

2 (44s):

Yeah, who's ready for a new hope? Okay, good. Because today is the day we are embarking on a new journey through this series. A new hope starting today. Well, hey, I'm glad that you guys are here today. My name's Matt Wolf. I'm the lead pastor here at Rice Church Denver. Whether you're joining us online or in person, we are so glad that you are here. We are all about helping people follow Jesus. We wanna help you follow Jesus for you in turn to help others follow Jesus. That's what we're all about. And, and today's series that we're kicking off a new hope I, think it iss gonna be really great because I think we need some more hope, don't you? I, I really think we need more hope in our world. Whether you're a believer in Jesus or not, you need hope. And that's what we're gonna be talking about today because we are coming up right now in just a few weeks on the two year anniversary of the start of the war in Ukraine.

2 (1m 34s):

Just this week, you may have noticed that there was a plane that crashed in Ukraine with 74 people on board, including 64 Ukrainian POWs, all that died. They are fast approaching 500,000, a half a million people who have died so far in the last two years in that war. A half a million people. That is more people than live in Colorado Springs, but it's not just in Ukraine. Did you know that? Right now there are 110 armed conflicts that are going on around our globe. We don't hear about most of 'em. The one we do hear about a lot is the war in Gaza, which started on October 7th when the terrorist group Hamas invaded Israel, murdered, raped, killed some 1100 Israelis, and then took almost 204 50 men, women, and children hostage.

2 (2m 26s):

since then, that war has broken out and nearly 30,000 people have been killed just in that conflict. That's more people than live in Wheat Ridge. But it's not just around the globe. Things are happening here in our own country at home. Since the year 2000, the suicide rate in our nation has gone up 37.5%. It keeps rising to the highest number that we've ever seen in 2023 when over 50,000 people for the first time committed suicide just in that year alone in our country.

2 (3m 6s):

That's more people than live in Littleton killed each year. And it's especially poignant here in Colorado because we are have the fifth highest suicide rate in the entire country. Overdoses are bad as well as drugs continue to go on our street, heroin, fentanyl, perhaps you saw in Boulder, just in December, two people were killed with Nitrazine, a new designer drug that is 40 to 500 times more deadly than even Fentanyl since 2020. That was four years ago. Since 2020, the annual number of overdoses has doubled almost to 112,000 lives that were lost in 2023, which is more people than live in the town of Pueblo.

2 (3m 58s):

It's no wonder when you look at our world and our country, that young people today, perhaps for the first time ever when asked, do you think your life is gonna be better than your parents? They say almost equi, unequivocally. No. There's a lack of hope for the future, for optimism, for positivity, for progress. And I think that's why when I talk with some people, they say, I worry about my kids, older people. I worry about my

grandkids. I've even talked to some people who have decided to forego having kids because of the way the world is today. People worry about the future because of the state of our society.

2 (4m 41s):

And it's not just things in society. We look at our own lives with depression, with job loss, with infertility, with divorce, with abuse, with the loss of our loved ones. We wonder why even right now, my grandma who who's lived a great life at 92 is on hospice dying. And when these things happen, we're just reminded of death, destruction, evil suffering. When we look at these things, when we actually look at the reality of our lives and our world, when we open our eyes and don't try to hide from it, it leaves us with some big questions like, where is God in all of this?

2 (5m 26s):

What is he doing? Is he even real Megan Rapino, the soccer star or football for some of you? In November, she had an Achilles tear, which ended her career and she talked with the reporters about it. And this is what she said. She said, I'm not a religious person or anything. And if there was a God, this is proof that there isn't. I've heard a lot of people say things like that when there's suffering, when there's evil, when there's hard things, how could God even exist? How could he be involved if he allows this kind of stuff to happen?

2 (6m 9s):

So, that question is what we are going to tap tackle today and in this series. A little heavy, huh? But it's real life, isn't it? They're the real questions. We have And. we are not gonna turn away. 'cause what happens is one of two things. When we actually look at the reality of the world, some people, especially well-meaning Christians choose to let go of reality. They pretend like none of this stuff is real. They just go to church. Let's go to a happy cappy clappy church where we all smile all the time. Sorry, we're not that church. Okay? We decided to be real here. In fact, that's what we believe. When we're real together, we grow together. That's all about our community groups. That's why you need to join a group in the next couple weeks so you can talk about the real stuff in our lives.

2 (6m 53s):

We're not gonna be that type of people. Even some people try to avoid reality. Go out into the woods, let's buy an acreage and just avoid what's happening in society. And that sounds good sometimes, doesn't it? It's can be very tempting to let go of reality, but we're not gonna do that. On the other hand, the second thing that people do is, is let go of God, either their belief in God and say, well, I guess God isn't real. Or if he is real, he's not good. So I'm, I'm, why would I waste time on a relationship with him and going to church and all that religious stuff? They let go of God and I'm gonna challenge you to do neither of those things. In fact, what we're gonna be challenged by Habakkuk today is a third way to neither let go of reality or let go of God, but instead to embrace him even through the hardest things in our life.

2 (7m 43s):

And I believe that's what we're gonna get as we dive into the book of Habakkuk. Okay, If, you're wondering, how do you pronounce that name? I don't know. Okay. I grew up being taught that it was Habakkuk. And then I've learned later I, I've heard a lot of people say Habakkuk, which is probably what I default to, but I looked it up in my Bible software and they said, actually it's Habakkuk. So don't know which one is right. Your guess is as good as mine. We can slip back and forth. In fact, it's a very obscure book in the Bible, just three small chapters considered a minor prophet, not because what he has to say is minor, just because it's short. And, and I believe that the questions that ha Habakkuk asks and that God answers in this book are some of the most profound around.

2 (8m 31s):

And as we, we look at this book, some of you're like, man, it seems like it's a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away. I get it. It was written in in a country that is far away 2,600 years ago. And yet these questions are the same questions we are asking today. Who's struggling with? And so we're gonna ask him. So what I'm gonna challenge you to do is to commit to this four week series. I don't care if this is your first time or thousandth time here at our church. I want you to commit to these four week series because we're gonna ask these big questions and I can't answer all of them in just one week, right? I maybe can't answer all of them at all. but I, we're gonna try.

2 (9m 11s):

So I want you to commit to this four week series. That means E, even if you're traveling or you're busy or working or whatever, you can subscribe on YouTube. You can download or use whatever podcast app you have and subscribe right there. Make sure you don't miss any of this series on New Hope 'cause. Don't we need hope? We do. So let's open up our Bibles to Habakkuk chapter one, Habakkuk Chapter one, If. You have your smartphone, which for some of you're like, I don't know where that book is, that's okay. Okay? Just use your smartphone. You can use the YouVersion Bible app and If, you find the right church Denver event there in the app. You can save the scripture that we're gonna cover. 'cause we're gonna cover chapter one verse one through 11.

2 (9m 51s):

And we're gonna learn two points that are basically two sides of, of the same coin that we're gonna learn from this passage. So the first one, if you're taking notes, our, our first thing that we are gonna learn from Habakkuk today is to embrace God with your questions. Okay? Embrace God with your questions. That's the first point. So let's jump into Habakkuk chapter one, verse one, the prophecy that Habakkuk the prophet received. Okay? Pretty simple introduction, right? This is actually the only time that we are told about this man, Habakkuk. He's a prophet, meaning a spokesperson for God, that God is speaking through him. Now, this is a little bit different than some of the other prophecies because Habakkuk is going to, as we'll see very soon, talk to God and God is gonna talk back.

2 (10m 39s):

And, we have recorded this dialogue between God and Habakkuk, the prophet. Now, we're not taught much about who this Habakkuk is. There's some historical evidence that he might have been a Levite. If you don't know the tribe of Levi. Those people worked in the temple. Now, he probably wouldn't have been a priest, but he was like around the priest. He was one of the, the religious workers at the very end of the book of Habakkuk. The very last line, if you jump there down to chapter three, verse 19. It says, for the director of music on my stringed instruments, which is interesting, meaning he's writing especially the last chapter that probably is a song of sorts. So he's a songwriter and he's talking about my instrument.

2 (11m 20s):

So he's a musician, perhaps he's a worship leader in the temple. And I like to think of him as the ancient Michael W. Smith or Chris Tomlin or, or your pastor, Sam Fisher, right? Okay. So he's a great songwriter, a musician. And so he's used to working in the temple of God, he's been serving God with his life, directing people. He's been thinking about God. He's been praying a lot as all these things have been happening. And yet life was pretty bad at this point. The nation had come to a really low point in their history. I wanna show you what's going on historically, based on the context, based on what's going on in this book.

2 (12m 1s):

We learned that it was probably written during the time of the Assyrian Empire. And I know you remember this from geography class in history, but I'm gonna teach you anyways. So the Assyrian Empire was a great empire of the ancient world, and they would have conquered most of the known Middle East, in case you don't remember geography class. Let's look at this next slide where we see some of the modern day boundaries of the nations that we know of. So this empire would've started in northern Iraq and would've gone from the east into parts of Iran to the north in, in parts of Turkey to the southwest, into parts of Egypt and Saudi Arabia. And it would have conquered all of what is now modern day Israel.

2 (12m 43s):

Now, what had happened at this time in history, if we look at this next slide, so here's back to the Assyrian Empire. If you zoom in now into that part of the Mediterranean where we know of as modern Israel. This next slide, you know that God's people, though they had been one nation right after the time of Solomon, had actually had a civil war and had broken apart into two different nations. The 10 tribes of the North were called Israel. The two tribes of the South were called Judah, two different nations. They didn't really like each other very much, but they were both God's people. Well, when the Assyrians came in, they actually destroyed, completely demolished the northern nation of Israel. They were gone, taken as slaves, the nation was gone.

2 (13m 23s):

But Judah, as we see in this next slide, was left in a sea of red, right? They were probably a vassal state, meaning they were taking all their money that they had and giving it to Assyria just so they can keep a little bit of autonomy for themselves, these two tribes. So you can just imagine they're thinking, wow, we have no

money. So the economy is poor. There's no jobs. People are struggling to eat, to put food on their tables. And the nation has is a far cry about how great it was in the time of David and Solomon. They're surrounded by the enemy who rules everything and things had gotten bad. Also, at this time, there was a series of pretty bad bad leaders for the nation.

2 (14m 6s):

There was one good one towards the end, a guy named Josiah who did a lot of good things, led some reforms. But then the next two kings after him were these young 20 something punks who were bad. They were bad. They were leading the nation away from worship of God. So it was in moral decline. A a lot of evil had taken over. They were worshiping the other gods. You can just imagine. They're like, well, look at assy so much greater than us. Maybe we should worship their gods and not worship our God. That that has been taught to us by our parents and grandparents. So a lot of evil and, and just things were bad in the nation. You can just imagine a lot of the people in Judah putting on these red hats that said, make Judah great again. Can you imagine? This is the time period they lived in, okay? Right? They were not happy with the leader at the time.

2 (14m 47s):

They were not happy with the corruption, with the sin, with the evil, with the injustice all around them. And it's at that time that Habakkuk has this prophecy. So he takes his anger to God. Let's read verse two together. He says, how long Lord must I call for help? But you do not listen or cry out to you violence, but you do not safe. So here he is working in the church, in the temple every single day of his life. He's praying all the time. He's one of the faithful people when everybody else has gone astray, whether there's evil all around him, violence happening in the nations and in their own nation, why isn't God doing anything?

2 (15m 30s):

In fact, the title to this section in the NIV is Habakkuk's complaint, right? He starts by complaining to God, he's angry, he's frustrated, he's not happy. How long are you gonna do that? God? Verse three, he says, why do you make me look at injustice? He's not gonna ignore reality. He sees it all around him. It's injustice. Why do you God tolerate wrongdoing, destruction and violence are before me. There is strife and conflict abounds. Therefore, in verse four, the law is paralyzed and justice never prevails the wicked hem in the righteous So that justice is perverted.

2 (16m 15s):

Even if there are government officials, police officers, judges, they're not doing what they're supposed to be doing. Either the law is paralyzed, that they're afraid to step in and make things right or there have justice that's perverted. There's an injustice all throughout the nations, and he looks around and says, this is not right. God, why don't you do something? I love how honest Abacus, he's not afraid to look at the reality of the world. But when we have questions about our world, about suffering, about why God isn't stepping in, do you know what we're supposed to do with those? Embrace God with those questions.

2 (16m 56s):

Bring them to him. Ask him, complain to him. Yell at him. Curse at him. Even He hears what you're saying. Anyways, might as well just talk to him about it. I mean it, Elizabeth Elliot, who was a missionary and her husband was killed trying to reach a tribe for Christ. She said this faith does not eliminate questions, but faith knows where to take them. I think it's true. If, you have doubts, If, you have questions, complaints about God, you're in the right place. It's okay to have those things. In fact, I think it's good and healthy to take those as long as we take them to God.

2 (17m 40s):

That's really important. I heard Tim Keller once say, the doubts are like the antibody to faith. Okay, you gotta fight off the viruses. But having those doubts, having those questions, it actually means that we're getting healthier. What's worse is when we ignore them, put them aside and, and let go of reality. There's a a, a sect that's a, a break off of Christianity. I would not even call 'em Christians and, and what they teach people, maybe some of you have heard this and I think it's just flat out wrong. They will teach people, Hey, you have a question about God. You have these hard things that you're dealing with. You're angry, whatever. It's just put it up on a shelf. You heard this before. Just put it on a shelf and leave it there.

2 (18m 22s):

And maybe when you get to heaven, you'll get an answer. Yeah, okay. Some of you grew up with this and we're taught that. Just put it on a shelf. Ignore it for the rest of your life. Don't dive into the question. Don't try to find any answers. Don't pray about it. Don't talk to God. Definitely don't talk to your pastor. He can't handle it. Okay? We all have these questions. Let's not let go of reality. Let's embrace God with those questions. Let, let's try to find some answers to seek after the truth. We don't ignore things up on a shelf here. We're real at this church. In fact, I don't care what the emotions you have related to this stuff.

2 (19m 3s):

Anger, frustration, whatever you have, bring it to God. And I think feeling it and expressing it is part of what we must do in faith. That's what prayer is. Did you know that we have this, this great prayer book, the Psalms, there's 150 prayers. Psalms one third of them are people angry at God, one third and God saw it. Let's include those in the Bible. Like you need those. It's not just happy clappy all the time. Like there's, there's some in there too that are happy. Like great, but it, we're, we're supposed to do this. When, when we know someone going through tough times, we're actually commanded to weep with those who weep. We're supposed to experience the sadness, the anger, the frustration, but bring it to God.

2 (19m 47s):

Have you ever read Psalm 88? This is like the gloomiest of all the Psalms. The very last, it starts out okay, but the last line says, darkness is my closest friend. Okay? It, it's bleak. It's bleak. It's like written by Radiohead or something, but it's bleak. But, but God wants us to express it. And notice how God does not

reject Habakkuk. We're gonna see that very clearly. He's not like, come on man, step it up. Where's your faith? No, God engages us. He loves us. He embraces us through our questions. He just wants us to bring it to him. And, and that's what we must do because these questions are there.

2 (20m 28s):

We need to deal with them. Don't let go of reality. Deal with them. It's like getting colon cancer. It's actually a very treatable form of cancer nowadays. It's only deadly if you ignore it. So if you're just like, I think it's just pain. We, we have a name for that, don't we? It's called denial. If you do that, you will die. All you need to do is go to the doctor, to the physician to be treated. You're probably gonna be okay. And in the same way, if we ignore our doubts and questions, try to hide 'em away. It will eventually kill us in our faith. We need to embrace God with our questions. So don't let go of reality. Whatever you do, and I think Habakkuk is a great example for us to do this.

2 (21m 12s):

That's the first thing. So embrace God with your questions. You ready for 0.2? Embrace God till you see the good. So. We take our questions, our complaints, our anger. We bring those to God, we yell at him, we write him out, whatever it takes again and again and again. But then keep embracing until we see the good on the other side. What's amazing is that Habakkuk ask God these questions, right? God actually answers him, man, I wish God would answer some of my questions, right? Amen. Right. But thankfully he did record in, in his own word, his response to Habakkuk. And I'm so glad the Holy Spirit gave us this because in verse five, God actually answers Habakkuk and his complaint.

2 (21m 58s):

He says, look at the nation's and watch and be utterly amazed for I'm going to do something in your days that you would not believe. Even if you were told he's about to tell him what he's gonna do. He's like, you're not gonna believe it. You don't have the faith to trust me. But if you open up your eyes and see the injustice. One day you will open up your eyes and see me come through and bring justice. That's what he's saying. So you need to keep embracing me until you see it with your eyes. People say that, you know, seeing is believing. It's not true. Believing is believing, okay? In fact, believing is believing when you can't see it.

2 (22m 38s):

And so what we are challenged to do is, is believe until we see to have faith and wait until we can see it. I think author Philip Yancy is right. He said, I have learned that faith means trusting in advance what will only make sense in reverse. It doesn't make sense yet. God, I only see injustice and God is about to say, no, I will make all things right. I have a plan when it seems like everything is chaos and getting worse. So don't let go of God either. Don't let go of reality. Don't let go of God, even if it's hard to hold on in faith.

2 (23m 22s):

And a lot of people do this. I remember talking with a young man years ago, and he, he shared with me that

he had grown up going to church. He, he, he just believed all that stuff. But as he got older, he saw more suffering, more evil in the world. And, and he said, I, I had to walk away. I don't believe anymore because of all this suffering in this world. I think there's a lot of people like that, right? Don't believe anymore because of how many bad things are north. And I just poked him a little bit. I'm like, you know, that's illogical. And we're gonna talk about this a lot more Next week. Okay? So come back, Next week, If, you really wanna dive into that question. but it, it, it doesn't actually logically follow. Just because bad things happen doesn't mean God isn't there. And yet so many people do that. They're like, there, God must not be there 'cause there's bad things around us.

2 (24m 3s):

Now, maybe there's something he's doing that you cannot see or Maybe you cannot comprehend it. I get this a little bit better now that I have kids. If, you ever tried to explain to a kid money, like seriously like a little kid trying to explain the values of different things and they just have no comprehension of this or that you have money, but we don't wanna spend it like our twins, they're four and they'll be like, Hey, I want that toy. We're like, ah, probably not right now. Do we not have the money for it? Well, no, we do and we're not gonna get it. Well, why not? And it's hard to explain this, right? Okay, well, we're making a choice not to spend our money on ad at that time. Well, why not? Is it on Amazon?

2 (24m 44s):

Well, yes, then why can't we get it? Okay, some of you adults keep asking yourself that. Well, it's on Amazon, I can get it right. Don't do that. Okay? Kids have a hard time understanding money and it's complicated and, and why we don't spend money on certain things, So, that we have money later to spend on the things that actually matter, right? So I, I think in a similar way that adult minds are a little bit different than than kids' minds, right? God's mind is that much different than adult's mind. Think about that. There may be things he sees, knows, can see the past, the present, the future, all things from all angles, because he's omniscient. He's all knowing.

2 (25m 25s):

So if his mind, I I is even just a little bit different than ours, maybe we just can't comprehend what he is doing. And, we can't see it. In fact, God tells us this through Isaiah the prophet. And Isaiah says in chapter 58, 55, verse eight, verse nine, he says, for as heaven is higher than earth. So my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. You're missing some of this because your mind still hasn't matured enough to get it, to comprehend it. And that's why we are challenged to continue to embrace God, not let go of him because we're holding on until we see him come through, until we see the good.

2 (26m 7s):

That's what faith actually is. Second Corinthians five, seven tells us, but we live by faith, not by what we see. If, you see injustice, evil, bad stuff all around you. We don't live according to that. We live according to faith about what God is doing behind the scenes and what he will bring in the future. Hebrews 11 entices to our



hope as well. Now, faith, he says, is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do, not what? See, that's how we get a new hope. We have faith in a God, what he will bring in the future, what we can't see right now. In fact, if we could see it, wouldn't it be faith?

2 (26m 50s):

That's what Paul tells us in Romans chapter eight. He says, but hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have. But if we hope for what we do, not yet have we wait for it patiently. That's faith. We have a hope in the future, a new hope God doing something special. And, we have faith until then, and I don't know what God will do for your future, for our nation's future, but I do know that he has a plan because he had a plan for Habakkuk. And what's amazing is God actually tells Habakkuk, he's like, you're not gonna believe it, but I'm still gonna tell you anyways. And look at this, in verse six of Habakkuk one, he says, I am raising up the Babylonians that ruthless and impetuous people who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwellings, not their own.

2 (27m 41s):

Why is he saying this? Well, let's look at this next map. The Syrian empire had taken over all the Middle East, but then there was this one little city called Babylon. And very soon their empire would be much bigger than Assyria. And I think at the time God tells Habakkuk like, you're not gonna believe this. Nobody's gonna believe it. But Babylon will actually come in. They'll be stronger than the Assyrians. And their empire will span farther and they will take all the evil the Assyrians have done and bring it to justice. All the evil in your own nation will be brought to justice by the Babylonians. You can't even believe it right now. But guess what happened exactly that. If you've read the book of Daniel, which we covered last year here as a church, that's what happened within a generation.

2 (28m 26s):

The Babylonian empire would span a, a broader swath of land, would take over more territory and would set all those injustices. They'd be gone. Now If, you're thinking, well, I thought the Babylonians were just as bad or worse. You're right. Come back Next week, we'll talk about it. But what I do want you to see is that God has a plan. That's why he says, look at the nations. It's not just I'm working in, in my own people in this one tiny little part of the globe. All the nations belong to me. I control all of them. All of human history belongs to me. God is saying, and I will control it the way I want to. And I will make all things right In due time.

2 (29m 8s):

All injustices will be brought to justice. All wrongs will righted. That's the promise that God gives us. We just can't see it yet. And if you're thinking about our own nation, well, I don't think I, I can't see how God's gonna make anything better to, I don't. I don't see, well, I'm sure that's how people felt in 1850s. Okay? Think about how bad things got in the 1850s and then God made him a little bit more right? With the Civil War. If you're like, well, that sounds worse. Yes, sometimes it gets worse before it gets better come back Next week. But the point is, God is at work. He has a plan, and all of human history is working towards his plan. And he will

accomplish it.

2 (29m 48s):

And that's why we need faith to embrace him. Now until we see the good. Martin Luther King Jr. Tells us what we need to do for our own lives. He says, faith is taking the first step. Even If, you don't see the whole staircase. We're not gonna see the whole thing. We don't know everything that's ahead, but we can step forward in faith, trusting that God will come through. And that's why we embrace him until we see the good. And that's why I'm gonna challenge every single one of you to embrace God. That's my big idea today, to embrace God. You know, when you think of the word embrace, you're like, oh, that's a great hug. Okay? Sometimes being with God, meeting him for the first time, especially when you realize, yeah, you're a sinner.

2 (30m 29s):

Yeah, you're a bad person and God still loves you anyways. Sent his own son to die on the cross for you to forgive you. If, you knew life. Now, man, that's a great big hug. He loves you right there at your worst. And sometimes spending time with God is like that great big hug. There's nothing better than the hug of the Father. And yet sometimes we're like, ah, I'm angry. That's why I say embrace God. Did you know I love this? The name Habakkuk, the root word for the name Habakkuk means to embrace. That's what his name means. I wonder why God picked him. He's like, ha, embrace. And sometimes it does mean a great big hug in the book of Genesis, that root word occurs again and again.

2 (31m 11s):

And it's always about like hugging someone, like a family member, a friend, And, you haven't seen him. It's that nice warm embrace. Oh, that's the best. That's how God it is with God sometimes. Yet that word also is used in places like Jo. Job 24 8. I like this. He says, they are drenched by mountain rains and hug. Same word, hug the rocks for lack of shelter. They're in torrential downpour, a terrible storm. There's flooding. They think they're gonna die. And they hug. They embrace the rock. They clinging to it. 'cause there's nothing else to do if they wanna survive. And sometimes that's the kind of embrace we need to have with God. When all around us, there's storms all around us.

2 (31m 51s):

Things are awful. And getting worse, embrace God. It doesn't feel good. But If you let go. Let me tell you, it is much worse. Embrace God in faith, embrace God. I think this is what Jacob did. You know Jacob, you might remember this story. He was running from his father-in-law who wanted to kill him. And he was running towards his brother-in-law, who wanted to kill him. So he's literally between a rock and a hard place. And he was out by himself one night struggling internally, what am I gonna do? Life is bad. It's gonna get worse. And a man comes and starts wrestling with him.

2 (32m 31s):

You remember this story? Turns out that that guy was actually God coming in, in human flesh. And they

wrestle all night long. That embrace keeps coming. And Jacob even gets injured so much that he's gonna walk with a limp the rest of his life. And yet still, he clung to this man who was God. He embraced him and would not let him go. And he said, until you bless me, I'm gonna embrace you until the good is on the other side. That's what Jacob did. We should also be like job, job lost everything. His kids were killed. He lost all of his riches. He was left with nothing.

2 (33m 11s):

And his wife told him to let go of God. And, and she said it a little bit crasser. She said, curse God and die. Talk about a helpmate, right? Curse God and die. That's what she told Job. And yet still, he clung to God, he embraced him and he wrestled with God. He took big questions, complaints to God. Why is this happening? It doesn't make sense. What did I do wrong? I did not do anything wrong. And he kept talking to God and he clung to him until God showed up in a giant whirlwind in a storm, spoke to him. And then on the other side of that, God blessed him with double everything he had lost. He clung, he embraced until the blessing came.

2 (33m 52s):

Or we could be like Jesus, who was about to have one of his closest friends betray him, who knew his other friends would abandon him. And there he was in the garden, crying out, angry, complaining to God. He said, my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. He, he shed tears, even tears of blood because he was so frustrated and angry and in agony. And yet he still clung to God When they arrested him, when they beat him, when he went through the worst physical suffering you can imagine, suffered injustice at the hands of the law. And then was hung up on a cross when he was there on the cross.

2 (34m 32s):

Do you know what he said? He questioned God, my God, my God. Why have you forsaken me? He asked. He complained, why God? And yet still, he clung. He embraced God. 'cause his very last words were said, father, into your hands, I commit my spirit. I embrace you. And though he experienced the worst suffering, the true innocent who suffered injustice

1 (35m 4s):

And

2 (35m 4s):

Crimes against him on the third day, we know he rose from the dead. There was blessing on the other side, though no one could see it. Jesus rose from the dead to prove that God has power even over the worst evil death itself. And if God can do that, he has a plan for your suffering and your evil and your hard times as well. So embrace God no matter how hard it's, I even wanna encourage you to embrace God like Danny did. Danny Martinez, lot of you know, love Danny. I I I love Danny. Back in 2015, he was having some health issues and because of that, he, he had one of his legs amputated and he had lots of health issues after that.

2 (35m 47s):

I, I came to the church in 2017 and I spent a lot of time with Danny. Man. I loved him. He went through some hard stuff. You can imagine that the depression and the anger he felt and, and I talked with him through some of that. And, and he would still like, complain angry. Like he, he was mad, right? And yet he was here every single week. He was always out in the front greeting people. He kept clinging to God. He kept coming back to God again and again and again. And even to the point where God brought more blessing into his life. And he was serving in our church. He was a leader. He led our operation, Christmas Child Ministry last year. And even he went down there five times to pack boxes, to send hope to people around the world.

1 (36m 30s):

He

2 (36m 31s):

Clung to God even when it was hard. You know, Danny passed away in December, and that's one of those things, I have no idea why that happened. It's one of those big questions like, God, why? but I do know. Maybe we can look at him And. we can have that same type of faith. The faith of Habakkuk, the faith of Jacob, the faith of Job, the faith of Danny, the faith of Jesus to embrace God no matter what comes

1 (36m 59s):

Clinging

2 (36m 60s):

To him in the storm, clinging to the rock that is higher than us, And, we will make it through the storm to the blessings on the other side. I promise. Because God promises. So embrace God.

1 (37m 13s):

Let's pray.

2 (37m 17s):

Lord God, we open up our eyes. We're not gonna hide from the truth that there is suffering, that there is evil. That sometimes it seems like the bad guys are winning, that things are getting worse. We don't get it. But we're gonna embrace you anyways. We're gonna embrace reality and we're gonna embrace you as hard as it's, And I pray, especially for those right now who are hurting, who are struggling, who are seeing the worst of it right now, Lord God, renew their hope, renew their faith right now. Give them the strength to clinging to you even when they wanna let go. Even they wanna reject you and turn away, Lord God, bring them to yourself in faith.

2 (37m 57s):

And Lord God, I pray that you bring the blessing, don don't know when it's coming. Lord God, bring it soon.

Bring it soon. Bring it soon. And Lord God, help us trust you to have faith until we see you come again. Now, with eyes closed, I do just want to tell you that some of you in here, Maybe, you have turned away in faith or, or maybe you've never had faith. But when you heard the message today that Jesus, God's own son died on the cross for you, let me tell you what it means. It means all your sins are forgiven. You're giving new, fuller life now, an eternal life where everything is made new after death. And it's only available If. you put your faith in Jesus Christ and trust him for the future.

2 (38m 41s):

So if you're ready to do that, I'm gonna give you a simple prayer that you can repeat after me. So. that you can accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior. And start out on that journey of faith, taking the first step, even though you can't see the whole staircase So, if you're already a follower, Jesus, say this prayer out loud. You have courage. Somebody around you who needs to pray this for the first time, please repeat after me. Dear God, I'm a sinner. I need a savior. Save me. Forgive me in faith. I declare Jesus'. Lord, fill me with your spirit. Give me the gift of eternal life. Give me a new hope.

2 (39m 23s):

Help me to follow you in faith till I see the good Now with eyes closed. If, you said that prayer for the first time, it meant that if Jesus for the first time is your Lord and Savior, we wanna celebrate with you, And. we actually have a, a book that we wanna give you to encourage you on your journey of faith. So with nobody else looking around on the count of three, put your hand in the air. 1, 2, 3, put your hand high in the air If, you have that hand. Put it all the way up and we'll bring you a book. I see his hand down here in front. Let's celebrate, Lord God, we, we celebrate with those who make a decision of faith, Lord God, that are willing to take that first step. Lord God, I pray that you bless that person, Lord God bless all those taking steps of faith.

2 (40m 6s):

Lord God, we are grateful that you love us, that you save us, that you forgive us, that you give us a new hope and a new life, and eternal life ahead, Lord God, help all of us step forward in faith, even when it doesn't make sense in Jesus' name. Amen.

3 (40m 22s):

Thank you so much for listening to the message today. I'm Matt Wolf, lead pastor at a Arise, Church Denver. And we're all about helping people follow Jesus And. we wanna help you follow Jesus because of that. If you're newish, even if you're just checking us out online, go down below in the description and fill out that form at arise Denver dot com slash new. And if this message has impacted you at all, please go to rise Denver dot com slash give So that you can give back and help more people find out the message of Jesus Christ.