

Good morning everyone, my name is Mark Peters, I'm one of the pastors on staff at North Shore Alliance Church. I'm glad to be with you this morning, and grateful to have the opportunity to preach from the Scriptures.

It was an interesting week for me, getting ready to preach. I set aside as much preparation time as I usually do. I made sure that I had all the commentaries I needed for studying. I snuck away to a quiet place where I could think, and pray, and write. I did all the things I usually do, but when it came to writing out my sermon, I had a case of preacher's block. All day Wednesday, and on Thursday, every time I opened my laptop to write, I would end up staring at the blinking cursor, on a blank page.

A number of years ago, I handled preacher's block very differently than I do today. A few years ago, I would obsess over the unwritten sermon...I would will myself to stay put in front of that blinking cursor until I was cross-eyed. The closer Sunday got, the greater my worry would become...*400 people are coming to hear from God's Word, and I've got nothing to say.*

But my obsessing slowly came to an end, as I continued to experienced the faithfulness and goodness of God time after time. Do you know that God is always right on time...His time mind you, not mine, not yours, but He is always on time.

Sometimes the sermon doesn't get done until late Saturday night, but God has always been faithful to give me words to speak, when I am patient enough to wait for them.

These days, when I'm wrestling with preacher's block, I don't spend a lot of time staring at my laptop...when I'm stuck, I begin to pray, asking the Holy Spirit to "unstick" me, to direct my thoughts, to give me His words. If He does, I keep writing, and if He doesn't I close my laptop and give myself to some other work. God will speak when He's ready...He's always on time.

Our kids had a Professional Day on Friday and we had planned to take the kids skiing up Grouse in the morning. But before we went skiing, I snuck out early to go for a long run in the Demonstration Forrest and about 25 minutes into the run, the Lord began to direct my thoughts and gather my sermon...right on time.

I want to begin this morning by speaking a word to you about hope. Last weekend, at the end of our Sunday service, I shared with you a definition of hope that I came across, and have been chewing on for a few weeks. Let me share it with you again: *hope is the joyful anticipation of the Lord's goodness.*<sup>1</sup>

Now there's a big difference between hope and positive thinking. Have any of you seen the movie-musical "Annie"? Hope is not: *"the sun will come out, tomorrow, bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow, there'll be sun."* Positive thinking is just that...thinking positively...*hope* is more solid because it's grounded in the reality of God's character. Our reason for hope is the goodness of God.

How do we live with without hope? We don't...not really. Without hope we wither, we languish, we fade away. We are hopeless without hope. Proverbs 13:12 says, *"Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but*

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Johnson, pastor of Bethel Church, Redding, CA.

*a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.*” **Hope deferred makes the heart sick.**

No one plans to lose hope, but once hope is lost it takes some work to get it back. Hopelessness often begins with disappointment that has a profound affect on the way we think about life. Disappointment comes in all shapes and sizes:

- Perhaps someone you loved **died** prematurely, and unexpectedly.
- Perhaps you’ve tried repeatedly to get into a **university program** and your application has been repeatedly rejected.
- Perhaps your dreams for your **business** are going up in flames.
- Perhaps you thought you’d be **further along** in dealing with your addiction, or sinful behaviour, or weakness.
- Perhaps you still haven’t found **Mrs. or Mr. Right**.
- Or maybe you thought you found them, **you married them, but** now your marriage has dissolved.
- Perhaps you were certain that **the Lord promised** you something, but you’re still waiting, and now you’re questioning yourself and the Lord.

Disappointment...few of us deal with disappointment very well. And while there are many different strategies for dealing with disappointment, most of them lead to heart-sickness. Some of us try to brush off disappointment as no big deal...we try to ignore it, hoping it will go away. Some of us have spent years wallowing in disappointment...it has become the defining characteristic of our lives. Some of us stuff it down as far as we can, and tell ourselves that we will deal with our disappointment some day...but “some day” never comes.

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<sup>2</sup> Bill Johnson.

What did King Solomon say? “*Hope deferred makes the heart sick*”. Disappointment, left unattended, turns to hopelessness...and most hopelessness finds its root in a lie we’ve come to believe. One author writes, “If there is hopelessness in any part of our heart, it is a sign of enemy occupation, a sign that one of his lies are present.”<sup>2</sup>

Friends, search your hearts this morning...is there hopelessness in any part of your life? Is there any place where you find yourself saying: *this will never change, there’s no point in trying any more, God doesn’t seem present in this situation, this is hopeless?*

Hope is the joyful anticipation of God’s goodness, but the evil one uses disappointment to cast a shadow on God’s goodness. Disappointment, left unattended, gives birth to the lie that *maybe God is good to some people, but not to me*. This lie tends to snowball into another: *God’s goodness is reserved for those who perform the best...I’m simply not holy enough to expect God to be good to someone like me*.

Perhaps you’ve come to believe the lie that God is not strong enough, or perhaps not loving enough, to deal with the challenges in your life.

Perhaps you’ve been praying for someone, or something, to turn around and you haven’t received the answer you were hoping for. And you’ve come to believe the lie that in this particular circumstance there’s no point in praying any longer, prayer doesn’t change anything.

Some of us haven't exactly "lost" our faith, but our faith is dying the death of a thousand paper cuts. When we become hopeless in certain areas of our lives we tend to become prayerless in those same areas. In prayerlessness we cut ourselves off from God, the source of life, and we tend to settle for some kind of lie, something much smaller than what God has promised. We settle for a lie because we don't want to feel the weight of our disappointment.

I want to tell you something this morning that all of us need to hear: God is not the author of pain, disappointment, suffering, sickness, or death. Now, God can (and does) work out His plans and purposes in spite of these things, but that doesn't mean He's pleased about any of it. *God is the author of goodness.*

I've got two phrases on the screen behind me that I want you to repeat out loud...are you ready? **God is not the author of pain...God is the author of goodness.** Sometimes just hearing the truth from our own lips begins to dismantle the lie we've believed. *God is not the author of pain...God is the author of goodness, and for this reason, we continue to look to Him, anticipating the goodness He has in store for us.*

Friends, if you are dealing with disappointment or hopelessness in any area of your lives, then I want to recommend two practices to you:

**1) First, find your rest in the Lord.** Ignoring disappointment doesn't make it go away...it guarantees that it will go underground and blossom into hopelessness. Putting off dealing with disappointment, is like putting off healthy patterns of diet, exercise, and sleep. In most case, if you don't care for your physical body, it

will break down sooner rather than later. Hope deferred makes the heart sick, and finding our rest in the Lord is the best remedy available.

**2) Second, find your voice in the Psalms.** The Psalms have always been the prayer book of God's people. There are 150 different Psalms recorded in the Bible, and these prayers (songs) express the entire range of human emotion. Within these Psalms you will find lament, despair, confusion, anger, bitterness, fear, and even revenge...you will also find hope, joy, love, peace, and healing expressed in these Psalms.

If you are dealing with disappointment and hopelessness, start reading through the Psalms, and if at first you don't find a Psalm that fits your circumstances, keep reading until you do and then begin to pray.

There is nothing we can't pray to God...we can pray our anger, our fear, our disappointment, and confusion to God. If God is not big enough to handle our pain and disappointment, then He is not big enough for our lives. The reason we pray our disappointment to God is because when we release it to Him, He can transform it...He can transform us.

There are many things that are beyond my comprehension. I'm not God, I don't see all that He sees, and even if I could I likely wouldn't understand most of it. But I do know that God is good. I do know that God isn't the author of pain or disappointment. 1 John 3:8 says that the reason Jesus came to earth was to destroy the work of the devil; pain, suffering, disappointment, sickness, and death is the devil's handiwork.

I'm not trying to make things sound more simple than they are...we do live in a broken world that God is restoring, one person at a time. God is good, but that doesn't mean that everything in your life will be good. But we can ask for, and joyfully anticipate, the Lord's goodness invading every area of our lives. God's goodness is bigger and stronger than our disappointment and hopelessness.

### Spiritual Direction Moment

Before I move into our Corinthians text this morning, I want to take the next few minutes to move us into a time of encounter with the Lord. My sense is that there is an open window for some of us this morning...a window for God to break into our disappointment. I know that if some of you don't invite God into your disappointment right now, the window will be shut by the time you leave this morning.

And so I'm going to take the next 4-5 minutes to lead you in a time of silent prayer, prompting you along the way.

- *Holy Spirit, search out disappointment/hopelessness in any area of my life.*
  - *take some time to describe your disappointment to Jesus.*
  - *confess any lie you have believed about yourself, or about God, in this area of disappointment.*
  - *Declare that God is the author of goodness. I believe that you are the author of goodness, and the intent of Your heart is to be good to me.*
  - *Mark to pray for release/freedom from any spirit of disappointment/hopelessness*
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If you have your Bibles with you, I want to invite you to turn with me to 1 Corinthians 3:18-23; that's page 1774 in the Blue Bible.

### Read

*“18 Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become “fools” so that you may become wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight. As it is written: “He catches the wise in their craftiness”; 20 and again, “The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.” 21 So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours, 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, 23 and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.”*

In verses 18-21a, Paul gathers up the themes he's been addressing since he opened the letter. Once again we hear Paul talking about wisdom and foolishness, about division/faction/quarreling, and about what makes a person spiritual.

Paul opens with a strong warning: *do not deceive yourselves*. Just because a person (or church) claims to be wise and spiritually mature doesn't make it so. The Bible defines wisdom and maturity quite differently than most. Biblically speaking, wisdom results from the marriage between “knowing” and “living”. How do we know the one who is truly wise? We know it by looking at their life; the one who is wise, lives her life in alignment with God's life.

The Corinthians are claiming “wisdom” and “maturity” but their lives are telling a different story. They are arguing about who's the wisest, who's the most spiritual, who's following the best leader...they are making Paul's case for him.

True wisdom and maturity leads to honouring God, and loving our brothers and sisters in Christ. 1 John 4:20 reminds us that “*Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.*” This a theme Paul is going to come back to again and again throughout the letter.

When we live out of disappointment or woundedness, we end up wounding the people around us. We judge, we argue, we seek to elevate ourselves above one another, and we are the more miserable for it; peace eludes us all.

There is another way to live. We’ve already talked about finding our rest in God, and finding our voice in the Psalms; what I’d like to talk about now is *taking hold of our inheritance*.

In order to make sure that his message is coming through loud and clear, Paul repeats himself twice in vs. 21 and 22. “**21** *So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours. 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours. 23 and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.*”

By a show of hands, how many of you have ever received an inheritance of some kind from someone you knew? Most of us know how an inheritance works. Over the course of a life, a person will accumulate money, property, and possessions; a person’s last will and testament contains details concerning the distributing of these assets, payable upon their death.

Paul wanted to lift the Corinthian eyes from their petty squabbles so that they could come face to face with their inheritance. “*All things are yours,*” said Paul. That statement sounds like a rather large blank cheque. And so, Paul spells out exactly what he means in vs. 22.

The leaders the Corinthians are fighting over (Paul, Appollos, and Peter)...Paul says, “*you don’t belong to them...they are mere servants...they belong to you.*” But Paul doesn’t stop there because a Christian’s inheritance is much larger. *All things are yours...the world, life, death, the present, the future—all are yours...because you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.*

Paul lays out a pretty lofty inheritance: *the world, life, death, the present, the future*. Has Paul gone too far? Though we participate in these realities; we do not possess them. But think about it...on the day Jesus returns, everything will be different...the world will be put to rights, and disappointment will be a distant memory.

When Jesus returns the final nail will be pounded into death’s coffin. Death may be our enemy in the present, but even now, we have nothing to fear in death. To live is to live for Christ, to know His life within us, and to die is to go to be with Him.

We may not know what today or tomorrow holds, but we know Jesus...and He’s the One who holds both today and tomorrow. Our present is secure and the future is certain because God is seated on His throne; no one can rival His power, and no one can compare to His goodness and love.

“*All things are yours,*” said Paul, “*the world, life, death, the present, the future--all are yours.*” These five descriptors are not the boundary

markers of our inheritance, they reveal that our inheritance in Christ is without boundary. *All things are ours in Christ.*

Romans 8:32 says, “*Since [God] did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won’t he also give us everything else?*”<sup>3</sup> Isn’t that incredible? Jesus isn’t holding out on us. His love, His grace, His forgiveness...it’s for us. His wisdom, His joy, His peace...it’s for us. His calling, His authority, His power...it’s for us. God didn’t hold back His precious Son, why would He hold back anything else? *He wouldn’t...He isn’t.*

Ephesians 1:3 says, “*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*”

1 Peter 1:3-5 says, “ *3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, 4 and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. 5 And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.*”<sup>4</sup>

All things are ours...because we belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God. Hope deferred makes the heart sick...disappointment, left

unattended, leads to hopelessness. Hopelessness finds its root in some lie we’ve believed about ourselves, our world, or God.

But friends, now is the time for hope...for the joyful anticipation of the Lord’s goodness. Now is the time to lift our eyes from our petty squabbles, rivalries, and posturing...we have an inheritance to take hold of. Now is the time to invite the Holy Spirit to root out any hopelessness, any lie that keeps us chained to the past, chained in the present, or fearful about the future. Now is the time.

May God’s goodness catch you by surprise, fill your heart with hope, and fill your mouth with His praises.

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<sup>3</sup> New Living Translation.

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