

Hope From Ashes: Responding to Tragedy
Lamentations 3:21-40
September 11, 2011
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If you were old enough to understand what was happening, you will never forget September 11th, 2001. It was at 8:46 am that American Airlines Flight 11 struck the North Tower of the World Trade Center. And many of us were going about our normal activities, and perhaps someone called, we heard somehow of what had happened, turned on the news. And then we'll never forget watching in shock and disbelief when at 9:03 am, the second plane, United Flight 175, crashed into the South Tower. And we watched as within two hours, both of those massive structures collapsed into a pile of rubble and ashes.

The images of the heroes of that day – the police and firefighters whom we watched rush into danger, and of course, many of whom never returned – are forever etched upon our minds. Today marks the tenth anniversary of that national tragedy. And as we celebrate this anniversary, it really provides all of us with an opportunity, obviously, to remember, to remember those who died, to pray for their families as we have done.

It also reminds us that evil and tragedy is part of life in a fallen world. In the days and years ahead, as much as we don't like to think about it, we will all face tragedy. It may be a national tragedy inflicted upon us by those who wish to destroy us as a people. It may be a personal tragedy. But regardless, it will come. So, today should serve not only as a reminder of the past, but as a call to prepare our minds and hearts for the future - how we ought to respond.

There's a book in the Bible that presents for us a believing response to a great national tragedy as well as to a tragedy that was intensely personal for the author. In fact, the book is simply a collection of laments or poems of grief. It's called Lamentations. I invite you to turn there with me this morning. Lamentations is anonymous. We're not told explicitly who the author was, but many scholars believe it was probably written by the prophet Jeremiah. And the personal and national tragedy that occasioned this book was the destruction of the city of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian army. This book is kind of a funeral dirge for an entire nation and its chief city.

It was a horrific experience. For thirty months leading up to its collapse, for thirty months the Babylonian army laid siege to the city. During that siege, there was unimaginable trouble within the city itself. In fact, famine was widespread. You'll notice in 2:19, the prophet writes,

“Arise, cry aloud in the night At the beginning of the night watches; Pour out your heart like water Before the presence of the Lord; Lift up your hands to Him For the life of your little ones Who are faint because of hunger At the head of every street. See, O Lord, and look! With whom have You dealt thus? Should women eat their offspring, the little ones who were born healthy?” [It was the worst of times for thirty months.]

When the Babylonians finally breached the walls on July 18th, 586 B.C., the worst unfolded to that people. You can see it if you look back in chapter 2, the middle of verse 20,

“... Should priest and prophet be slain In the sanctuary of the Lord? On the ground in the streets Lie young and old; My virgins and my young men Have fallen by the sword. You have slain *them* in the day of Your anger, You have slaughtered, not sparing.”

Look over at 5:11. When the Babylonians broke into the city on that July day,

“They ravished the women in Zion, The virgins in the cities of Judah. Princes were [first killed and then, as an act of desecration, were] hung up by their hands; [the] Elders were not respected [their bodies were allowed to decay and to be ravaged by animals and birds]. Young men were ... [forced to work] at the grinding mill, And youths stumbled under *loads* of wood. Elders [the leaders of the nation] are gone from the gate, Young men from their music. The joy of our hearts has ceased; Our dancing has been turned into mourning.

The entire city was plundered and then razed to the ground. Solomon's temple, that magnificent edifice that Solomon had built, was looted, then burned and then utterly destroyed. Most of the elite citizens of the nation were imprisoned and carried off captive to Babylon - prisoners and slaves.

Understand that what the prophet wrote about was not like the destruction of the World Trade Towers on September 11th. Instead, it would be more like the destruction of our entire nation and its civilization – as if the record of the memory of the U.S. were to cease to exist. It was a tragedy of unimaginable proportions.

National tragedies will almost certainly come again in our lifetimes. Personal tragedy will confront every person here at some point in our lives. So, the question is, how can we be prepared? How can we respond to tragedy? The answer is in this small book written now twenty-five hundred years ago.

It's really an amazing book. Lamentations is a series of five laments. Each chapter is a carefully structured poem, crafted like an intricate funeral dirge. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. If you look in your Bible, you will see that chapters 1, 2, 4 and 5 all have 22 verses corresponding to those 22 Hebrew letters. The first four chapters of this book are acrostic poems.

The fifth is not acrostic, but still has 22, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. In chapters 1, 2 and 4, each verse begins with the next letter in the Hebrew alphabet - the first verse with "a", the equivalent of "a", the second verse with the equivalent of "b" and so forth.

You'll notice that chapters 1 and 2 have 22 verses and each verse consists of three lines of Hebrew poetry. Chapter 4 has 22 verses, but each verse consists of two lines of Hebrew poetry. And chapter 5 has 22 verses, and each verse consists of one line of Hebrew poetry.

The chapter that stands out, the poem that stands out from the others is chapter 3. It has 66 verses. That's because of its structure. In Hebrew, verses 1, 2 and 3 all begin with the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Verses 4, 5 and 6 all begin with the second letter in the Hebrew alphabet and so forth through the 66 verses.

It's a fascinating chapter. Chapters 1 and 2 are laments about the devastation that happened to the city of Jerusalem. But in chapter 3, Jeremiah gets personal. In this chapter, he documents the personal and emotional impact to him of what had happened to his city, his family, his friends and his nation.

Look at verse 1 of Lamentations 3, “I am the man who has seen affliction Because the rod of God’s wrath.” You understand that even the righteous were affected when God unleashed His anger on a culture? Jeremiah endured it. Notice how he describes it. Go down to verse 15 of chapter 3,

“He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drunk with wormwood. He has broken my teeth with gravel; He has made me cower in the dust. My soul has been rejected from peace; I have forgotten happiness. So, I say, “My strength has perished, and *so has* my hope from the Lord.” Remember my affliction [God, remember] my wandering, the wormwood and the bitterness. Surely my soul remembers and is bowed down within me.”

That reads like what those personally affected by the events of 9/11 experienced. And if you’ve lived many years here on earth, you have experienced a day like that as well – a day when circumstances were so bad that all hope seemed lost.

But in verse 21, Jeremiah, in the middle of this tragedy, begins to see a ray of hope. Look at verse 21, “This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope.” Now that verse could not be more important because it shows us that the path to hope in the middle of great personal or national tragedy is to deliberately call certain truths to your mind. As Lloyd-Jones would say, “You have to stop listening to yourself and start talking to yourself.” It’s in those truths that our hope is found because your circumstances may not change. Jeremiah’s didn’t change.

He was eventually carried off into Babylon and died in the Babylonian captivity, but he still found hope. How? Well, in the verses that follow verse 21, Jeremiah tells us how it is that he found hope for the future when he was in the middle of one of the greatest national and personal tragedies ever to strike a man and certainly in his life. In Lamentations beginning in 3:22 and running down through 39, really 40, there are several truths that we must intentionally call to mind in the middle of tragedy if we’re going to restore our hope.

Now this is too large a passage to cover in the detail it deserves in one message so my goal this morning is to just give you some hooks; some hooks on which you can hang your future study

and your own meditation. I want us to look at the truths Jeremiah rehearsed in his own mind and that gave him hope because it's where we find hope as well in the midst of tragedy.

The first truth that we must remember is this: God's character hasn't changed; God's character hasn't changed. It's interesting because Jeremiah placed verses 22 - 24 at the very center of the poems that make up this book. These verses are both the geographical center of the book and the theological center as well. And it's the place where we find our greatest hope when we find ourselves immersed in tragedy. Look at verse 22. It's a rehearsing of God's character. "The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail."

I love the Hebrew word that's translated here "lovingkindnesses". The Hebrew word is "hesed". It refers to a combination of love and loyalty in the context of a relationship. God has entered into a relationship with His people - a covenant relationship, a legally binding promise, like the covenant you made perhaps on the day that you were married when you stood before God and witnesses and committed to be faithful and loving toward that person. That's "hesed". That's why the ESV translates this word that's here translated "lovingkindnesses" as "steadfast love". The NIV translates it as "unfailing love". It is love and loyalty married together in the context of a relationship. God has made a covenant with us. And regardless of what comes into our lives, we can always count on His love and loyalty. They'll never change.

Notice though the word "lovingkindnesses" is plural. That's because the Hebrew word "hesed" is also plural. So, here it's not simply referring to the attribute of God – that loving loyalty or steadfast love – but rather, it's referring to the acts or expressions that show it, that evidence it. Notice he says, "The evidences of His loving loyalty never cease." They are never used up; they're never spent; they're never gone – even in the middle of tragedy. The proofs of God's steadfast love come to us because notice they are rooted, they are grounded in His compassion – "for His compassions never fail," His acts of compassion. God is always, even when we're hurting, God is always aware of, touched by, our misery. And in time, it's God's nature to respond to alleviate that suffering and misery.

Verse 23, "*They* are new every morning...." The pronoun "they" here refers back to the evidences of God's "hesed", of His unfailing love. Those evidences of His love for us and His loyalty to us are new every morning. The dawn of each day brings a fresh supply. And as Jeremiah

contemplates that, he just can't help himself, and he just breaks out in adoration of God – “Great is Your faithfulness.” Great, that is abundant, more than enough, is your faithfulness. It certainly is. I love the image from the Psalms, Psalm 36:5, where the psalmist writes, “Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.” When you fly in an airplane, you're high above the surface of the earth, and yet you still haven't begun to reach the atmosphere that surrounds this planet. You have some picture of the greatness and magnitude of the faithfulness of God. It reaches to the skies.

The Hebrew word translated “faithfulness” speaks of God as perfectly reliable. God is reliable. Our circumstances can sometimes make us question that. They can make us question if maybe God's changed His mind. Bad things come, what do we think? “Well, maybe, maybe God doesn't think of me the way He once did or maybe I was wrong.” But God is perfectly reliable. He always keeps His word. His faithfulness here speaks of both His word and His person. In His word, He always keeps it. He always does what He said He would do. He never goes back on His word. He's reliable to do what He promised. And it also speaks of His character. He's always perfectly consistent with who He is. So, however it may look like God's not doing what He should do, He's always reliable.

It's true with Israel, isn't it? The very fact that the Jewish people still survive is evidence of God's faithfulness. In Malachi 3:6, the prophet wrote, quoted God as saying, “For I, the LORD, do not change (I'm faithful, I'm consistent, I'm reliable); therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.” God's loyalty to the covenant He made with us and His own personal integrity never change regardless of how bad our circumstances may get. He can always be trusted. He's perfectly reliable. You can count on God.

Verse 24, “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, ... “Therefore I have hope in Him.” This verse, of course, harkens back to the Old Testament. You remember when the land of Israel was apportioned in the days of Joshua, the Levites, the tribe of Levi, didn't get any of the land. Instead, God was their portion. They got God instead. That's what Jeremiah's saying. You see, we may lose everything else in the world, but we still have God. And that brings us hope.

You see, whatever happens to us, or whatever happens around us, we must keep reminding ourselves that God's character hasn't changed. We are still surrounded, even in tragedy, with expressions every day of His steadfast love and of His compassion. He is always reliable. He

keeps His promises to us and He's always consistent with who He is. And if in the end, the absolute worst happens, and we lose everything else, we're still rich because we have God. So, in tragedy, we must keep reminding ourselves that God's character hasn't changed.

There's a second truth we must recall to our minds if we're to have hope, and it's this: God's plan hasn't changed, God's plan hasn't changed. One author explained this section that begins in verse 25 and runs down to verse 33 very well when he wrote this,

The Lord is well-disposed toward the children of men under all circumstances for even when He smites them, He seeks their highest interest. So, they ought to conduct themselves in adversity so as that it is possible for Him to carry out His designs.

God has a plan, a plan not for our harm but for our good. He has a plan even in our suffering. And so don't forget that suffering and trials are part of a good God's plan for our spiritual health, our spiritual progress.

Look at verse 25, "The LORD is good [even in tragedy, the Lord is good] to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him." The Lord is always good to those who seek Him, to those who patiently wait for Him to act. And notice that part of the way God expresses that goodness to us is in the middle of our trouble.

Verse 26, "*It is good that he [that is, us the believer] waits silently For the salvation of the LORD.*" In other words, it is for our spiritual good to wait patiently in the middle of suffering and trouble and even tragedy for God to save us, for God to rescue us. And we're to do so, notice verse 26, silently. That means without complaining, without arguing with God, without disputing with God about His justice or goodness.

Verse 27, "*It is good for a man that he should bear The yoke in his youth.*" It's a difficult verse to interpret exactly, but the basic point is clear. Suffering can accomplish good and even prepare us for the rest of life. So, don't complain against the Lord's discipline, but submit to His plan. He has a plan, and that plan includes suffering. We're to submit to it.

Verse 28, “Let him sit alone and be silent Since God has laid ... [this trouble] on him.” In other words, mourn. Of course, as Paul said about believers dying, he says we grieve. It’s normal and human and natural that we grieve, we mourn. We just don’t grieve like those who have no hope. And here he’s saying mourn. Absolutely when tragedy strikes, that’s normal and natural, our Lord Himself did. But bear it without complaining.

Verse 29, “Let him put his mouth in the dust....” That’s a posture that shows humility before God; that shows dependence on God. It’s like 1 Peter 5, “humbling yourself under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” And the second half of the verse, verse 29, gives us the attitude that we should keep throughout the tragedy. Notice: “Perhaps there is hope.” So, humble yourself before God; depend on God, and we are not to allow ourselves to lose hope of God’s deliverance.

Verse 30, “Let him give his cheek to the smiter, Let him be filled with reproach.” In other words, you have to be confident enough in God that you humble yourself under His hand and even allow yourself to be humiliated on earth. That’s what happened to the children of Israel. All the leaders of the nation were put in chains and marched across the desert back to Babylon. They were utterly humiliated. We must believe so much in God that we can even endure that.

Our Lord, of course, is the perfect example. He endured extreme humiliation without any retaliation. He simply entrusted Himself to God, and He never opened His mouth to retaliate. Why? Because He trusted God. He knew God had a plan. Those who are truly waiting on God to act and those who know that God has a purpose even in our suffering can endure humiliation (how?) because they, they don’t forget that suffering may be part of God’s plan, but it’s only temporary.

Look at verse 31, “For the Lord will not reject forever.” God often sends trouble to restore us to Himself. So even though our circumstances may cause us to feel like God has rejected us, it’s only temporary. The sorrow will come to an end. There may be mourning at night, but joy comes in the morning.

Verse 32, “For if He causes grief, Then He will have compassion According to His abundant ... [steadfast love].” God will eventually act (that word “compassion”), He will eventually act to

relieve our misery because of His abundant, loyal love. In fact, inflicting suffering on us is not natural to God. It's not something God takes any joy in.

Look at verse 33, "For He does not afflict willingly Or grieve the sons of men." Literally, the Hebrew text of the first part of that verse says, 'He does not afflict from His heart'. God only brings trouble because it is a necessary part of His plan to do us good.

So, trouble and suffering are, and always have been, part of a good God's plan for our spiritual health and progress. And that plan doesn't change when tragedy comes into our lives. So, when tragedy comes, don't complain against God. Submit to His plan, and remember that it's temporary. Whatever tragedy you face, it is not God's ultimate plan for you.

When I think of God's ultimate plan, my mind always goes to Ephesians 2:7 where Paul says: "He saved us so that in the ages to come He might show the riches of His kindness by His grace toward us in Christ Jesus." That's what His ultimate purpose is – to lavish us with grace and kindness and joy. So, in the middle of suffering, don't lose sight of God's plan. His plan hasn't changed.

If we're going to regain hope in the middle of personal or national tragedy, we must remember that God's character hasn't changed, that God's plan hasn't changed and thirdly, we must remember that God's justice hasn't changed.

Look at verses 34 - 36,

To crush under His feet All the prisoners of the land, To deprive a man of justice
In the presence of the Most High, To defraud a man in his lawsuit - Of these
things the LORD does not approve.

Now there are two basic circumstances described in these verses. The first is oppression by military force. Notice verse 34, "To crush under His feet All the prisoners of the land...." This probably refers to the brutal and evil methods of the Babylonian army and those have been documented by historians.

Let me just give you one example. When the city was eventually breached, and the king Jehoiachin and his leaders fled, he was sought down and finally tracked down in the Jordan

Plains. They brought him to Nebuchadnezzar, and Nebuchadnezzar had Jehoiachin watch as, in front of his eyes, they slaughtered and executed all of the nobles that had served with him as part of his kingdom. And then they had him watch as, one by one, they killed his children. And when his children were all dead, they gauged out his eyes so that the very last image seared forever on his mind would be that of his children dying. They bound him in chains and led him off to Babylon – brutal, military force.

There's another circumstance here that's mentioned and not only oppression by military force, but oppression by legal injustice. This is probably a reference to (as so often happens when the fighting is over), those Israelites who had been captured were brought before military tribunals. They were railroaded through kangaroo courts with only a vague appearance of justice. And God was allowing all of this to happen.

Here's the point. Often, tragedy comes to us through the evil acts of others, of other human beings. The men who perpetrated 9/11, they were not otherwise pious, misguided men. They were evil, selfish men trying to gain a personal advantage in the afterlife by committing mass murder against more than three thousand innocent civilians here.

But let's make it more personal. For us, tragedy can come too often through the evil of other human beings – acts like rape and sexual abuse, violent crime, deadly auto accidents caused by repeat drunk driving offenders, atrocities committed in war, and on and on the list goes. When tragedy strikes us from the hand of another human being, it is very easy for us to question the justice of God. Where is the God of justice? What was one of the most common questions that was asked after 9/11? Where was God on 9/11? Where was God when I was horribly sinned against by another human being?

Well, here God reminds Jeremiah that although He had allowed the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, He in no way sanctioned all of their behavior. Notice verse 36, "Of these things the LORD does not approve." God did not and does not condone or approve of abusing prisoners of war or of depriving people of justice and due process of law. In fact, for the Babylonians, there would be payday someday. It was coming. If you doubt that, read Jeremiah 50 and 51 where Jeremiah prophesies that God will bring absolute devastation on the Babylonians because of how they treated His people in this episode.

You can read about it, by the way, the end of the Babylonians in Daniel 5 – that fateful night when, when Daniel read the handwriting on the wall and told Belshazzar, “You’ve been weighed in the balances along with your kingdom and found wanting. This night, your life will be required of you.”

The same is true for all of the evil acts of men that produce great human tragedy. Consider the suicide bombers who perpetrated 9/11. God allowed them to carry out their plan for His own purposes. But in the middle of that horrible day, God’s justice had not changed. He hated murder as much that day as any other day. And those men who carried that out will someday stand before the true God of the universe and will give an account for every life they took, for every evil act they perpetrated. Don’t mistake the patience of God with the apathy of God.

Often, our trials are caused by or exasperated by some evil or injustice done against us. And when you find yourself in the middle of a personal tragedy in which evil people are involved, don’t lose your hope. The God whose name is Justice is still on His throne. The moral universe hasn’t changed. Perhaps in this life, but without question on the Day of Judgment, justice will be done. Not a single sin that is unrepented of will go unpunished. God’s justice hasn’t changed in the middle of our tragedy.

A fourth truth we must remember when tragedy strikes is God’s sovereignty hasn’t changed. God’s sovereignty hasn’t changed. Verse 37, “Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, Unless the Lord has commanded it?” Jeremiah’s making the point that nothing on earth happens that God hasn’t either commanded to be done or commanded to allow to be done. No human being can undermine or overrule God’s eternal decree. What happens on earth is ultimately what God wants to happen on earth. He will hold the evil perpetrators responsible, but He is directing and shaping the events behind the scenes.

Verse 38, “*Is it not from the mouth of the Most High [in other words, from His command] That both good and ill (or calamity) go forth?*” What the Bible teaches is that God directs everything that happens in His world, including what we call natural disasters as well as man-made disasters. God takes complete responsibility. That doesn’t mean He’s responsible for their evil; He’s not. They are responsible, and they’ll be judged for it. But ultimately, God can prevent what He chooses to prevent, and He allows what He chooses to allow. He takes full responsibility.

Listen to Isaiah 45:7. “God says, ‘I am ... the One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; (I, the LORD, or) I am the LORD who does all these.’ I bring well-being. I allow calamity.

Amos 3:6, “If a trumpet is blown in a city will not the people tremble? If a calamity occurs in a city, has not the LORD done it?” So, when tragedy strikes, God has not suddenly relinquished the throne of the universe. He is still in charge. Our world may be rocking, but His throne is unshaken. Remind yourself that God is still in control, that there’s not a stray molecule in His universe. When disaster strikes, God’s sovereign control has not changed.

There’s a fifth and final truth that we must intentionally recall to our minds in order to bear up, to have hope in the middle of tragedy. It’s in verses 39 and 40 – God’s grace hasn’t changed. His grace hasn’t changed. Look at verse 39, “Why should *any* living mortal, or *any* man, Offer complaint in view of His sins?” The Bible tells us that there are times when you and I suffer unjustly. We don’t deserve it. We’re unjustly treated. And 1 Peter 2, Peter talks about that and how we’re to respond. When that happens, when we suffer unjustly, we should wait patiently for God to act like our Lord did. He didn’t vindicate Himself. He didn’t defend Himself. He didn’t seek revenge. Instead, He kept on entrusting Himself to the One who judges righteously.

There are other times, however, when the trouble comes into our lives either as a direct consequence of our sin - our sin caused the trouble - or we invited God’s discipline into our life because of our sin. And when that happens, when the trouble comes in response to our sin, we have absolutely no reason to complain. But even then, there’s still hope.

Notice in verse 40 how Jeremiah turns to call the people to action. He says, ‘We have gotten what we deserve. In fact, we haven’t been treated as badly as we deserve.’ Let us do this, verse 40, “Let us examine and probe our ways [that Hebrew word for ‘ways’ is, is our ruts, our paths, the predictable patterns of our behavior. Let’s probe our ways and then acknowledge the sin] And let us return to the Lord.” That’s repentance. Let’s repent. If we will, in the middle of our tragedy, turn to God and seek His repentance, He will be gracious.

By the way, this happened to those who experienced the devastation of the city of Jerusalem in 586. In exile, you remember, they repented. And so, in 538 B.C. in response to their repentance,

God raised up a man named Cyrus who ordered that they repatriate, who sent them back to Israel. And they rebuilt the temple, and they rebuilt the city walls of Jerusalem, and they rebuilt the country.

When tragedy strikes, God's grace hasn't changed. We still haven't gotten what we really deserved, and we have no cause to complain against God's providence. Sometimes when we've brought God's discipline upon ourselves by our sin - if our sin is part of the cause of the suffering we're enduring; if we will turn to the Lord in repentance, we will find Him ever gracious and eager to forgive. God eventually freed the Israelites from Babylonian captivity and reestablished them in their own land. Jerusalem and the temple were rebuilt.

Here's the point. Listen carefully. Even on your darkest day, God's grace hasn't changed. In the future, there will be other national tragedies. And eventually, every person here will face some kind of personal tragedy as well because we live in a fallen world. In fact, there may be someone here today who this week will face a great personal tragedy in your life. How are you going to respond? How are we going to respond when tragedy comes? We learn from Jeremiah. If Jeremiah were here today, he would tell us all how to face tragedy, tragedy like you and I have never faced that he himself endured. We have to intentionally recall to our minds, intentionally remember five great truths:

God's character hasn't changed. He still loves you with an unchanging love. He is still compassionate toward your misery. He is still faithful to all of His promises.

God's plan hasn't changed. He's a good God who will use the suffering for your spiritual progress. And He will ultimately deliver you from all suffering into the glorious joy of His presence.

God's justice hasn't changed. He will deal out absolute, strict justice to those who have perpetrated the evil against you. Where there's no repentance, not a single sin will go unpunished. God is the King of the moral universe as well as the physical one.

God's sovereignty hasn't changed. God is still on His throne. He's the source of all good. And He's the One who also allows trouble and evil, but He directs it to ends completely unforeseen and unintended by the sinner.

God's grace hasn't changed. However difficult our circumstances may be, we still have never gotten what we really deserve, and, by God's grace, we never will. God is still gracious even in the worst of tragedies. And if it's sin that has brought God's discipline into our lives; if we will return to the Lord in repentance, He will hear and He will forgive because that's His nature. And in time, in His time, He will remove the discipline.

That's how to respond to tragedy the next time it comes to our nation or to our own lives. Notice verse 21 again. Jeremiah says, "This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope."

Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for this amazing passage of Scripture. Thank You, O God, that in the middle of tragedy we can have hope that arises from the ashes because You're still on Your throne; because Your character is unchanged; because Your sovereignty is unchanged; because Your plan for us is unchanged; Your justice is unchanged. Father, we bless You that Your grace is unchanged. Remind us, O God, when our worlds are literally shaking apart that Your throne is unmoved. Father, may we find hope in You.

I pray, Father, for the person here today who has no chance for hope because they don't truly know You through Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Father, may You help them to see today that You alone are the only source of hope in this life and eternal hope that exists. And that hope is found through repentance and faith in Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. May this be the day when they find their hope met in You.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.