



## **Worship Service Theme: Hope**

**Welcome:** Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community today. My name is \_\_\_\_ and I'll be leading our worship time. Our theme for today is **hope**. The Bible and our own lives have much to say about hope: what it is, why we have hope, and how to live in hope.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

**Opening Prayer:** Great and loving God, we ask that your Holy Spirit bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence joyfully and reverently, and let us depart today with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace which passes understanding. Amen.

### **Opening Hymn: Doxology**

**Statement of Faith:** Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23 together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

<sup>2</sup>He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

<sup>3</sup>He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

<sup>4</sup>Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

<sup>5</sup>Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

<sup>6</sup>Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

### **Suggested Hymns:**

**For the Beauty of the Earth  
Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us  
Amazing Grace**

**First reading:** Psalm 130

This is one of the Songs of Ascents, Psalm 120-134. Many scholars believe the title indicates that these psalms were sung by pilgrims on the uphill road to Jerusalem.

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord!

<sup>2</sup> O Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive

to the voice of my pleas for mercy!

<sup>3</sup> If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,  
O Lord, who could stand?

<sup>4</sup> But with you there is forgiveness,  
that you may be feared.

<sup>5</sup> I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,  
and in his word I hope;

<sup>6</sup> my soul waits for the Lord  
more than watchmen for the morning,  
more than watchmen for the morning.

<sup>7</sup> O Israel, hope in the Lord!  
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,  
and with him is plentiful redemption.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

**Suggested Hymns:**

**Holy, Holy, Holy**

**Jesus Loves Me**

**Second reading:** Romans 8:23-26. The apostle Paul writes:

<sup>23</sup> Not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons and daughters, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. <sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit helps us in our

weakness. For we do not know how or what to pray, but the Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

### **Suggested Hymns:**

#### **Softly and Tenderly**

#### **Leaning on the Everlasting Arms**

**Interactive Homily:** Let's think a little more about hope.

- What does hope mean? What shape does hope take in our lives—that is, how does it feel when we're hopeful? In terms of time, what direction does hope take? What attitude?
  - Waiting, faith, expectancy
  - Looking *forward* in a *positive* way
- What sorts of things do you hope for? (*let people generate lots of ideas*)
  - A good meal
  - Good weather, especially for an event like a wedding
  - For something to turn out well: a job interview, a recipe
  - Hope that someone is able to visit
  - Hope for peace in the world
- What about disappointment? Does that ever happen?
- Sometimes people don't want to hope for things because they feel they'll just be disappointed. What do you think? Is it better to lower your expectations or to hope? What are the pros and cons?
  - Hoping can feel risky but exciting; assurance, confident
  - Living with low expectations can feel cynical, sad, dull

When my son Sam was just a little boy, about 4 years old, he told me one day that he hoped his friend John could come over to play. I knew that it was unlikely, so I told him not to get his hopes up. Sam started to cry and said, "Mom, it makes me feel worse if you say that! You've got to hope for everything!"

That was one of the most profound things I've ever heard, and it actually became our family motto: Hope for Everything.

- What stories do you have from your life, where something went wrong or seemed bad but turned out for good?

- Maybe a job that didn't work out, but a better one came along...
- Maybe a trip that went badly or got rained on, but the family ended up laughing about it...
- What is something you hope for right now? Finish this sentence for today:  
"I hope ...."

... Let's take a moment to silently pray and reflect on hope.

**(Silent Prayer)** ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord's prayer together:

**Lord's Prayer:** 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, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

**Suggested Hymns:**

**This is My Father's World**

**It is Well with My Soul**

**Standing on the Promises**

**Third Reading:** Hopeful Poetry

"Hope" is the thing with feathers -  
That perches in the soul -  
And sings the tune without the words -  
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -  
And sore must be the storm -  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chillest land -  
And on the strangest Sea -  
Yet - never - in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb - of me. – Emily Dickinson

“Hold fast to dreams,  
For if dreams die  
Life is a broken-winged bird,  
That cannot fly.” — American writer/poet Langston Hughes

“You can cut all the flowers but you cannot keep Spring from coming.” — Chilean writer/poet Pablo Neruda

“There is a crack in everything.  
That's how the light gets in.” — Canadian singer/songwriter Leonard Cohen

“We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.” — Martin Luther King, Jr.

### **Suggested Hymns:**

**Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing**  
**Shall We Gather at the River**

### **Fourth Reading: “Lemons into Lemonade”<sup>1</sup>**

Have you heard the saying, “When life gives you lemons, make lemonade”? It’s a clever way of encouraging ourselves that there is always hope in times of trouble.

In 1980, God taught Don Jacobson this lesson. Don was 25 years old, happily married, and enjoying a physically demanding job in construction.

But then, unexpectedly, a shooting accident changed Don’s life forever. “I nearly died laying out in a freezing field for hours and hours,” he says. “After nine agonizing days in the hospital, I thought my injuries would keep me from providing for my family.”

Don said it took a while for that big lemon to become lemonade, but in the end he was wonderfully blessed. “I began to work in the publishing business and now 25 years later, I can see that not being able to build things with my hands forced me to work with my head and heart,” Don says.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from <http://www.christianpost.com/news/god-makes-lemonade-tells-true-life-stories-of-hope-56790/>

After the accident, Don served as president and owner of Multnomah Publishers, where he oversaw the production of more than 1,000 book titles.

Don says, “My wife and I love to sit around with our friends telling stories until late into the night. When I share my “lemons into lemonade” story with friends, two amazing things happen. My story inspires others and gives them hope. Then, without fail, my friends tell me their lemonade story and I am filled with inspiration all over again.”

Don says hope can always have the last word. “Stuff happens,” he says. “But so does lemonade.”

**Suggested Hymns:**

**Blest Be the Tie that Binds**

**I Need Thee Every Hour**

**Closing Blessing:** (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. Amen.

**Closing Hymn: Doxology (Reprise)**