, promised, or possible. Hope was the motivating force of faith, of enduring commitment—the pursuit of something that would only come later and, in that pursuit, transformed today. And so it is that hope, as the force of faith, makes

“all the truths that are presented to the whole world in an abstract and impersonal way become for [us] a matter of personal and intimate conviction. What I believe by faith,” contends Thomas Merton, “what I understand by the habit of [study and devotion to God], I possess and make my own by hope...By hope we lay hands on the substance of what we believe and by hope we possess the substance of the promise of God’s love....I will never really know Christ [in me, the hope of glory]....until my faith in Him is

⁴ HELPS – Word Studies, accessed [here](#).

⁵ Thomas Merton, *No Man Is An Island*, 22.

completed by hope...hope that grasps His love for me and [self-giving love] that pays Him the return of love I owe.”⁶

Hope animates our faith. Hope encourages and empowers our emotions, attitudes, and actions (our efforts and works) to grab hold of **what we have in faith**—our *own* salvation, freedom from the bondage to corruption, decay, and fading things, in Jesus—**and faith in**—the contented freedom of a child loved, secured, and so freed to do what children of God do...please their parents. Or, as Paul said, **“making him proud of you as you work hard in his orchard.”** (Colossians 1:10), returning love for love.

Think about that for a moment. The good work that we believe we can do, which we strive to be a part of in our daily labors, in the ordinary ups and downs of making a life, is achieved not through an anxious figuring it out nor attempts to control, but **in hope, the delight of child’s freedom.** **Working through hope** is to go about our daily relations, interactions, and responsibilities free and at peace. We are free to give of ourselves wholeheartedly, not out of fear or control or even mere obligation, but because we are bound only by love, within the love of God for us, others, and earth, and are being drawn up into the love more and more. Which is why Paul prays,

May the God of hope [the One behind the energy that revalorizes and transforms today as it draws you into tomorrow, completing your faith (Heb. 13:1-3)] fill you up with joy, fill you up with peace, so that your believing lives [your life of faith], filled with the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit, will brim over with hope! (Romans 15:13)

Just think about what sort of work we could do (what kind of life we could make no matter the labors requiring our energies) if we could work through hope, brim over with the strength of contented freedom within love!

DISCUSSION |

Our desire in this season is not merely to talk about Sabbathing and working within the love of God through faith and hope but to help one another actually make life good through that whole and holy rhythm. We’ll do that by having time to share and start processing with one another. We are beginning conversations here that can continue over dinner tables in Gospel Community, through which we can hold each other accountable, making ourselves at home in God’s life and love.

So here are some conversation starters:

- In what ways are you working in “bondage to corruption”...bound by fear, despair, fantasy, control, success, affirmation, or anxiousness?
- What would look different at/in your work if you let hope brim over into your interactions and efforts?
- How can we encourage you to give in to hope—the magnetic pull towards freedom in Jesus—this week?

⁶ Ibid., 23.

CORPORATE CONFESSION & COMMUNION⁷ |

LORD of Creation, create in us a whole and holy rhythm of life

composed of hours that sustain rather than stress, of days that deliver rather than destroy,
of time that delights rather than degrades.

LORD of Liberation, by the rhythm of your truth, set us free

from the bondage and baggage that break us, from the Pharaohs and fellows who fail us, from the plans and
pursuits that prey upon us.

LORD of Resurrection, may we be raised into the rhythm of your Life,

dead to deceitful calendars, dead to fleeting friend requests, dead to the empty peace of our accomplishments.

To our packed-full planners, **we bid, "Peace!"**

To our over-caffeinated consciences, **we say, "Cease!"**

To our suffocating selves, **LORD, grant our release.**

Drowning in a sea of deadlines and death chimes, **we rest in You, our lifeline.**

By your ever-restful grace, **allow us to enter your Sabbath rest as your Sabbath rest enters into us.**

For...

Jesus has done good work for us. The Holy Spirit is doing a good work in us.

And God our Father equips and calls each of us to go out and do good works, works he has prepared in advance
for us to do, and that he alone, **by his power and his Spirit, will bring to completion through us.**

For all the promises of God find their Yes in Jesus.

That is why it is **through Jesus we utter our Amen to God for his glory. Hallelujah! Amen.**

Song #3 – Rest in You by All Sons and Daughters

Song #4 – Christ Our Hope In Life and Death by Kauflin

BENEDICTION | 1 Corinthians 13

As we rest in the day made for us, we prepare to enter into the work for which we are made
[**LIGHT THE CANDLE**], remembering the reality in which we live:

Love covers the errors and faults of others.

Love trusts having confidence in the goodness of others.

Love lives towards its confidence with joy.

Love does so for the long haul,

enduring with courage and calmness.

So now, make yourself at home through faith and hope within love.

DISMISS

⁷ Adapted from *Common Prayer: a liturgy for ordinary radicals*, 554, & *Every Moment Holy*, Vol 3, xv.