

“HOPES DEFERRED”

(When Unfulfilled Expectations Disappoint Your Heart)

Text: Proverbs 13:12; Genesis 29:21-35

Subject: “The Only Answer to Our Deepest Need”

Introduction

“Hope deferred makes the heart sick; but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life.”
(Proverbs 13:12)

Fact: Not a person here, can escape disappointment.

Fact: Not one, can pass through life without pain.

Fact: Not anyone who lives, can dodge being hurt.

Fact: Pain and unfulfilled expectations touch everybody.

What’s the big deal?

1. “How” we handle our “setbacks” will form our character.
2. “How” we handle our “hopes deferred” will determine our usefulness.
3. “How” we handle our “unfulfilled expectations” will prepare us for eternity.

Question: How many of you want to please God when you have “hopes deferred”?

Question: How many of you want to be able to praise God, even when you hurt?

Question: How many of you want to live a thankful life and rise above murmurs?

Question: How many of you want what God wants, when hopes deferred affect your heart?

Notice our text: Proverbs 13:12

In Other Words

- ◆ Disappointments can make us cynical.
- ◆ Setbacks can make us paranoid.
- ◆ Let downs can make us suspicious of new friends.
- ◆ Rejection can make us overly cautious.

In Other Words

- ◆ We can become fearful of being hurt again by new relationships.
- ◆ We can allow our wounded-ness to restrict our openness to people.
- ◆ We can lose the joy of living unless we handle “hopes deferred” the biblical way.
- ◆ We can fail to discover what God is ultimately after in us.

Question: What is God after in all of us? (One thing)

Answer: More than fulfilling our desires, God is after our hearts to be pure worshippers of Him.

In Other Words, According to Matthew 6:33

- ◆ God wants to satisfy us and fulfill our dreams and desires.

But not before...

- ◆ He is first place in all our hearts.

Fact: The Lord gives us three words here.

Fact: Three words that deliver us from what we want, to what God wants.

Fact: All three words come from Proverbs 13:12

Fact: And, are illustrated in Genesis 29:21-35.

All turn to Genesis 29

- ◆ One of the greatest illustrations of Proverbs 13:12 is found in the life of Leah, Jacob's wife.
- ◆ It's one of the greatest examples of "hopes deferred" ever written.
- ◆ It's a perfect picture of what God is really after in all of us.
- ◆ It's one of the greatest revelations of how we can have a fulfilled heart (no matter what).

(This morning) "Three Words of Power"

Word #1 Is: "Hopes Deferred" Come to Everybody

1. Leah, Jacob's first wife, was unattractive.
2. She was unwanted and unloved by her husband Jacob.
3. Jacob had served Laban (Leah's father) for seven years to obtain Rachel for his wife.
4. Rachel was Leah's younger sister.
5. And, on the wedding night, Laban put Leah in the nuptial tent instead of Rachel.
6. Jacob would marry Rachel a week later, but he had to work another seven years for her.
7. So Jacob had two wives who were sisters and scripture says that Rachel was loved by Jacob, but Leah was hated.

Question: Is there anything worse than being single?

Answer: Yes!

Question: What is it?

Answer: It is being married to someone who doesn't like you.

Question: What's the good news for Leah's hopes deferred?

Answer: (Verse 31) "The Lord saw that Leah was hated."

What's the Good News?

1. The Lord saw that Leah was unloved.
2. The Lord is drawn to those who hurt.
3. The Lord reaches the afflicted to comfort them.

In Other Words

- ◆ The Lord saw her pain and "hopes deferred".
- ◆ The Lord saw her loneliness and "hopes deferred".
- ◆ The Lord saw her heartache and "hopes deferred".

- ◆ The Lord knew all about Leah (and He knows all about you).

Question: Like Leah, have any of your hopes been deferred?

Question: Have any of your dreams been put “on hold”?

Question: Have any “unfulfilled expectations” touched your life?

Question: Has the accuser of the brethren been whispering to you?

Question: Have you been tempted to doubt the love of God and His ultimate plan for you?

**Word 1 is:
“Hopes Deferred” Come to Everybody”**

Word #2: “Hearts Deflated” Are Very Painful

Question: What did the Lord do for Leah?

Answer: He gave her a son. (V. 32)

Question: What was Leah’s reaction to the birth of Reuben?

Answer: She said, “Surely, now my husband will love me.” (V. 32)

- ◆ Leah’s hope was that Jacob would love her.
- ◆ Leah’s hope was justified.
- ◆ She had given her husband a first born son.
- ◆ Leah was thinking, if the Lord could open her womb, surely He could also open Jacob’s heart.

Question: How did Jacob respond?

Answer: Still, he didn’t love her.

Question: What did Leah do?

Answer: She gave birth to a second son, Simeon. (V. 33)

Question: Did Jacob love her then?

Answer: Still, he didn’t love her.

Question: What did Leah do?

Answer: (V. 34) She gave birth to a third son, Levi

Question: What was her hope and expectation?

Answer: She said, “Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.” (V. 34)

**Yet, Jacob’s heart still did not desire her.
What was Leah learning?**

1. You cannot make another person love you.
2. The more you pressure someone to accept you, the more likely they are to reject you.
(But most of all)
3. The more you seek fulfillment in attaining a person’s love, the more your heart will be empty.

In Other Words

- ◆ Leah’s problems were worsening.
- ◆ Her jealousies over Rachel were adding to her disappointments.

(Yet All The While)

- ◆ The Lord was wooing Leah to Himself.
- ◆ The Lord was using her “hopes deferred” for a higher purpose.
- ◆ The Lord wanted to do something awesome for Leah.

What Was It? Verse 35

“And she conceived again, and bare a son, and she said, “This time I will praise the Lord.”

- ◆ She names the child Judah (which means “**praise**”)
- ◆ She became aware that while she had not been the object of her husband’s love, she was still loved by God.
- ◆ As the fourth pregnancy drew near to completion, she drew near and nearer to God.
- ◆ She shifted her hopes from Jacob to the Lord.

In Other Words

- ◆ As long as Leah was seeking self-fulfillment, she found heartache and pain.
- ◆ But, when she became a worshiper of God, she entered life’s highest fulfillment.

She began to please the Lord. What was the result of her decision?

1. Her soul truly began to change.
2. When she found fulfillment in God, God began to remove all of her jealousies, insecurities and pain.
3. An inner beauty began to grow in Leah (and she became a woman at rest).

What’s the lesson?

1. It’s not counseling or a class on success or self-esteem I need.
2. We simply need to discover God’s love for us.

(In Other Words)

“Hopes deferred” that satan would use to make our heart sick”

Will be reversed

When we come to the place that Leah did, and just praise and worship God and put His glory above our hopes, desires, wants, feelings and what we think we need to be happy.

(What a revelation here)

- ◆ Romans 8:28 says “God causes all things to work together for good to those who what? “Love God”.
- ◆ I can murmur, complain, feel cheated or just love God (Like Leah) when hopes are deferred.

What’s the reward?

- ◆ If we continue to love God above everything else, nothing we experience can ultimately turn out harmful to us. (Why not?)
- ◆ Because we give the devil no foothold when we praise God in the midst of hopes deferred.

Word #3: "Happiness is the Reward for Upward Believers

"In Proverbs 23:12, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." (True)

**(But the rest of the verse says)
"But desire fulfilled is a tree of life."**

In Other Words

- ◆ As our desires are fulfilled, we are fulfilled. **(Which means)**
- ◆ The secret of a rewarding and fulfilling year is to commit our desires to God.

(Which means)

1. Let the Lord choose your times and places.
2. Let the Lord choose your friends and relationships.
3. Let the Lord help you in every disappointment to do what Leah did. (What did she do?)

**"This time I will praise the Lord."
What's the lesson?**

1. That there is no love, no fulfillment in this life apart from God.
2. The Lord alone is the tree of life that satisfies all desires.
3. It is foolish to seek the love of those who have rejected you.
4. All sickness and pain from hopes deferred in your life are healed in the presence of God (when your desire is for Him above all others).

**What happened to Leah?
Jacob on his deathbed said in Genesis 49:29-31**

"I am about to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave. There they buried Abraham and his wife Sarah, and Isaac and his wife Rebekah, and there I buried Leah."

- ◆ Jacob buried Leah in the ancestral place of honor! **(In other words)**
 - ◆ God had beautified Leah when Leah praised God.
 - ◆ She found fulfillment in God, then God gave her fulfillment in Jacob.
 - ◆ When Leah delighted herself in the Lord, something happened and something changed.
1. Inner peace and beauty and security came forth.
 2. Leah began to change in the place of God having first place.
 3. The negative effects of grief and rejection and hopes deferred fell off.
 4. As Leah worshipped God and gave Him first place, love and joy fulfilled her life.
 5. Her very soul was restored and made beautiful and insecurity vanished away.

How? Why?

- ◆ Because she came to the place of saying "This time I will praise the Lord."

Amen
Bill Kirk