

Prayer of Preparation: Gracious God, speak your hope into this place until we discover the courage to open our eyes and find that your redeeming spirit lives within us. *Amen.*

When I studied for today's sermon, I realized that the word "hope" isn't in this psalm. You read the psalm with me a little earlier, so you know I'm right. The word hope is not in Psalm 14. In fact, when people read Psalm 14, the first things they think of are refuge, shelter, and being protected by God. But not hope.

So where's the hope here? Where and how is the psalmist pointing us toward hope? So I want you to listen to Psalm 14 again with a fresh ear: *Fools say in their hearts, "There is no God." They are corrupt; they do abominable deeds; there is no one who does good.* The psalmist is low key crying out...I'm surrounded by fools. These people are crazy. I'm surrounded by folks who don't know God and who don't *want* to know God.

The truth is we are surrounded by people who deny God in any way God shows up in their lives. So their faith and hope are based on what they can see and what they can do for themselves. Our world is filled with people who chase the here and now and have forgotten eternity.

The psalmist is fed up with those folks. The psalmist is so fed up with these folks that the psalmist calls them fools. And I agree. I wholeheartedly agree. I agree that only a foolish person would look into sky at night and say there is no God. Only fools would look into the depths of the oceans and say there is no God. Only fools would look at mountains, and seas, and jungles, and forests, and plains, and ice deserts, and sand deserts...and say, there is no God.

Only fools would look into the faces of so many ages and nations and races and say...there is no God. Only fools. And by fools, what the psalmist and I mean, are people who look around, see God's goodness, and say...there is no God.

The truth is, we rarely look around and *really* see. I admit that sometimes it is difficult to see all that is going on around me. We rarely look around and see that all we are and all we have is all God. Everything and everywhere is God. The psalmist says it this way, *They have all gone astray...there is no one who does good, no, not one.*

This is a HUGE indictment from the psalmist, but here's the problem...the psalmist isn't talking to me or about me. I truly believe in God with all my heart, all my mind, and all my soul. The psalmist isn't talking about us who know God; the psalmist is talking about people who *refuse* to know God. The folks who refuse to believe in God *have all gone all gone astray*. Those are the people who live without hope...those are the people who live without hope in the living God.

I see people who live without hope every single day. I see people without hope on street corners. I see people without hope in the grocery store. I see people without hope on social media. I see people without hope in the food pantry, in the clothes closet, on Wall Street, in classrooms, on college campuses, in good jobs and in bad jobs. I see people who live without hope in blue collars, in white collars, with lots of money and with no money at all. I see people without hope in all places and all the time. I see them the same way the psalmist saw them.

Here's what Paul says in 1st Timothy, *The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance; that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the foremost.* That's where we receive our hope...from Christ Jesus who came into the world to save us sinners. Because that's who Jesus is and that's who we are.

Jesus is our hope because try as we might, we are sinners. Jesus is our bridge between this world and heaven. Jesus is...the one who will present us to God Almighty with great joy and rejoicing. Jesus is the One who will say "well done" to us when we enter heaven's gates. Jesus is our hope.

Psalm 14 also says, *The LORD looks down from heaven on humankind to see if there are any who are wise, who seek after God.* Written hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years before Jesus was born, the Psalmist looks for those who are wise enough to see God and to follow Jesus...God's son, our redeemer, and our hope.

Response to the Word: May your hope lay in the one who calls you *Beloved*. ***Amen.***