



September 2015

Dear friends,

I love musicals. One of our family's favorites is *Annie*, the story of the spunky little orphan girl who meets a billionaire who takes her in and provides for her the family she has been longing for (Sorry, I should've given you a spoiler alert). Our family had an opportunity to see *Annie* on the stage a few weeks ago. One of the iconic songs of this musical is the song, "The Sun Will Come Out Tomorrow." This song is a song of hope. Its message is simple: No matter how bad today is, tomorrow is another day and the sun will come up, so have hope, don't give up.

Maybe it's the difficult season our family has been in, or maybe my brain isn't wired to just sit and enjoy the show, but the song got me thinking about hope. The world is full of "wisdom" designed to give us hope. Granted, not all of this counsel is as pithy or comes in the form of a catchy tune, but we have all heard such pearls as: Tomorrow is another day.....what goes up must come down...it is darkest before the dawn....time heals all wounds... everything has a season....and my personal favorite: this too shall pass.

Is that really supposed to comfort us? Are the general seasons and cycles to life the best we have?

When life has handed you the kind of pain that rips your heart out, stomps on it a few times and hands it back you, the thought of another day isn't hopeful. It can feel really empty. Trite sayings begin to ring hollow. But what choice do you have? You either give up or look to another day to bring relief. So you tell yourself the sun will come up tomorrow, and you look to a new day, a new season and hold on and push through with all of your strength, in hopes that it has to get better. The Bible says that everything has a season, right?

I think this "pure determination" kind of life is described in Jeremiah 17:5-6. This is the life that depends on itself for strength. It is described as a bush in a wasteland. In a hard land where most things have shriveled and died, there is a bush. A bush that survived in this wasteland, it was not overcome by the circumstances around it, it survived. This is the bush that hangs on with white knuckles, satisfied that it seems to be doing as well or better than anything else it can see around it in the parched desert.

But here's the deal. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon notes that everything has a season - not as a source of peace, but as commentary on how meaningless life can become. The purpose of the changing seasons, the dark and the light, the sun coming up every day, the unchanging laws of nature was not ever supposed to substitute for hope. It was always supposed to point us to something more. That whisper in your soul that says there must be more to life is the same whisper Solomon felt when he wrote Ecclesiastes. It is the same whisper that God wrote on your heart to remind you that there is something else. In the book of Romans, we are reminded that nature points us to the attributes of God. Jeremiah 33:25, says, "This is what the Lord says, If I have not established my covenant with the day and night and fixed the laws of heaven and earth, then I will reject the descendants of Jacob and David..."

The sentence structure makes it hard to understand, but here is the paraphrase: As long as there is day and night, as long as the sun comes up tomorrow, as long as the laws of heaven and earth stand, then you can know I have not rejected my people.

The sun coming up each day was supposed to remind Israel that He had not rejected them. That was their hope as a nation in exile. The sun coming up every day was not hope in and of itself. It was hope because of what it pointed to. It was a reminder that one day God would send a savior for His people. In Lamentations, the hope expressed while thousands died from famine, plague and sword was not hope in the new morning, but that God's mercy to them was new each morning.

Do you see the difference? God says the sun coming up each day gives you hope because of what it points to, what it reminds you. It reminds you that God keeps His promises, and He is who He says He is. Our enemy says to look for your hope in the sun coming up. If you become satisfied with the hope of a new day, you will never look for the greater hope.

The kind of life that that looks beyond the sunrise to the greater hope- the life that trusts in Jesus and finds its confidence in Him - is described in Jeremiah 17:7-8. Right after God describes the 'bush' life, he describes a different kind of life. This life is one planted by and sending its roots out to the stream. That life is described not as a bush, but a tree. It is a tree that thrives, even in the heat. Its leaves are green. It doesn't worry through the heat and drought because it knows from where its strength and feeding come. It is a tree that doesn't fail, even in a dry and hard land.

Jesus once described Himself as living water. That is what he wants to be for you. Why would you settle to be a bush in a wasteland when you could be a fruit-bearing tree by a stream? Why would you settle for the false and empty hope of the sun coming up tomorrow (No offense, Annie), when you could know the true hope of the Son who rose to save you and offers to fill you with his power and living water - if you will just dwell near Him.

The fact is your hope is not in a new day. Your hope is the new life to which that new day points. God kept His promise to send a Savior. He sent his only Son to die to bear your sins and burdens, and He rose from the grave to give you His glorious life. He doesn't want you merely to survive this life. He wants to offer you abundant life. Why would you settle for anything less?

Let the sun coming up each day remind you that you are in His thoughts. He is who He said He is. That is True hope. It is not hope in a new day, it is hope in the person who created it.