

# Sermon Note: Longing

## Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

### Introduction

This week we begin a new worship series called **Dearly Beloved**. The title comes from words we often hear at weddings or funerals—language that signals something sacred is about to happen. In this series, we'll hear those words as a reminder of who we are: a community deeply loved by God and called to walk by faith, together.

We begin with longing. Longing rises when life doesn't match the hopes we carry. It's the restlessness that keeps us searching—searching for meaning, for connection, for healing, for peace. The letter to the Hebrews tells the story of people who lived with that kind of yearning. They stepped forward in trust, even when the destination was still uncertain. They moved toward the promise because something in them knew it was worth seeking.

### Illustration Videos

*Content note: This clip includes a brief instance of coarse language. Viewer discretion is advised. Consider pausing or editing as appropriate for your context.*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z\\_u51wYnKKo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_u51wYnKKo)

In this scene from the film *The Martian* (2015), astronaut Mark Watney begins his fight for survival after being stranded alone on Mars. With no guarantee of rescue, his decision to act becomes a powerful image of faith, resilience, and hope in the face of the unknown.

### Why This Video?

This scene captures a turning point. Watney has every reason to panic—he's alone on Mars with limited supplies and no clear rescue plan. But instead of giving up, he decides to begin. He doesn't know how the story will end, but he chooses to act with grit and determination. That choice shows that he's willing to keep going in spite of his fear and uncertainty.

His decision is both practical and deeply human. It speaks to something many of us know: the way a deep longing—for connection, for home, for meaning—can stir us to act, even when the future is unclear. Watney's quiet resolve reminds us that hope often shows up in small steps: starting with what we have, where we are, and trusting that it matters.

### Video Discussion Questions

1. What stood out to you about Watney's response after realizing he was alone?
2. How did the tone of the scene shift when he started making a plan?
3. What emotions do you think he was feeling—and pushing through?

4. What kinds of thoughts might keep someone from taking that first step?
5. Have you ever faced a situation where you didn't know how things would turn out, but had to begin anyway?
6. In what ways does hope show up in this scene?
7. What role do problem-solving and imagination play in survival—or in everyday life?
8. How does this clip portray strength that doesn't look flashy or dramatic?
9. What makes this moment more than just a technical challenge?
10. Where do you see longing at work in this story?

### **Colossians 3:1-11 (NRSVue)**

<sup>1</sup>Faith is the reality of what we hope for, the proof of what we don't see. <sup>2</sup>The elders in the past were approved because they showed faith.

<sup>3</sup>By faith we understand that the universe has been created by a word from God so that the visible came into existence from the invisible.

<sup>8</sup>By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was going to receive as an inheritance. He went out without knowing where he was going.

<sup>9</sup>By faith he lived in the land he had been promised as a stranger. He lived in tents along with Isaac and Jacob, who were coheirs of the same promise. <sup>10</sup>He was looking forward to a city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

<sup>11</sup>By faith even Sarah received the ability to have a child, though she herself was barren and past the age for having children, because she believed that the one who promised was faithful. <sup>12</sup>So descendants were born from one man (and he was as good as dead). They were as many as the number of the stars in the sky and as countless as the grains of sand on the seashore. <sup>13</sup>All these people died in faith without receiving the promises, but they saw the promises from a distance and welcomed them. They confessed that they were strangers and immigrants on earth. <sup>14</sup>People who say this kind of thing make it clear that they are looking for a homeland. <sup>15</sup>If they had been thinking about the country that they had left, they would have had the opportunity to return to it. <sup>16</sup>But at this point in time, they are longing for a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God isn't ashamed to be called their God—he has prepared a city for them.

### **Scripture Study Questions**

1. How is faith defined in this passage? (Hint: read verse 1.)
2. We live in a world where it seems like everything is questioned. Faith is already an immense challenge, and these days feel like a Doubting Thomas era. It's like everyone is from Missouri where the state slogan is, "the show-me state." Can we be sure of anything these days? What if we think about this question through the lens of verse 1?
3. What does Hebrews 11:3 tell us about creation and faith? How does that shape your understanding of what it means to trust in what we cannot see?

4. In verses 8–10, Abraham is remembered as one who obeys God without knowing where he’s going. What do you notice about this mindset or trust in God? What does this reveal about the kind of faith the scripture calls us to?
5. What does it mean to live as “strangers and foreigners on the earth,” as in verse 13?
6. The people in this passage died without receiving what was promised, but they still trusted God. How does that challenge or encourage your own faith journey?
7. What would it look like for our church to live with a deeper longing for God’s future? What kind of community would we become if we took that longing seriously?

### **Additional (Optional) Questions**

1. What aspects of your life or the world around you have changed significantly in the past year?
2. Are there any current changes or trends that leave you feeling anxious or uncertain about the future?
3. What do you see happening today that inspires you with hope?
4. Which is more lasting for you—anxiety or hope? Why?
5. We know the world is always changing. But what do you believe stays the same? What can we count on?
6. What do you think the writer of Hebrews meant when saying, “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”?
7. How can faith help us face change and uncertainty in today’s world?
8. What are you personally hoping for or dreaming about right now?
9. If you could shape the world in one meaningful way, what would you change?

### **Weekly Action**

Each day this week, begin a sentence with the words “By faith…” and write or say aloud one way you’re choosing to trust, hope, or move forward—no matter how small. Then, take one simple action that flows from that sentence.

Example:

“By faith, I will keep reaching out even when connection feels hard.”

Action: Send a text or call someone you’ve lost touch with.

Let this be a quiet rhythm of hope: naming what you long for, and taking one small step toward it.

### **Prayer**

Gracious and Loving God, Like Abraham and Sarah, help us walk by faith and not by sight. Give us the courage to follow you even when the path is unclear, and may our lives reflect the hope of your eternal promises. Amen.