



ENTER God's presence

Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.

-Psalm 62:5-6

Heavenly Father, you are a mighty warrior who saves us, our rock and our fortress. May we always encounter the hope that comes from being your children as we gather around your word. Remind us again of all the ways that you give us a hope and a future through your son Jesus, Amen.



SHARE life together

1. **Share your highs and lows with each other?**
2. **What is your greatest hope at the moment?**
3. **Share a time where hope has helped you through a difficult time in your life.**
4. **What is the most outrageous thing you have ever hoped for?**

Patterns. The brain is wired to recognise them. From those who can look at a bunch of numbers and see what comes next to those who can recognise a species of bird from its flight pattern. From those who can observe a child's social interaction and recognise they have special needs to those who can spot emerging patterns of growth or decline in the business or financial markets. Our world is full of patterns. Our lives are built on patterns. From the idiosyncrasies and habits that bring us comfort or make us unique, to the destructive patterns of behaviour that destroy relationships and lives and drain our lives of hope. Today in final week of our series "Reset", we see a pattern of behaviour and a cycle of existence that is repeated over and over and always leads to the same conclusion - gloom, despair, dejection and exile. But God, who ordered this world and sets the pattern for living, comes to break that pattern and create a new one that transforms gloom into gladness, despair into delight, dejection into joy and resets hope on a daily basis.

Week beginning:
Sunday 14th February 2021

Worship series:

RESET



VERSE for the week

The Lord your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you;
in his love he will no longer rebuke
you, but will rejoice over you with
singing.

Zephaniah 3:17



REMEMBER this week

**Redemption by grace,
restoration in love,
recreation for joy.
That's the daily pattern
that resets hope in your
heart and inspires life in its
fullness. It's a repeated gift
from a God who loves you
and delights in you.**



LISTEN attentively

Read Zephaniah 3:9-20

- 5. What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?**
- 6. What do you hear this scripture saying to you right now?**
- 7. God promises to do a lot of things for his people in this passage. Which “He will” or “I will” statement from this passage is most powerful to you right now? Why?**

Patterns – they are everywhere. They are what make life manageable, predictable, reliable. We base our behaviour on the patterns we see in the world around us. For example, if I don’t want my favourite coffee mug to break, then I take care not to drop it on the tile floor. I have learned this because of my previous experience with coffee mugs and tile floors; noting the pattern that when one is dropped onto the other it fairly reliably results in the mug shattering into many tiny pieces. We notice cause and effect, we identify patterns in behaviour, in numbers, in shapes, in colours. We are so good at this because it is how we were made. Being able to identify a pattern help us to predict the outcome of our behaviour and avoid making silly decisions. It doesn’t always work, but it keeps us out of trouble an overwhelming majority of the time.

That is until it comes to God. The Old Testament scriptures, both as a unit and in its individual books, depict a repeating pattern in the life of God’s people, the Israelites. The pattern begins with God providing a promise of provision and protection. He does this with Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham and Moses, just to name a few. Eventually the people enter a phase of rebellion against God and his laws and then, in judgement, God usually sends the people into some kind of exile whether it be getting kicked out of the garden of Eden, wandering in the wilderness or being carried off by a foreign nation.

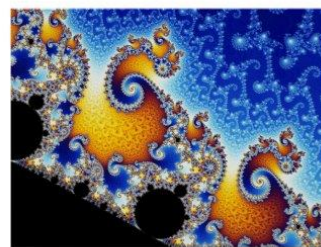
- 8. What patterns of rebellion can you identify in your own life? What are the things that consistently turn you away from God and his plans for you?**
- 9. Have you ever found yourself hoping things will be different, only to find yourself repeating the same mistakes over and over again? Why do you think this happens?**

The only way to alter a repeating pattern is to introduce a new element to it. Zephaniah begins chapter three with two familiar elements of the pattern, rebellion and judgement. Yet as we approach the end of the chapter, something new is added – restoration or redemption; and with that comes hope for a different future. Notice though that from the beginning of verse 9 – the prophet speaks mostly of what God does. Redemption and hope do not come from increased effort of the people, it comes from God and his mercy and faithfulness. The God who has until now responded to rebellion with judgement, now choses to respond with mercy, and he does that through his son Jesus. Jesus is the new element to the pattern, the thing that fundamentally shifts the way the pattern repeats on itself. God still promises us protection and provision, we still find ways to rebel against God, God’s judgement is still carried out, but it is removed from us and carried out on Christ. This allows us then to repent, it gives us the opportunity to turn back to God and draw close to him rather than to be separated and exiled from him.

- 10. Although we know that through Christ we are now God’s children, have you ever found yourself feeling distant or removed from God? How did that happen?**
- 11. Have you ever tried to break a habit or a pattern through sheer force of will? How hard did you find it? What other things might have made it easier?**



On the right is what is known to mathematicians as a 'fractal image'. It is essentially a pattern made by repeating the same shape in various scales. They often tend to form the spiralling kind of effect which you can see in the image. One of the mistakes we often make in our lives is allowing our hope to be established or based on the wrong thing. When this happens, no matter how hard we might try, like a fractal image, we simply continue producing the same result, just on a greater or lesser scale. This usually leads us to fear, anxiety, stress and burnout because despite our best efforts, we keep seeing the same disappointing results. When our hope is centered or founded in Christ, then things can change.



That is when we can reasonably hope for things to get better, for the future to be different. We cannot make the right changes ourselves. Only God alive and at work in us through his word and his Holy Spirit can make the changes that bring hope to our future.

- 12. What things, apart from Jesus, have you tried to find hope in at some point? How did that go?**
- 13. How do your daily routines influence your focus on Jesus as the reason for your hope? Do you find yourself relying on him and his strength or on your own power and strength?**



Have a look at Lamentation 3:21-23

The author of Lamentations has witnessed the judgement of God towards a rebellious Israel, yet even after experiencing the judgement, he can say 'yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope, because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. With your hope in the Lord there is hope even in the pit of despair. And this hope comes from his great love toward you. He delights in you. Zephaniah says he rejoices over you with singing. You do not have to hope that you are enough – Know that in Jesus your heavenly Father delights in you. He is not waiting for you to slip up so he can punish you, he just wants you to know him and to know how deep and how wide his love for you really is.

- 14. How do you spend time with God? Do you look forward to it or does it feel like an obligation?**
- 15. What difference does it make knowing that God delights in you, that he rejoices over you with singing? What hope or confidence does that knowledge bring you?**
- 16. What might happen if you saw everyone else as someone in whom God delights?**



- Praise God for his ongoing love and care for you.
- Thank Jesus for making hope available to us through his death and resurrection.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help the pattern of your life be one of hope and love.



You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

[Name], God loves you and delights in you. Amen.