

**Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church**  
**Knoxville, Tennessee**  
September 1, 2019  
**Dr. Jay Howell**

**“In Christ: Knowing Hope”**  
**Ephesians 1:15-23**

We continue this series “In Christ” going through the first three chapters of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. We’re at the end of the first chapter of the letter, and before this point, Paul’s been talking about God’s choice to raise up a people for himself, a people he adopts as his children, his family, a people set apart for a purpose, that is, God’s purpose, as v. 10 puts it, to gather up all things in heaven and things on earth, a purpose—as we saw last week—to declare his glory and his presence in the world. God’s up to something big, which is why much of what Paul says at the beginning of his letter is kind of up in the rafters. It can be hard to understand. Some of these things are too big for us to understand; it’s a grand vision for the fullness of time—we’re not going to get it all. But even so Paul doesn’t think it’s our role to just stay in the dark. And so, in the passage we come to today, Paul takes a moment to pray, to pray specifically that our eyes would be opened, and not just to be opened to some mystic secret, but in particular, to hope. Will you pray with me?

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But then Paul tells us more about the way this God operates. He tells us his playbook. He tells us that if we have reason to doubt that even if we see the world or see our own lives and see only a broken record, see only despair, see nothing that could indicate that any of it could amount to much, that a hopeless situation could ever become anything else, that there'd be no way anyone, even God, could turn around this dead-end franchise, Paul tells us, "He's done it before."

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I mean, I'm all about optimism; I'm all about looking on the bright side; but at some point, you have to be realistic, right? Sometimes things are just beyond repair. Sometimes things just aren't worth saving. Better to cut your losses and move on. At some point we can't be putting all our chips on the table for a long shot.

But then Paul tells us more about the way this God operates. He tells us his playbook. He tells us that if we have reason to doubt that even if we see the world or see our own lives and see only a broken record, see only despair, see nothing that could indicate that any of it could amount to much, that a hopeless situation could ever become anything else, that there'd be no way anyone, even God, could turn around this dead-end franchise, Paul tells us, "He's done it before."

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What would change if you looked at the world, looked at creation, and instead of seeing everything as a hopeless enterprise, you saw a place that is and will be under the same power and authority that raised Jesus from the dead? If God could do that, imagine what he could do here. Changes things, doesn't it?

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I mean, I'm all about optimism; I'm all about looking on the bright side; but at some point, you have to be realistic, right? Sometimes things are just beyond repair. Sometimes things just aren't worth saving. Better to cut your losses and move on. At some point we can't be putting all our chips on the table for a long shot.

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I mean, I'm all about optimism; I'm all about looking on the bright side; but at some point, you have to be realistic, right? Sometimes things are just beyond repair. Sometimes things just aren't worth saving. Better to cut your losses and move on. At some point we can't be putting all our chips on the table for a long shot.

But then Paul tells us more about the way this God operates. He tells us his playbook. He tells us that if we have reason to doubt that even if we see the world or see our own lives and see only a broken record, see only despair, see nothing that could indicate that any of it could amount to much, that a hopeless situation could ever become anything else, that there'd be no way anyone, even God, could turn around this dead-end franchise, Paul tells us, "He's done it before."

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What would change if you looked at the world, looked at creation, and instead of seeing everything as a hopeless enterprise, you saw a place that is and will be under the same power and authority that raised Jesus from the dead? If God could do that, imagine what he could do here. Changes things, doesn't it?

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I mean, I'm all about optimism; I'm all about looking on the bright side; but at some point, you have to be realistic, right? Sometimes things are just beyond repair. Sometimes things just aren't worth saving. Better to cut your losses and move on. At some point we can't be putting all our chips on the table for a long shot.

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I mean, I'm all about optimism; I'm all about looking on the bright side; but at some point, you have to be realistic, right? Sometimes things are just beyond repair. Sometimes things just aren't worth saving. Better to cut your losses and move on. At some point we can't be putting all our chips on the table for a long shot.

But then Paul tells us more about the way this God operates. He tells us his playbook. He tells us that if we have reason to doubt that even if we see the world or see our own lives and see only a broken record, see only despair, see nothing that could indicate that any of it could amount to much, that a hopeless situation could ever become anything else, that there'd be no way anyone, even God, could turn around this dead-end franchise, Paul tells us, "He's done it before."

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In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

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**Knoxville, Tennessee**  
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I mean, I'm all about optimism; I'm all about looking on the bright side; but at some point, you have to be realistic, right? Sometimes things are just beyond repair. Sometimes things just aren't worth saving. Better to cut your losses and move on. At some point we can't be putting all our chips on the table for a long shot.

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He tells us how in v. 20. "God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly place." What Paul's saying here is, "You want a reason to hold onto hope? You want a reason to put your chips on the table? You want a reason to think that all this lofty talk of the plans of God or the glory of God could ever come down to earth? You want a reason to think that everything that's broken or corrupted, everything that spirals in one vicious cycle after another could be remade and renewed? Here it is: Jesus died, and God raised him from the dead." It's not some mystic secret. It's not some path to nirvana. It's because Jesus rose from the dead.

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