

CHURCH OF THE HIGHLANDS

Hope and Future

Full Transcript

Mark Pettus
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Duration: 36:53

Opening & Welcome

- 0:00 Somebody, our God has no rival. I said our God has no equal. Come on, he's the name above every name Jesus. We have gathered in that name today and man, I sense his presence here today. Y'all sense the presence of God today. He is with us and manual. God with us in this place. I'm so grateful you're with us as well. Jill and I love you with all of our heart. There's just no place like Church of the Highlands on the Sunday morning, gathered together in His presence, His people, and His power is in the room today. I want you to know that today. God's power is here today. The same power that raised Him from the grave is in this place today, available to us today.
- 0:40 And so I'm just so glad you're here and welcome, of course, all of our locations. It's one thing to show up. It's another thing to experience God. How many of you all came to experience God today? Well, make some noise. I did. I came to experience it today.
- 0:54 So before we go any further, I just wanna pray for us one last time that we would open our hearts up to Him and that we would have an expectation that God you're gonna meet with us here. I don't know what you came in looking for needing, just walking through whatever situation. God's power is available to us today. God, we love you today. And we are so grateful for your presence.
- 1:16 God, I sense your peace here today. God, I sense joy here today. Hope here today. God, your love is here today. So God, we make a decision right now, not just to show up physically, but to show up in faith today. We open our hearts. We want to open your heart up to him. Our hearts are open. You are the potter. We are the clay. So God, we say, come and mold us, shape us, change us. We want to walk out of here different than we came in. And we just promise to give you all of the glory and Jesus' name. And everybody said, hey, man, come on. Give him praise one more time with all the chaps.
- 1:50 Awesome. Awesome. I love you guys so much. It's so great to be in the house of God together. Once you high five your neighbor at every location and you can grab your seat.

Church Updates & Legacy Season

- 2:05 Awesome. Awesome. What it is, again, great to be with you. I want to officially take a moment just to welcome all of our locations across the state of Alabama over in the Georgia, our correctional facilities. And then, as always, anyone joining us online or on demand. And before I have your clap, I got to spend a good bit of time over the last couple of weeks in the state of Georgia at our campuses there. And just this past Sunday was at a couple campuses and then on first Wednesday was at Columbus. And I just got to say this today, God is moving in the state of Georgia. And I'm so grateful that God has called us to the people of Georgia and we are just getting started.
- 2:42 You know, I mentioned the correctional facilities. We are in all 28 of Alabama's correctional facilities every single Sunday. Church of the Highlands has an expression of worship, God's Word. They watch what you're part of right now in those correctional facilities. And people are getting saved. God is moving

in a powerful way. And about four or five months ago, we got a chance to begin in our first correctional facility in the state of Georgia. And in Jesus' name, I believe we're going to be in all those as well. Come on, put your hands together for the entire Highlands family. We love you. And Georgia, we don't want you rubbing anything in today, all right? You don't need to just calm down a little bit.

- 3:16 We're all good. I'm gonna leave it right there. So, you know, God's moving in a big way right now at Highlands. And today's gonna be a little bit of a different day today. Kind of two parts of what I'm gonna share with you. The first is really an update on all that is happening. I wanna make sure you know we've been at the movie season. I haven't had the chance to be here in person to say these things to you. And just really to give a good, I got a good report today of how God is moving in this revival season that we're seeing in our nation and really in our world. Oh, so that's incredible.
- 3:43 And after that, I have a message that I can't wait to share with you today from God's Word. It's really in the spirit of encouragement. And so, as a church right now, we're in an eight week season, we call legacy. Look at your neighbor and say legacy. It's important for us to catch the heart of this. It's not just church programming, very intentionally placed. The last eight weeks of the year are some of the most important for ministry. It's just where people are, hearts are open. There's just so much opportunity for us to be generous and for us to do things outside the walls of our church. And so before I share some updates, just thank you.
- 4:15 Thank you for your prayer. Thank you for being all in. I'm not surprised by that. That's who we are as a church. But thank you for your generosity. I want to just give a shout out to the entire dream team of 23,000 of you that serve every single week here at Highlands. And through all of that, to God be the glory, God has been very, very good to us and allowing us to see His goodness in the world. And I want us to, we're going to celebrate all these things today because again, you're every single one of you. are a part of what's happening, all for Jesus, but we're a part of it. So the first week of legacy, Pastor Chris actually preached here, and I got a chance to be down at our Daphne campus,
- 4:50 And y'all, it's such an amazing, see the whole mobile bay area right now, it's growing, there's industry coming there, great opportunity for us to be omissioned for God, and we had the opportunity earlier this year to purchase property, paid for it with cash. Come on, to God be the glory. We own property now and Daphne, and we wanted to do something we've never done, and that is to host a dedication service actually on the property. So I have a picture of her right here. Y'all, we put up a tent. We had an old school tent revival in Daphne. Check this out. A thousand people showed up that day, and we had our first church service on that property.
- 5:22 Yeah, to God be the glory. paid for and then we'll break ground on the building later on in 20 or in 2026. And I got a chance to share that day and of course always give opportunity for people to respond. Y'all, that used to be a peanut farm but somebody got saved there that day, the first person on that property. And this is what I told him this and what did just the picture of God's sovereignty and providence? That this land, God always knew there would be a church here. We just finally caught up with God's plans. And that's going to be a beautiful place to reach, just thousands of people. Amazing what's happening down there.

- 5:54 Right after that, we had our high school retreat. I could highlight really everything that's happening in student ministry. Church, look at me. God's moving right now in students. We're in a moment. And we will continue to lean in, just lean in in prayer, lean into the serving of this next generation. We had a high school retreat where God just moved. It was at Shaco Springs, Alabama, in the major metropolis of Tallah, Daga. And so it was near where I grew up. So Taladeg was the big city where I grew up. So we had our retreat there. 181 students got baptized the very last night. Yeah, we have some pictures of that. Y'all, 15, 16, 17 years.
- 6:30 Let me think about our own story. What a beautiful picture of declaring Christ that young. I'm going to serve him for the next 20, 30, 40, 50 years to God be the glory of what's happening. Right after that, we had our freedom conference. How many y'all love freedom groups at Highlands? Man, what a blessing and just past your hand is in this service. It's so grateful for his leadership over all these years. He and Colette and just an opportunity for all of us to say goodbye to yesterday to step fully into the freedom that God has for us for our future. We're counting the power of the Holy Spirit. changes everything, and we had over 2,000 people at our freedom conference, again, made possible by your generosity.
- 7:06 And God just moved in a powerful way. I have a picture of just the hands raised right there just representing that freedom that God does and God moves. And if you've never been to a freedom group, let me just do it this way. If you have been to a freedom group, and you want to encourage those who haven't yet been to a freedom group, put your hands together right now just so they know. It's a big deal. Got some shots over here to my right. It's amazing. And then we stepped a course into the Atta Movies season. And those three weeks were so powerful. God did move in a powerful way. You know, whoever made those movies, they thought they were making them for money.
- 7:38 They didn't know they were going to create a movie that could be used for ministry. And again, God redeems all things and it's really cool that we get the chance to do this. Thank you for always stepping in. I think we all enjoy it, but we recognize it's an opportunity to invite people. And you did that like never before this year. And I want to give you a good report that those three weeks at At The Movies were so powerful. We saw 1,360 documented salvation over those three weeks. So it works. And here's the cool thing. 104% increase in first time guests. So I know many of those are here today again at Highlands and so we welcome all of you guys here.
- 8:14 And then really throughout all of legacy season, just sharing a good report today of what's been happening. We've been doing outreach like crazy. Getting outside the walls of our church, showing people the love of Jesus, being the hands and feet of Jesus. And it's just been amazing really all year long. Outreach has been a big focus for our church this year. The world is hurting and what a chance to put on those red shirts, get out there and show them that love. We were actually up year over year, 15% in the number of outreach projects so grateful for Pastor Dino and that entire team. This is a crazy number everybody. I was asking for a number to help us get our mind around it.
- 8:45 I think this may make it harder because it's just so big. But to God be the glory, this year church of the Highlands has served 3.79 million service hours. We have served that many hours outside the walls of our church to God be the glory. So thank you.

- 9:02 And even in the Thanksgiving season, we did a Thanksgiving outreach where we were able to serve families food that have need right now in that area. And we served almost 5,000 families over 100,000 pounds of food. And we saw 240 salvation of people waiting in line to get a Thanksgiving meal. Because God uses all of that. And so here's the big deal. Thank God for all that has happened already. We are not finished yet. So just, as we're heading, I want to give you the roadmap over the next few weeks for prayer and participation. Giving hope is next Saturday the 13th. Please be praying. This is a chance for us, again, to it's really kind of like a second survey.
- 9:38 This has become massive for our communities. We'll serve around 10,000 children. But here's the cool, we're really revelation that Pastor Dino brought to this. There's many different expressions and thank God for all of them of giving gifts at Christmas. But we have really made an intentional focus to focus on the parents and families. So they're the heroes of that. They're the ones who come to our church locations. They do their shopping. They take those gifts home. Almost a million dollars worth of gifts will be given. But all of that is done through the family so that we really get a chance to minister to them because we know if we win their hearts, they're able to then bring the presence of God into their homes.
- 10:10 And so be praying for giving hope next Saturday. Still opportunities to serve, but it's a really, really important, important day. And then right after that, we have our legacy offering. been talking about it for the last five or six weeks. I won't go too much into it today. But this is a once a year offering that we bring every single year is an active worship. This is not for us. I got good news, everybody, because of your generosity, everything, all of our ministry is already funded. So the buildings like Daphne, all that we're doing, all that's already funded, to God be the glory. And your generosity, this is about doing more outside the walls of our church.
- 10:47 This is an offering we're able to steward and then bless others nationally or locally, nationally, and internationally. So every church of the Highlands, campus, pastor, and team, We've already got a list. I saw the list of those a couple of weeks ago. We can do so much good together. Nationally, we partner with groups like Convoy of Hope and others. The partner with what they're doing. And then internationally, in the 1040 windows specifically where the gospel, people have never heard the gospel. I want to make sure you hear this. We are called to that area of the world. Praise God for all international missions. We partner with many great partners where we're focused on the 1040 window and also the nation of Israel.
- 11:25 And a large part of that, I'm offering, we'll get to bless both of those places. And so the goal has never been a number and I'm not going to start now. Our prayer is that we would all participate, that we would bring it to God. It is all for Jesus. Come on, Matthew 25. gives us a beautiful picture. It says, whatever you have done for the lease of these, you actually did for me. So when we bring that offering, when we bless those ministries, thank God, they get blessed, but it's really ultimately offer Jesus. And I just want to say kind of 10 months into this new season with me as the elite pastor here, it's important for me to say this, okay?
- 11:59 As a church, we were called to the same mission as we happened the last 24 years, can I get an amen? We're a great commission church. We're going to help people meet no God, find freedom, discover purpose, and then make a difference. We are focused on the great commission, and we also have the same

values if we had the last 24 years. We're in, especially in the area of stewardship. We have our church leadership with trustees and overseers and our elders. Myself included, the spiritual DNA of this house is the same, and I consider every single penny that any of us bring to God. It's worship, it is to Him, and stewarding that is the honor of my life, and I have the fear of the Lord that we would do it all for Him.

The Gift of Hope and Future — Jeremiah 29:11

12:34

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

- 13:04 Pastor Chris Stewart of that for 24 years, the candle will be lit in Jesus' name. But we're going to have so much fun. It's going to be an amazing service. And so all of that is kind of our legacy season. I'll update you and just again asking for prayer and just really asking God. We always just ask you to ask God and let's continue to lean in as a church. What I want to do for like the last 20 minutes of today is share a message that I have been carrying like a burden over the last, probably the last month. There's different kinds of messages we have. There's teaching, the goodness of God series was very much a teaching series.
- 13:35 And I'm excited for 2026 and some different series we have coming up. There's different kind of, you know, like conference messages, different preach messages, all of that. Today is very much an encouragement. I'm delivering this today like you and I were sitting across a coffee table together, one on one. And it's not going to be my words. Pray, it's never my words today. I just want to make sure you hear this clearly. I am just getting the opportunity to relay a message from heaven to you today that God wants to deliver to your heart. The spirit of today is encouragement. Christmas is often a season of contradictions.
- 14:09 So on one hand, it brings joy, celebrations, all the traditions and Christmases, by the way, only 18 days away. Can anybody excited for Christmas? I know Pastor Blake's excited for Christmas. All right, so I love the traditions. I love the passion. We are very passionate in our family and everyone's passionate around their traditions is amazing. I'm going to give you four Pettis family traditions today. I'm going to deliver them like hot takes. If you agree with these, make some noise. If you don't agree with these, I'll show you some love as well. Maybe here's the first one. Christmas decorations should never go up until after Thanksgiving. If you agree, make some noise. Okay, where are my before Thanksgiving people?
- 14:47 Y'all make some noise. Maybe more of y'all. All right, we're praying for you, all right? So here's the next one. In our house at least, real trees are better than fake trees.
- 15:01 I'm not even gonna give the fake tree people a chance right there. Okay, okay, Justin. Here's the next one. Real Christians open presence on Christmas morning, not Christmas Eve. It's in the Bible. It's not in the Bible, it's not in the Bible. All right, where are my Christmas Eve people? Like Christmas Eve y'all makes a noise? Y'all probably own a cat too, I'm just saying. I'm joking. Just for fun. All right. Here's the last one. Elf is the best Christmas movie, and Polarge Fresh should be rated T for terrifying.

- 15:33 All right. So on one hand, it's all of that. And on the other hand, it can also be a season of sadness, loneliness, depression, and pain. I feel that right now. As a pastor, I feel that right now. I felt it, as people were walking in today, I felt it in conversations throughout this last few weeks, the schedule is hectic. Even in the natural right now, it's the darkest season of the year, and it can be dark in our souls. I don't know where you are today, but God dropped a verse in my heart. I want to share it today. It's one of those verses that is really well known, and maybe even has been memorized by some of us here today.
- 16:06 Sometimes though, we don't preach those well-known verses anymore because everyone knows them, but y'all, they're well known for a reason. And this one is so powerful. This is a message from the Holy Spirit to you today no matter what you're going through. Jeremiah 29-11, for I know the plans I have for you to clear as the Lord, plans to prosper you, not to harm you, plans to give you hope, and a future. Everybody say hope. Everybody say future. Two gifts the Holy Spirit has for you and you don't have to wait till Christmas morning. You can open them today. God has a gift for you today in this Christmas season in your situation. Hope and future.
- 16:42 Here's that work, first word hope. Hope in the original language is a faith-filled expectation. Hope is a good word. I think sometimes we think of it almost ethereal, like, oh, it's hope. It's a wish. It's a bet. Well, I hope it works out. And nothing could be further from the truth in the original language. And I want us to catch the spirit of this word. In the original language, it's like the picture of hope will be elastic or rubber band or even better. In my house, we have sling shots. A sling shot, pull tight, waiting to be released. Hope is active in our heart. It hope is an expectation. Hope is a confidence. Come on, somebody.
- 17:16 Hope is a peace-filled, just like, God's gonna show up. I don't know how. I don't know when, but I'm not gonna worry about I have the hope of God. And what's so cool is it's active, and with all the unknown in our life, catch this today. This is a gift that God has for you. All the cracks of the unknown, of what's gonna happen, and what is it gonna look like? Here's the beautiful thing. Hope it like water fills all of that, and we're able to live with that peace-filled expectation. because we have our hope in God. God has that for us today. That word future is also important. Future is the outcome. This is huge.

It Is Not Over for Your Purpose

- 17:49 That God has written for your life. Look at me today. God has an outcome written for your life. And I want to make sure we understand that word outcome is important. So over the last season of my leadership here at Highlands, I had the chance to be the president of Highlands College. And we really birthed the college back in 2011 with a vision and a dream. And early on, I even had the title president, but I was really just president of a dream. We didn't really have a college yet. We were on the way there. And one of the early opportunities that Pastor Chris asked me to steward was our journey towards accreditation. To God be the glory, we're on the other side of that.

18:23

Ephesians 2:10

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

18:54

Romans 11:29

For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

19:29 It's the culmination of all of it. Here's a better way to think about it. It's the destiny, the destination that God has for your life. Y'all do know God has written. He holds your life in His hands. He's written your story all the days of your life. And hey, everybody, there is a destination. No matter what you are facing right now, that doesn't change. that God has an outcome for your life and the enemy cannot steal it. I want to encourage somebody today, you're walking in shame, condemnation, pain right now. Yeah, you made a mistake. You know, yeah, it has not been the best year. Yeah, you wish you could do it again, but it is not over in Jesus' name.

20:07 God has a hope for you today, that his future outcome and destiny is as sure as it has ever been in Jesus' name. He might receive that today. Jeremiah 29-11 declares this, that no matter who you are, no matter what you've done or how things look right now, it is not over. It's not over. Three areas I want to lean in to encourage somebody today, we're across the table at coffee today. Number one, it is not over for your purpose. Oh, you gotta believe this today. It's not over for your purpose. My favorite verse in the entire Bible is Ephesians 2.10, for we are God's masterpiece. He has created us new in Christ Jesus so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

20:47 Y'all God planned good things for your life. for your life personally and the good things that you would do through what that first teaches us by discovery who we are in Christ. Then we discover that we're a masterpiece. We have an identity and we get activated in motion to do the good things. God has called us to do. God has a destiny. God has a purpose. God has a divine outcome for your life. You all look at me today. It's irrevocable. This is what you got to catch today. Rome is 1129. A great verse to memorize. For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. God is not a Walmart. He has a no return policy.

21:25

Philippians 1:6

Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

It Is Not Over for Your Relationships

21:44 And I think sometimes we act like they didn't even try to make us believe that our gifts and call or like that, but God makes it very clear in his word. He will not take them back. He has built them into your life. He's breathed them into you. But listen, Ephesians 2.10, he plans your life for good things. He has a no return policy. You are not disqualified. Failure is not final. I want to speak especially today in my heart to the correctional facilities. I know you're in a situation right now based on what has happened in your past but God still has a future for you and your church family. We believe it. We believe in you and we're grateful for your church family.

22:21 Philippians 1-6. Come on somebody be confident of this. Let me say confident. Confident of this, yeah, I'm sure of it. I have hope in this area that he who began a good work will carry it to completion into the

day of Christ Jesus. That's a promise from God's Word. It is not over. Secondly, it is not over for your relationships. Oh, this one's good, especially in the Christmas season. Friendships, family, business, marriage. Maybe you're walking right now. I even pray today just in the spiritual sensing that people would walk into church today, feeling the weight of the world in an area relationally. Like right now you're feeling even the stress of a fence, pain, maybe even betrayal.

23:00 We're walking with the family right now that's walking through betrayal and it comes with just such a like a lead weight that you're walking with. Maybe it's like hard to even get into church today or watching online today. And you just gotta know it is not over no matter what it looks like right now. God has hope for you. As he works out all things, Romans 8, all things for good. He is the God of hope in the future. I share testimonies. Whenever I share them, we share them. They're always to encourage you. I just, in this area of relationships, it's so difficult, sometimes it can feel impossible. I got a share of stories from our show's location.

23:33 A man named Britton today. I'm sharing this to encourage somebody who feels like it's over and it's not over. Since I grew up in a Christian home, but drifted as I got older. After high school, I joined the Marines. The military gave me discipline. It was also a dark place. I was far from my family, far from church, far from God. In 2010, while stationed in California, I met my wife. We got married quickly, started a family, and when I came back from deployment, life was hard. When I left the Marines in 2013, we were broken, stressed, and our marriage was strange. Over time, things just got worse. I fell into some bad habits, smoking pornography, recreational drugs.

24:08 My wife and I fought constantly. There was no trust, no peace, no honesty. In the middle of it, there was no God. In 2023, after one too many fights, I finally walked out, hit rock bottom, angry, addicted, and miserable. But God never gave up on me. My parents had started going to Highlands and they invited me. First, I showed up just physically, but in January 2025, everything changed if that was earlier this year. At church, we talked about not carrying old sands into a new year, and I knew God was speaking straight to me. That day, I gave my life to Jesus and was water baptized. Since then my life has been completely different. I quit trying to cope with substances or media and instead I started to read my Bible every morning praying daily and taking steps to begin leading my family spiritually.

24:49 My marriage has been restored and is stronger than it's ever been. My kids are thriving and they each have a real relationship with Jesus. There's one thing I've learned without Jesus, you have nothing. No addiction, no sin, no broken marriage is too far gone for him to heal. If he could take me from my lowest point to where I am today, he can do the same for you. Come on, let's give God glory. It's the truth today.

25:17 Man, I just want to wrestle the enemy off your life. I know so many of us are being attacked right now. Devil gets your hands off the people of highlands. It's not over. Devil gets your hands off of our marriages, off of our relationships. It's not over. Mark 9:23, this is Jesus. What do you mean, if I can, Jesus asks, anything is possible for those who believe. We're gonna pray that in just a moment. Here's the last area of encouragement today is for anyone out there who's struggling in the area of faith. It is not over for your faith. You're in church today, but

It Is Not Over for Your Faith

- 25:50 Right now you may never have had a real relationship with him. This philosopher that I love, he has a quote, his name's Blaise Pascal, he said that there are all of humanity before they know God, lives with a God shaped hole in their heart. A puzzle that has a piece missing which my wife loves puzzles, especially Christmas, there's nothing worse than a puzzle piece missing. You're restless, you're worried, you're looking everywhere, you know, did the dog eat it in our case? Probably, you know, whatever helped. But then when you find it, you're like,
- 26:21 It's nothing like it. It's like it's finished. Without God, you will always be restless. This is what St. Augustine said, you have made for us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you. What a beautiful opportunity for anyone today who's never known God, but I really want to lean into those today, who actually, you have a relationship with Jesus, but you were in church today struggling. You're struggling with what you believe. You're struggling with what you've experienced. Maybe you're even struggling with what you've seen. You're frustrated with your beliefs. We were walking through so many different situations that are right there right now. I think there's some beauty in that, by the way.
- 26:55 I think the restlessness we feel is a GPS in our life that gets us back to God and gets us re-centered. I think even in the season of revival, people are wrestling with a lot of things. Maybe they've had on the shelf for a while. So I want to encourage you, if you're wrestling right now with God, even if you're offended at Him, He is not offended at you. In fact, He loves you and you can bring whatever you are walking in. You can bring it all to Him. If you're restless today, I've got the most beautiful promise for you from Matthew chapter 11. Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.
- 27:30 That word rest is not talking about sleep, although we could all use a little more of that. It's talking about the soul level. Y'all check church. That word right there carries with it a relief from striving. I have been trying to fix all this on my own. I've been trying to figure it out. And now I can just,
- 27:47 God's got it. It speaks to revive like literally like a CPR. I was I was done. But now I'm I'm filled with hope because I know God has a future. It's not over for our purpose. It's not over for our relationships. It's not over for our faith. Come on. Can I get an amen in church today? It is not over. And if you need help believing it, I want us to take this last few moments and look back at Jeremiah 29. In fact, I'll give you homework today. Go read the entire chapter. We love to quote Jeremiah 29-11, but we don't often know the context of that scripture. And when you look at the context, it actually can be kind of confusing at first, but it completely strengthens.

The Context of Jeremiah 29 & The Advent Promise

28:26

Mark 9:23

What do you mean, 'If I can'? Jesus asked. Anything is possible if a person believes.

28:49 I got hope in future for you. What? When you look at it, it's so powerful and beautiful. God is saying to them, hey, I know things don't make sense. Maybe this is where you are today. I don't see the answer. You don't see how you're going to get from here to the other side of this, but I just need you to know. In the middle of it, I'm still with you. I'm still at work. You can have a faith-filled expectation that no matter what comes your way, the outcome doesn't change. It's been written. You have a destiny, and I am with you. And I love that even in that God doesn't leave the Israelites and say, all right, see y'all in 70 years.

29:22 This is only God. He says in the middle of it, go ahead. Plant gardens, build houses, Mary, because guess what? Even in captivity you're going to prosper. Well, somebody isn't our God good. He's the God of hope and of future. Babylon could not stop the destiny of God over Israel. And neither can our mistakes, failures, detours, the critics, the rejection, none of that can stop what God has for our lives.

29:52

Matthew 11:28

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

30:24 On the other side of that captivity, they were out of captivity, but they were still in prison. It was just a different prison. They were now in the prison of hope. We know where hope comes from. And no matter what we're facing, it is locked and sealed that God is in control. And so we're just going to lean into our stronghold and come on. Catch that last promise somebody today. He restored double. God's a good God. It's not over. One of our favorite traditions as a family is called Advent. And maybe you celebrate that as a family and even as a church the last couple years we talked a lot about it and we will more in the future even.

30:58 I love Advent. It actually was birth years ago, a couple centuries ago, a century and a half ago, in Germany and an orphanage led by a missionary who wanted to let the children celebrate Christmas. They're excited. Advent actually means arrival. And so they, you know, hey, how can we count down to Christmas? And they built it around that. And of course, now it's become a countdown and also celebrated in churches as a wreath. But the candles were all because it was the darkest time of the year. And he just used candles as a way to signify the light in the darkness. And so all that's turned into the all-group and a method of church. We had one of these on the stage, every single Christmas season, an advent wreath that celebrates.

31:32 Maybe you don't have never connected to the power of it. Celebrates a few things that are available to us today. There's four candles. We actually Advent officially would have started last week in the first. Big idea of Advent is always hope is what we're talking about today, that there's hope available to us. And today that there's peace, today is the Sunday of peace, that there's peace available to us. Next Sunday, this pink candle here is joy, that we have joy. And then the last one is love, that God so loved the world he sent his son. He's arrived. Jesus is here. This is Advent. All those candles are good, and the world has some level of answer for those, but there's a candle in the middle that changes everything, and this is where we are today.

32:06 This is our opportunity. If we won't hope today, this is our opportunity. It's called the Christ candle. It's the most important one. In fact, unless this candle is on fire, unless it is lit, there's no possibility for any of these other things. But today, because this candle has been lit, because Jesus has come, because Jesus

went to that cross, we sang about it earlier. We now have the opportunity in every situation to come to Him and to receive. Today, if you need hope, church, you can come to Him.

32:37 And you can receive in the name of Jesus the hope that only He can bring. Today, if you need peace, you can come to him, come on somebody, and you can receive his peace. When we come to that stronghold, we can become a prisoner of peace. I'm going to break protocol here for all the methods. I'm sorry, I'm going to light next week's candle, but actually it's joy, so if you need joy today, you can come and you can receive joy. It's available to you today, waiting for you today. And for all of us, even as a reminder, but we can receive His love, the love of God, sons, and daughters of God. This is Jeremiah 29 and 11.

Closing Prayer & Invitation

33:17

Zechariah 9:12

Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double.

33:31 I sense God's presence in this moment. We're not gonna rush. This is a moment of ministry. Every eye is closed, every head is bowed and every eye is closed just to give you that one-on-one time with God. We'll pray that salvation prayer in a moment, but I want to minister right now to all of us no matter what your situation is, you can come to Him today to Jesus Himself and receive.

33:54 Philippians 4 says this, do not be anxious about anything but in every situation no matter what situation you're facing. The Bible is clear, this is an opportunity in every situation. By prayer, petition with thanksgiving, present your request to God and the peace of God which transcends understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds. Let's do that right now. It starts with prayer. Prayer is just letting God know what's going on. Prayer is an act of faith. Come on right there, one on one, whatever your situation is, bring that to him today. Maybe you've been trying to handle it in your own understanding. This is a moment to put it into his hands. That marriage, those finances, your schedule, the unknown, that pain, that betrayal, whatever it is, God, I'm putting it, that's what prayer is.

34:36 I'm putting it in your hands. And the Bible says petition him. The Bible invites us to ask him to step into that situation. So whatever the answer to that prayer looks like, can you boldly right now pray that? Miracles, provision, healing, Connecting the, from where we are, to where we're heading, all the unknown, whatever it might be, come on boldly asking God, I'm asking you, I've tried to fix it on my own, I'm asking you today, I'm petitioning you today to move in the situation, for your wisdom, for your strength, for that breakthrough, for that softening of a heart, for the protocol to return home. We're petitioning you. And I love the last part that we're encouraged to thank Him in advance.

35:11

Philippians 4:6-7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

35:26 We receive it. pledge our hearts and our minds. We give you all the glory. God thank you for your peace. I want to pray for anyone today because every head's still bowed and every eye is still closed that doesn't know yet, doesn't yet have a real relationship with Jesus or you walked away. I think it's so appropriate today. Jeremiah 29 is a beautiful text. Chapter, verse 11, we've talked about, but verse 12, the very next verse says this, then you will call on me and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me, and you will find me when you seek me with all of your heart. And that's salvation. It's the moment you seek Him with all of your heart.

36:00

Jeremiah 29:12-13

Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

36:16 I'm asking you to forgive me of my sin, our repent. I turn away from that. I'm now pointed towards you. God, you were the Lord of my life and you were my Savior. Tell him that you're my Lord. Your way is my way. You're my Savior. I give you all the glory. Now inviting to fill you with the Holy Spirit. God, fill me with your Holy Spirit. I have the power to live out my faith with you. God, thank you for those who just prayed that prayer. The Bible says that all of heaven is celebrating. So here at Church of the Highlands, we celebrate to in Jesus' name, everybody said, Amen. We'll put your hands together.

36:51 Let's celebrate those who just made that.