HUDSON'S HOPE CHAPEL

A Future in God's Hands

November 15, 2026 · Series: After God's Own Heart · Luke Hughes-Bunger

Main Passage: 2 Samuel 15:13-26, 30; 18:24-33 (ESV)

Big Idea: We can entrust our future to God's mercy because Jesus accomplishes the rescue we cannot provide for ourselves.

Introduction

In John Bunyan's Christian allegory, The Pilgrim's Progress, a traveller named Christian carries a burden he cannot remove. It represents the weight of his sin. When he falls into a bog, the burden prevents him from climbing out. He can see where he needs to go, but cannot get himself there.

The bog is called the Slough of Despond. It pictures the fears and doubts that gather around someone who knows their need but cannot see a way forward. Then a man named Help comes to Christian. Christian gives him his hand, and Help draws him onto firm ground. His rescue depends on someone able to do what he cannot.

This picture opens a question that many of us recognize. Where can we turn when we cannot remove our burdens or secure our own future? Knowing that something needs to change is different from having the power to change it. We may need help with what lies behind us and with the uncertainty ahead.

David, Israel's king, faces such a moment. His son Absalom has rebelled against him, and David leaves Jerusalem. His story leads us towards God's mercy and towards Jesus, the King who provides the deepest rescue we need.

You do not need to have heard the earlier sermons to follow this passage. Its invitation is for anyone who needs hope, whether they have followed Jesus for years or are beginning to explore faith.

Point 1: Entrust Your Future to God's Mercy

2 Samuel 15:25-26, 30

A painful past and an uncertain future

David's family history includes serious wrongdoing. His daughter Tamar suffers sexual violence at the hands of her half-brother Amnon. David fails to bring justice. Tamar's brother Absalom kills Amnon and later wins support for a rebellion against David.

David's own failures belong to this painful history. Other people are also responsible for their choices. The story does not make everyone else's wrongdoing David's alone, nor does it excuse

his failures. Now the family is divided and the kingdom is threatened. David and those loyal to him leave the city.

The passage acknowledges the damage of sin, but also shows where someone with a painful past can place their hope. David cannot rewrite what has happened. He can turn towards the God whose mercy he needs.

The ark cannot guarantee the outcome

The priests bring the ark of God with them. This sacred chest represents God's presence among His people. David tells them to return it to Jerusalem. He hopes that God will bring him back, but leaves that decision with the Lord.

The ark is not something David owns or can use to guarantee victory. Taking a sacred object with him cannot give him control over God. His future depends on God's mercy rather than on possessing the outward sign of His presence.

David longs to come home, but cannot demand his throne. His uncertainty concerns the earthly outcome, not whether God is trustworthy. He places himself before the Lord and accepts that God must decide what happens next.

For Christians, this distinction matters. Those who trust Jesus have His promise of forgiveness and eternal welcome. That promise does not mean every circumstance will develop as we wish. It means we can face uncertain circumstances knowing that our relationship with God rests on Christ's faithful work.

Trust expresses itself in faithful action

David still makes decisions and takes practical steps to protect people. Trusting God does not mean refusing to act or waiting for every difficulty to disappear. It means doing what faithfulness requires while leaving the outcome with Him.

We often want to know how a conversation, decision, or change will turn out before we begin. Yet we cannot control another person's response or see the whole road ahead. We can tell the truth, seek help, and do the next right thing.

A simple prayer expresses this dependence: Lord, here I am. You know what I have done and what I cannot repair by myself. Show me how to walk faithfully today. I leave tomorrow with You.

This is also an invitation to stop making control the condition of trust. We can ask God for the outcome we hope for while recognizing that His care does not depend on granting every request in the way we expect.

Faith and tears can belong together

David climbs the Mount of Olives barefoot and weeping. Those with him also weep. Trust has not removed the pain or made the future clear. He continues forward while grieving.

We do not have to feel calm before we can entrust ourselves to God. A breaking heart does not prove that faith has failed. We can bring God sorrow, fear, and unanswered questions while continuing to depend on Him.

Nor does the passage teach that every hardship comes from a particular sin we have committed. Some wounds are caused by other people. We can seek God's help without accepting blame that belongs to someone else. His mercy is a refuge for the wounded too.

David eventually returns to Jerusalem, but his return does not undo every loss. That prepares us to consider a rescue deeper than the recovery of familiar circumstances.

Point 2: Receive the Rescue Only Christ Can Give

2 Samuel 18:33; Romans 5:8

The rescue David cannot accomplish

David's forces win the battle against Absalom's rebellion. Yet news of victory does not answer the question closest to David's heart: what has happened to his son? When he learns that Absalom is dead, he withdraws and weeps.

His cry expresses a longing to have died in his son's place. Absalom has turned against him, but David still loves him. He wants an exchange that his power cannot accomplish. He cannot reach backwards, reverse the death, or bring his son home.

This is real grief. Scripture allows us to hear it without treating tears as a problem to be quickly solved. It also exposes the limit of even a king's ability to rescue someone he loves.

We may recognize that limit in our own relationships. We cannot save another person simply by loving them deeply or wishing hard enough. Our helplessness shows why we need someone greater than ourselves.

The greater King who acts for sinners

God has promised an enduring royal line to David. Jesus is the promised Son of David who fulfils that hope. David needs mercy himself; Jesus has no sin of His own. He willingly gives His life for those who have rebelled against God.

Sin is our refusal to give God His rightful place. It appears in the ways we put ourselves first and fail to love Him and our neighbours. We cannot remove that guilt through determination or by improving our circumstances.

Yet God's love moves towards us in this need. Jesus bears the judgment our sin deserves and rises victorious over death. What David can only long to do for his son directs our attention towards what Christ actually accomplishes for sinners.

The landscape adds an echo. David crosses the Kidron and ascends the Mount of Olives while leaving Jerusalem. Jesus crosses the Kidron and goes to the Mount of Olives on the night of His betrayal. He goes willingly towards the suffering through which He will save His people.

Romans 5:8 tells us that Christ dies for us while we are still sinners. God's mercy does not wait for us to make ourselves worthy. We receive salvation by trusting the Saviour who has acted on our behalf.

What restoration means

Restoration is more than recovering a former position, reputation, or way of life. Through Jesus, people separated from God are welcomed into His family. Their guilt is forgiven. His Spirit begins to change them. They receive the promise of resurrection and everlasting life with Him.

Some losses and difficult responsibilities remain in this life. There may be patient rebuilding and conversations that cannot be avoided. These things do not cancel the future Jesus has secured for those who belong to Him.

Christian hope therefore has a firm foundation. It rests on a living Saviour and His completed work. We can face the future with confidence in Him even when we cannot predict its earthly shape.

Return to the traveller

Help draws Christian out of the bog, but his burden remains. Later, Christian reaches the cross. There the burden falls from his shoulders, rolls into a tomb, and disappears.

Bunyan's two scenes show different aspects of need. Being lifted from a desperate situation does not itself remove guilt. Freedom from sin's burden comes through the Saviour who bears it for us.

We can come to Jesus without first reaching a certain level of religious knowledge or proving that we can improve ourselves. We can confess our sin and ask Him to save us. His welcome is for those who trust Him.

Believers also keep depending on His mercy. Maturing in faith does not mean outgrowing our need for grace. We can ask for help with hidden temptation, admit failure, and begin again in obedience because His Spirit continues to work in us.

Application and Conclusion

Where can we turn when we cannot get ourselves onto solid ground? We can turn to the God whose mercy David trusts and to Jesus, who accomplishes the rescue we cannot provide.

Bring God the truth about your past. Confess what needs forgiveness without defending it. If someone has harmed you, remember that seeking help does not require you to take responsibility for their wrongdoing.

Take the next faithful step. That might be an apology, a request for prayer, or a conversation about following Jesus. Choose a concrete response rather than waiting until you can see how your whole future will unfold.

Entrust that future to Him. We cannot promise ourselves complete repair of every relationship or restoration of every loss here and now. In Christ, however, we can be sure of forgiveness, belonging to God, and the life He has promised. Our Saviour has opened the way ahead.

Discussion Guide Questions

1. What makes Christian's situation in Bunyan's bog a useful picture of needing help? What can he see but cannot do?
2. Read 2 Samuel 15:25-26. What does David hope for, and what does he leave in God's hands?
3. Why does sending the ark back matter? What does this reveal about the difference between trusting God and trying to control an outcome?
4. How does certainty about forgiveness in Christ help us face uncertainty about earthly circumstances?
5. What does David's weeping in verse 30 teach us about faith and grief?
6. How can we speak about sin's consequences without placing blame on someone who has been harmed by another person?
7. Read 2 Samuel 18:33. What does David long to do? How does his inability help us understand our need for Jesus?
8. Read Romans 5:8. What does the timing of Christ's death for sinners tell us about God's love?
9. How is restoration through Christ deeper than getting our former life back? Which aspect of that hope encourages you today?
10. What is one faithful step you can take this week while leaving its outcome with God? Share only what you are comfortable discussing, and pray for one another.