

- I wanna talk to those of you who are hurting. Maybe you're a little bit afraid, you're alone. You might feel exhausted or worn out. Maybe you feel like you're losing hope. I'm gonna show you a guy from the Old Testament, his name is Jeremiah, and his words are recorded in one of the places in Lamentations 3. And if you feel worn out, if you feel discouraged, this guy felt a lot like you. In fact, I would encourage you to read Lamentations 3. I'm gonna tell you in what I call, today's language, what he said, this isn't exactly the way he said it. When he said it in Lamentations 3, it's more Bible-y, but I'm gonna say it how you would say it. I'm gonna tell you how you would say it, but I promise you, this is in the Bible. Essentially what he said was this, he said, "People suck." That's how you would say it. He said, "Life isn't fair." He said, "My body is wrecked." He said, "I can't sleep, I'm broke, I don't know how I'm gonna pay the bills. I'm overwhelmed with anxiety and God doesn't seem to care." That's what he said. I promise it's more Bible-y in Lamentations 3, but that's essentially what he said. And then in Lamentations 3:19, he said, "I remember my affliction and my wandering, and the bitterness and the gall. I remember them and my soul is downcast within me. Yet, this I call to mind and therefore I have hope." Today my goal is to help you call to mind one of the beautiful, powerful attributes of God that will give you hope when you're hurting. He said, I call this to mind and therefore I have hope. "The faithful love of the Lord never ends," here's our attribute, "His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness for his mercies begin afresh each morning." Today, it is my honor to talk to you about the mercy of God. And the title of today's message is "Hope When You Are Hurting." Father, give us hope through your Word. May we experience your mercy, your goodness, your grace, and your faithfulness, and be changed in your presence by the power of your Word. In Jesus' name we pray, and everybody said, amen and amen. The mercy of God. This subject is, honestly, it's a lot more complex, than most people would think. Honestly, there are layers to every single attribute of God and there's a lot of overlap, but there's also a lot of distinction. And so, one of my goals, whenever I'm communicating or teaching is to really simplify, to take any kind of concept, and to make it really, really simple. Now I'm gonna do that today. I'm gonna start simple and then I might confuse you, which is exciting, because sometimes confusing preaching is called deep preaching, have you ever noticed that? I mean, like, if it's confusing, it's deep, and so, that's just kind of a preacher joke. But what I'm gonna do is I'm gonna start simple and then we are gonna go a little bit deep into something that's complex, and hopefully come back out on the other side with a very powerful and very simple truth. One of the challenges when we talk about the attributes of God, I think a lot of people see them all in kind of like this soupy, goopy stew. Like, they all kind of go in there together, like they all kind of overlap, like there's love and joy, mercy and goodness, and he's just, and he's faithful, and he is full of grace, and he's compassionate, and all this stuff. And all of those are true and they do all overlap, but they're also very unique and quite distinct. For example, today, I wanna give you three of the attributes or qualities of God that are closely related, but they're actually very, very different in function. We're gonna look at three just to build our foundation. One is justice, one is grace, one is mercy. They're related, but yet, very, very distinct. What is justice? Justice is simply defined, whenever you get what you deserve. And in our culture today, when someone does something horrible, we tend to think, "Let justice be served," That's justice, somebody gets what they deserve. Grace is when you get what you don't deserve. Do any of you deserve salvation? The answer is no, we don't deserve it, but we're saved by grace. God gives us something that we do not deserve. That's different from mercy. Mercy is when you don't get what you do deserve. And they're all a little bit different. For example, most of us like justice, until it comes down to us. We don't want justice with us, what do we want? We want mercy. We don't want what we deserve, we don't wanna get what we actually

do deserve, we want other people to get justice, but oh, we want mercy. For example, how many of you've ever gotten a ticket for driving too fast? Ready for a little fact? I've never gotten a ticket for driving too fast. That's amazing. 54 years old and I know just this week, I'm gonna get pulled over and I've crushed my records. Ha! But I've never gotten a ticket for that. But I did get one ticket in my life and it was for an expired license tag. I went, Amy was with me, we went to the traffic court thing, I don't know if you've ever been there before, but I don't wanna talk bad about anybody, but I felt really humiliated. Number one, about a third of the people knew me in there, like, "Pastor Craig's here, what did he do wrong?" I know that, I know that, Life.Church, you know, whatever. And so, I went in there and it was funny 'cause the guy at the front was calling people up, and everybody in there, I promise you, they were all innocent. It's like, "Was it you?" "It wasn't my fault." "Well, I wasn't really speeding." "Well, I didn't make that left turn." "Well the light was green," or, "The light was yellow," whatever. Everybody in there, it wasn't their fault. When he called me up, he's like, "Craig Groeschel." They're like, "Oh, that's Pastor Craig." And I walked up all the walk of shame up to the front. And I stood before him, he said, "What's your story?" I said, "I am just, I'm sorry. I'm an idiot, I forgot, I'm guilty." And he looked at me just shocked. He said, "What did you just say?" And I said, "I'm sorry." He said, "Not that part, the other part." I said, "I'm guilty." He said, "No, no, no, no, the other part, the good part." I said, "I'm an idiot?" He said, "Yeah, that part." And I thought, "Oh, he's gonna, like, shame me." And he just said to me the true story, he's like going, "Can you say that again?" I said, "I'm an idiot." And he said, "What kind of an idiot are you?" I said, "I'm a guilty idiot." He said, "Could you say it louder?" And he gave me this look kinda like, just trust me and work with me. He said, "Can you say it louder?" So I was kind of falling along, all right. It's like, "I'm a guilty idiot. I'm a guilty, guilty idiot. I'm the worst. Bad, bad, bad, bad me. I'm a guilty idiot." And the guy looked at me and he said, "Oh, my gosh, all these other people are innocent. You're guilty. I can't have you're guilt infecting them. You're forgiven, go outta here." And I walked out of there with no ticket for the Groeschel. Somebody, that's mercy. That's when I was wrong and I deserved punishment, but I didn't get the punishment. We want justice for other people, but we tend to want mercy for ourselves. And God, this is good news, is a merciful God. I wanna show you a text in Ephesians 2 that is not fun. It's not fun at all. Paul contrast our spiritual condition without Christ, our nature without Christ. He contrasts that with God's mercy. And he says in Ephesians 2:1-3, he says, "Once you were dead because of your disobedience and many sins." So first of all, he says, "You're spiritually dead because you did a lot of things wrong." Then he said, "You used to live in sin like the rest of the world, obeying the devil." So watch what he's saying. You're spiritually dead and you're obeying the devil. Then he said, "All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature." We did whatever felt good, whatever we wanted. "By our very nature," Paul says, "we were subject to God's anger or his wrath, just like everyone else." So, let's summarize this and see what he is saying. He's saying without Christ, you are spiritually dead. Not physically dead, spiritually dead, because your disobedience to God. You're obeying the devil without Christ. And you're following your sinful desires and you're subject to God's anger or his wrath. That's confusing, when we at church preach about a loving God. And this is where it gets a little bit complex. How can a loving God also be an angry God? That doesn't make sense to me. What I wanna try to show you is that love and anger can unquestionably coexist. They can unquestionably coexist. I'm gonna give you an analogy and I wanna warn you, it's gonna break down because I'm gonna compare God to you. And the problem is, if you haven't noticed, you ain't God, okay? So it does break down some, but it is going somewhere. For example, if you have a child, and you love your child, but your child lies to you, what do you feel? You feel

simultaneous love toward your child and anger at the sin. And yet, but, they coexist. If you have a friend that you love, but your friend likes to drink too much and drive drunk, you can simultaneously love your friend, and be really, really mad your friend is putting himself or herself and other people in danger. They coexist. You can love your husband so much, but when he doesn't put the toilet lid down, Come on somebody, okay? You might not love him in that moment, and you're asking for God's help to love him. You can both love and be angry at the same moment. And so, when God is angry, he can both love people, and be angry at that which hurts his creation at the same time. And Paul is talking about this in the nuance, as he says, "Without Christ, you're subject to his wrath. He's angry at the filth, the horror, the sin, that goes against everything of his holiness." And then in verse four, you see two of the best words in all of the Bible. Remember, what are we without Christ? We're dead in our sins. We're obeying the devil. We are subject to God's anger. And then Paul says, "But God," somebody say, "But God." Say it again, he says, "But God." He says, "But God is so rich in," what? "But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much that even when we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead." In other words, even though we deserve to be punished, because of God's rich mercy, he didn't give us what we deserve. If you ever are tempted to think, "Well, God's not fair." Sometimes you need to say, "Thank God he's not fair." Because if he was fair, I would get what my sins deserve. God is rich in mercy. In fact, that's a, rich word in the Greek is the word *éleos* and this word is a present tense word. What it means is that God lives in a continual, ongoing state of mercy. It's an unending state of mercy. He is rich in mercy. It's continual. In other words, it's always been there. It always will be there. And that's why it's new every morning. It was there yesterday. It was new today. It'll be new tomorrow because it does not end. It's always there. It's continual, unending. He is abounding in rich mercy. You may say, "But, wouldn't God like the kick off angry God in Old Testament strike him dead?" And now he's like the loving, wink, wink at sin, push over God in the New Testament. No, no, no, no, no, no. He's always been just, and he's always been merciful. He's always been righteous and he's always been loving. And here's the problem, this is why so many people have a wrong view of God. And let me just, again, we're gonna go deep. This is deep. It may be confusing, but that's deep, okay? This is where people go wrong. So many people, they don't understand God because their view of God starts in Genesis 3, and it ends in Revelation 20. It starts in Genesis 3 and ends in Revelation 20. If you don't know Genesis 3, that's when Adam and Eve fell. That's when they sinned. That's when they disobeyed God. And Genesis 20 talks about the punishment. That's the judgment. That's the eternal damnation. And so, for so many people, when they think about God, their theology is, you're a sinner and you're going to hell. You're pathetic and you're going to hell. You fell short and you're going to hell. You're not a good person, you're going to hell. But that's not where the story of God started. And that's not where the story of God ends. The beginning is in Genesis 1. And in Genesis 1, God created everything and said, "It's good. It's all good. The oceans are good. The mountains are good. The skies are good. The birds are good. The fish are good. The watermelon's good. It's all good." Then he created people. And he didn't say people were good, he said, "Now, man is very good." This is where it started. It started with the goodness of God. And he said, "This is so good, enjoy it all. Be naked. Multiply. Have fun. Party in the garden. Just don't eat the fruit of this one tree. This is one." And then Adam and Eve gave in to temptation and ate the one. God said, "If you eat of that, you'll surely die." They ate it and did they die a physical death? No, they died a spiritual death. And what did God do? Because he's a mean judgmental, angry God. He struck 'em dead on the spot and made little black spots right there by his first blade of grass. Then you'll say, "No, that's not what he did. He said, "Hey, I'm sorry, there are consequences for

what you did. I've got bad news for you, child birth, child bearing's gonna be really hard, and you're gonna work a lot." That's what's coming. There's some consequences. But then what did God do? In his mercy, which is new every morning, that has been there from the beginning and will be there till the end, in his mercy, he sacrificed an innocent animal, and made coverings with the skin for their shame. His mercy is new every morning. It was there at the very beginning. It starts with his mercy and his goodness, and it goes all the way to the end in Revelation 21 and 22, when we see that God makes all things new again. It starts with good, it ends with good, because his mercy is new every morning. When you understand the nature of God, yes, he's always just, but he's always mercy. Your only reasonable response in view of God's mercy, we offer our lives as living sacrifices. He's always been good, he always will be good. Are you tracking with me? Is this a little bit deep? Oh, I was hoping you would say yes. Okay, we'll keep going on, all right. In the Old Testament, David sinned. And you may be thinking there's the Bathsheba thing, shoot him up on the roof, okay? This is a different time. David actually was pretty dang good at sin. Thankfully, God is a God of mercy. And this was a sin that could have had some pretty big consequences to a lot of people in the Old Testament. And I want you to watch what David did, is he wanted to turn to God, but I want you to watch who he didn't wanna turn to when he had done wrong. He says this in 2 Samuel 24, he said, "Let us fall into the hands of the Lord." Why? "For his mercy is great." He'll have mercy for my wrongdoing. Let me run to the God who is a merciful God. And then he say, "But do not let me fall into human hands." I think that's kind of funny. I wanna go to a merciful God, because God may show mercy, but so many people won't. Am I telling the truth, right? Am I telling the truth? God may be a merciful God, but, oh, my gosh, if you mess up, people will pile along. And the tragedy is that, so often, those who should be most merciful, the body of Christ, are often those who show the least mercy. We're gonna come back to this thought because it's really, really important. But what I wanna do first is I wanna show you just how much mercy means to God. Just how much it matters to God. In fact, if you look in the Old Testament, they're the most ridiculous, detailed descriptions of how God wanted his holy temple built, okay? If you don't know, the holy temple would be his dwelling place, and you can read again and again, I mean so many details, it'll make you wanna skip that day of Bible reading. Like, this is how you build a portico and here's the entry, and here's the store room, and here's the upper part, and here's the dimensions. It can be this much and this much by this much, this long, and here's the cubits, and here's the gold, and here's the silver, here's the bronze, and you do all this kind of stuff. And then God says, "In the middle of my house, what I want you to build is a place of atonement. In the very middle of all the descriptive glory and beauty of my house, I want you to build a mercy seat." Why? Because God was saying, "In my house, I want you to always make room for mercy." Make room for mercy. It's in the center of my house, it's in the center of my heart. It's the core of who I am. Because with the birth of every new day, my mercy is already there. James was the one who said that mercy triumphs over judgment. Why is it that those people, Christians, who should be full of the most mercy? Why? Because we receive the most mercy. Why is it that those who receive the most mercy are often the most judgemental? Oh, dear God, help us all. Help us all. Help us all. Perhaps one of the biggest reasons why so many people stay away from God today, not because of who God is, but because how we represent God. It's narrow-minded, hypocritical, judgmental Christians without mercy. And that's why, because we are people who have received mercy, we should be the most merciful. What is our message? It's the message of Jesus. It's the message that Jesus is knocking on the door. And if anyone opens up, Jesus comes in. In other words, our message is come as you are. Come with your pain. Come with your brokenness. Come with your sinfulness. Come with your insecurities.

Come with your dysfunctions. Come with your drug problem. Come with your porn addiction. Come with your lying. Come with your envy. Come with your guilt. Come with the things that you don't want anybody to know about. And just come to Jesus, just come to Jesus. Just come to Jesus. I'm not here to judge. I've received mercy. I want you to have the same mercy. It doesn't mean that we won't tell the truth, but it certainly means we're not gonna judge you away. Come just as you are. Come with your doubts. Come with your doubts. We're gonna talk with about more of this this year. There's so many people that have a question about God. They doubt. And the church says you can't doubt, and so they leave the church, like, this should be the safest place in the world to take your doubts to God. This should be the place we're most secure with the most complicated questions about God. You think God hadn't heard it before? Come with your questions to God. Come with your complaints to God. Come with the things that make you crazy about the church. You think there's a lot of things you don't like? Listen, I am here every day. I can give you a longer list of things I don't like. We're not perfect. We'll never be perfect. We're far from perfect. We can't be perfect. So, because we're not perfect, we don't demand perfection. We have been forgiven, we are people of grace. And so, my message is just like, come on and join me. I need forgiveness, you need forgiveness. Let's just go to Jesus. He is so good. He is so good. Let's let him straighten us out 'cause I can't straighten you out and you can't straighten me out. So let's just go to him together. Make room for mercy. In the middle of my house, make room for mercy. If there's anything in the middle of make room for mercy, make room for mercy in the church, make room for mercy in your heart. Some of you, you need to receive the mercy of God. He's given it to you, now receive it. Accept it. You're forgiven. You're changed. You are new. That thing that you hate about yourself, that you can't let go. Why are you holding onto something that God has already forgiven? Make room for mercy. Look at the person next to you and say, make room for mercy. Type it in chat, make room for mercy. Make room for mercy. Make room for mercy. There's a difference between justice, grace, and mercy. What is justice? Justice is very clear. It's when you get what you deserve. And boy, we like when people get justice, except for when it's us. And then there's grace. Grace is when you get what you don't deserve. Nobody here deserves salvation. Nobody here can earn it. You're saved by grace. Grace is when you get what you don't deserve, and mercy is when you don't get what you do deserve. I wonder who's thankful for the mercy of God in their lives today. Thank God for his mercy. Thank God for his mercy. Thank God that I do not get what my sins deserve. Thank God that in his mercy, God sent Jesus. And what makes it even more emotional is when someone sins, someone must die. God is just, but he's also merciful. So, because of my sin, someone had to pay the price. And this is where it gets really difficult. That someone was the Son of God, who paid it for me in my place. The one who never sinned paid it for me. My ticket, wasn't just forgiven, but someone paid for my wrongdoing, for my sinfulness. Our only reasonable response, the author says this, "Let us present our bodies as holy sacrifice, living sacrifices." This is our holy and acceptable act of worship. That's what we do, living for Jesus is worship. Worship and just singing a song. It's because of his mercy. I worship him with the way that I live. Thank God for his mercy. Thank God for his mercy. Some of you may say, "Well, I thank God for his mercy, but I'm still hurting." And I know that so many of you are, there's so much pain going on right now. When I look around at those who are closest in my life, I see more brokenness. I see more sadness. I see more anxiety. I see more tension, that I think I've seen in 31 years of ministry today. I wanna go back to what Jeremiah said in Lamentations 3, he said this, he said, "The faithful love of the Lord," this is so good, "it never ends." It's continual. It's never-ending. "His mercies never cease." They were there in Genesis 1, and they're in the end of Revelation. He's always been a God of mercy and he'll always be

merciful God. He's always been just and he's always merciful. And then the author says, "Great is his faithfulness, his mercies begin afresh each morning." Whatever it is that you need from God, his arms are open wide. He starts with mercy. He was merciful yesterday, he's merciful today, he'll be merciful tomorrow. Whatever you need, his grace starts anew today. His goodness starts anew today. His compassion starts anew today. His love for you, it never ends. Whatever you need from God, he is good. He's always been good. He loves you. He is a God of justice and he is a God of compassion. And so, when you are downcast and when you are hurting, just like the prophet, you call this to mind and therefore you have hope. This is who my God is. This is what he's done. He's always been good. He's always been loving. He's always been faithful. He did for me, what I couldn't do for myself. When I am alone, he is with me. He will never leave me. He will never forsake me. He is the God who comforts me in my trials. He is the God who strengthens me when I'm broken. He is the God who heals me when I'm sick. Where can I go for my spirit? He is always there. If I wake up, he's there. When I go to sleep, he's there. He was with me last night. He'll be with me this morning because his mercies never cease. They are new every morning. So if you find yourself hurting today, I bring good news to you. His mercies are new every single morning. And it's available for you today. Wherever you're hurting, wherever you're afraid, take it to God. He can handle your doubts. He can handle your fears. He can handle your brokenness. He can handle your anxiety. He can handle your complaints. He can handle your sin. Take it to God, he is there. His mercies are new every morning. Father, we pray today, that by the power of your spirit, you would do a work in our church that only you can do. Speak to us, God. Move, God. Today, as you're reflecting at all of our different churches, those of you who are hurting, you've got a burden. You've got a weight, maybe an unanswered prayer, could be a sin that you're trying to overcome, could be someone betrayed you, could be any number of things, a financial burden, you're asking for healing, whatever it is, you feel alone? Maybe you feel afraid, you're full of questions. If you need the presence of God right now, would you lift up your hands? Just all of our churches, lift up your hands. You can type it in the chat, "I need the presence of God." Father, I ask that by your grace, we will come to you, not with a Genesis 3 mindset, starting with our sinfulness, but instead of Genesis 1 mindset, starting with your goodness, that you're good, you let us come. And even when we fail, because of your rich mercy, you sent Jesus for us, so we trust you. You're the most trustworthy God. You're always a good God. So, Father, we ask that you would meet whatever needs that we have. We cast our burdens on you because you care for us. We cry out to you, God. We bring our questions, we bring our doubts, we bring our fears. And, God, we choose to trust you. Would you, at this moment, in a way that only you could do, would you minister to your sons, to your daughters, show us your grace, your goodness, your love, your compassion, your mercy, that is new every morning. Reveal yourself. We thank you, God, that you are exactly what we need. As you keep praying today, we talked about justice, we talked about grace, we talked about mercy. Justice is when people get what they deserve. And it's a hard truth, but when we're talking about a holy and a perfect God, when we sin against that God, justice is that we pay, somebody has to pay. That's justice. The amazing thing is Jesus the Son of God, he gave his life as the Lamb of God, the perfect sacrifice, for the forgiveness of our sins. So what do we get? Well, by the grace of God, we get salvation. Meaning, we're saved by the grace of God through faith. It's a gift of God. We didn't earn it. We get something that we didn't earn or deserve. And we get the mercy of God, that even though we deserve punishment, Jesus paid that price for us. Let me tell you what, there is no better news. There is no better news from the time you're born, 'til the time your life ends. And a God who is that holy and that just, and that loving, and that merciful, that is a good God. In view of God's mercy,

in view of what he did for us through Jesus, our only reasonable response is to give him our whole life. And that's what I'm gonna ask you to do right now. And I want you to listen very, very carefully. There are some of you, you've been around the church for a long time, I'm talking to you. Being a Christian isn't just pray a little prayer. It's not joining a little class. It's not checking a box or going to a membership class. It's a full on life-submitted-to-following-Jesus. It's a wholly devoted life to Jesus. It's not a one-time prayer, it's a lifestyle. It's a commitment. It's a relationship with the God of the universe. How do we start that relationship? We step away from our wrongdoing. We step away from our sinfulness, and we recognize what Jesus did, who he is, the Son of God, who paid the penalty for our sins, died in our place, and God rose him from the dead. Now, by the grace of God, you can get what you don't deserve, salvation. By the grace of God, we don't pay the penalty we do deserve. Mercy and forgiveness. And because of that, our only response is I give you all of me. All of me. I'm not a part-time Christian. It's not this is to keep me outta hell. Like, this is a all of me. God, I wanna belong to you, I give my life to you. In all of our churches today, some of you you're gonna recognize, that Christianity's not just a little thing you add onto your life, it is your life. You know you've sinned. You know you need forgiveness. You know you need a savior. And so today, you're stepping away from that. You're recognizing that justice was served when Jesus died and paid the price. And grace was extended, and mercy is given today if you'll receive it. And your response is I give you my whole life. All of our churches, those who say, "I need this, forgive me this. I wanna follow him, I wanna give him my," that's my response. I see who he is, I know what he's done. This isn't joining a church, this isn't some kind of religious feel-good thing. This is a full-blown, all-in commitment, to the one who gave his life for me. Jesus, I surrender. I wanna be your disciple. Wherever you're watching today, you need him, you want his forgiveness. You're ready to be a follower of Jesus. Give him your life. All-in, Jesus, save me, I give you my life. It's your prayer. Lift your hands high right now all over the place. Lift 'em up, come on, everybody. We've got people today in all of our churches saying, "Yes, Jesus, I surrender my life completely to you." Those of you online, will you just type it in the comment section, "I'm giving my life to Jesus. I'm giving my life to Jesus because of his mercy." This is my response. Would you pray with those around you? Pray, heavenly Father, take my life today. Jesus, forgive my sins. Please save me. Thank you for justice on the cross. Thank you for grace that saves me, and thank you for mercy that's new every morning. Because of who you are, because of what you've done. I give you my whole life. All of it, every bit of it. Jesus, you're my savior. You are first. I will follow you every day of my life. Thank you for new life. I give you all of mine. In Jesus' name I pray. Oh, I need some people who are excited to give God praise today. Let's thank him for his justice, his grace, and his mercy.