



# Central Peninsula Church

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Psalm 130  
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## Road Music for a New Year

### NEW YEAR'S DAY

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Good morning everyone. What a great way to begin a new year. I don't know about you but New Year's day has to be one of my favorite days of the year. All the rush and frenzy of Christmas is over! You've had time to try on your new sweater. You've had time to return your new sweater. The guests have gone. You're probably off work, the house is a mess, you stayed up late, you probably got up even later. And here it is; it's new year's day. It's pretty much the laziest day of the year! And I bet for some of you it's one of those rare days when you don't feel guilty for not having a lot on your to-do list. It's the one day of the year when you give yourself permission to relax and just let the day unfold. It's a great day to let down.

But New Year's also brings a rare opportunity for us to start out on something fresh, to venture out into something absolutely new. That's where New Year's resolutions come from. Of course you know what they say. "New Year's resolutions just go in one year and out the other." But there's something about the simple act of turning over the calendar to a new year that marks a new beginning and symbolizes an opportunity for a fresh start.

As you can see, we're going to take communion together this morning. But we're going to do something that's just a little bit different on this first day of 2006. We're going to take some time and ask the Spirit of God (through His Word) to speak to our hearts and lead us into this New Year.

So I want you to turn this morning to Psalm 130. As you turn there I want to give you a little background. You may know this is part of a grouping of 14 Psalms that are called Psalms of Ascent. These poems were read, recited and sung by the people of Israel as they traveled once a year on their journey to Jerusalem. They were

like the travel music of Israel.

When my kids were little we would hit the road early in the morning and we'd set out on our annual camping adventure. And we didn't travel anywhere for long without music. So we had a collection of cassette tapes that we took with us and sang together along the way and my kids remember those songs to this day. The words and melodies have been etched in their souls along with the memories of our times on the road. And that's what these Psalms were for Israel. They were the songs for the road that Israel sang as they made their way once a year to meet with God. The concerns and prayers and desires of these Psalms prepared their hearts and modeled for them how they were to live out their own journey of faith.

So we're going to let the words of this Psalm lead us to meet with the Lord in communion this morning and prepare us to enter into the adventure of faith that's ahead in 2006. Let's look together at Psalm 130.

#### I. LONGING

**"Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD; O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy" (vv. 1–2).**

Like I said, New Year's day is one of the laziest days of the year. But tomorrow the gyms will be full of red faced, sweaty overexerted people, busy with activity; because tomorrow everyone begins to make good on the number one New Year's resolution in America—to exercise and lose weight, to work hard at fighting off the effects of time on our bodies. And you know what, that's a good thing; the stewardship of our bodies and our health is a good and right priority to have. Even though Winston Churchill said that the only exercise he ever got was

when he was a pallbearer for his friends who died from too much exercise! But I want us to look at where this Psalm begins. It doesn't begin in the gym with anxiety over a few extra pounds. And it doesn't start with a determined resolution to change or make things better. Instead it cries to God passionately from a place that the psalmist calls "the depths." It's the inner world, it's that deep and restless place of the soul. One commentator says: It's clear that self help is no answer...here.

This is a call to God from a place of recognition and need. In fact a lot of the Psalms cry out to God from this same desperate place but for different reasons. Psalm 5 cries out because of all the evil that exists in the world. Certainly we can relate to that today as we read the headlines and watch the atrocities in living color. Sometime the Psalmist cries out in fear and anxiety. Like in Psalm 42: **"My tears have been my food day and night... my enemies surround me... my foes taunt me."** Other Psalms seek the Lord through times of great sorrow and loss or turn to Him in the midst of great personal suffering and pain. So our depths get churned up over different things but at the core it's all about wanting and needing more of the Lord in our lives. And that's a great place for us to start out in this New Year. In fact I thought about this and realized that this is the exact opposite of a New Year's resolution. A resolution is the declaration of a determined will that says with clenched fist, "I will change. I will make things better." But this is a cry from the heart that says "I can't change, I need more of You. Help me in my place of weakness and need. I can't do this on my own."

So I want you to take out your bulletin insert this morning. You'll see there that I've given us some space to ask ourselves a few questions as we move into this New Year. And the first question is this: What do I need more of the Lord for in 2006?

As you pause for a minute and think about all

of the challenges you face, where do you think you need Him most? Maybe you look at your marriage and you realize that things need to change. You don't want to go on like this. And as you elbow your husband or wife you realize that you've got to change. You know that your attitude and your hardened heart needs more of the Lord to get unstuck in your marriage. Or maybe you're just overwhelmed as a parent and you need more of the Lord for endurance, wisdom, and strength. As a dad you know you need to stop checking out when the pressure is on. As a mom you know you more of the Lord to help you stop responding out of frustration. Or you just need more of His presence and peace to get through this season of sorrow and loss. Maybe for you, you've been fearful to step out of your comfort zone for Christ. You've been hearing the Lord clearly for a long time and this year it's time to take some steps. You don't want this to be just another year, like 2002 that faded into 2003, that just sort of drifted into 2004 and 2005. You want this to be a year of change and personal challenge, when you make some significant steps forward in your walk with Christ.

So get still for a minute and ask yourself: what do I need more of the Lord for in 2006? Then write that down in a couple of words or a sentence.

## II. RECEIVING FORGIVENESS

The last words of verse 2 are a plea for mercy. **"Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy."** It's a call to God to extend kindness to the helpless and weak. Not because he is deserving in any way but he throws Himself upon the mercies of God and counts on God's character to forgive. **"If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared"** (vv. 3-4).

He says Lord, if you were making a list and checking it twice, no one could stand in your presence. We would all cave in under the weight of our own sin. But you are a forgiving God. John 1:9 says: **"If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us of all unrighteousness."** He says that's the kind of God you are.

You are by nature a God of forgiveness and grace. For some of us here this morning, the most desperate thing we need to start anew in 2006 is a fresh touch of His forgiving grace.

My driveway is built on an incline and my garage is prone to take on water in a big storm. So at the base of the driveway just in front of the garage door there a gutter that directs water into a small well where there is a sump pump. And the sump pump's job is to pump the water out of the well as it fills up and deliver it into my back yard where there is plenty of room and no threat of flooding. It's an amazing little pump. But occasionally it gets clogged up with debris. The leaves and dirt from the driveway eventually make their way into the well and the strainer on the bottom of the pump gets clogged. When that happens the pump tries harder and harder but its power is restricted. It can't move the water in the well. Before long it's tired and overwhelmed and it gives up and the garage floods. And you know what? I discovered the hard way that the pump can't clean itself. I need to reach in and remove the junk. I need to wash the strainer and pick out the pieces of debris. Then I put it back in and it does what it was intended to do. Sometimes we get just like that little pump, don't we? We may keep trying with all of our might to live life well but because we haven't dealt with some area of sin we get clogged up, the debris restricts the flow of God's power and we eventually become overwhelmed and ineffective.

That's exactly what the Psalm writer discovered here; He finds a God of forgiveness who removes the debris when we turn to him. He's a God of mercy, full of loving kindness and grace, always ready to forgive. And He's always eager to erase the stain of sin in our lives.

So what do you need forgiveness for this morning? What do you need God to erase and cleanse as you begin this new year? Be brutally honest with God. Maybe it's something you've been carrying around your whole life and you want this day to be a new beginning. You want to start 2006 cleansed of this stain in your life. Or maybe you've let debris gather over this last year that's clogging up your walk with the Lord. Or there's some attitude, some insecurity or

jealousy that's getting in the way of your relationship with someone and you want to start fresh this New Year. So I want you to pause and search your heart for a minute and ask, "What do I need His forgiveness for as I begin this New Year?"

### III. WAITING

**"I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning"** (vv. 5-6).

I think besides personal suffering, waiting is perhaps the most difficult and challenging part of living. When you wait you face your limitations and you become still and you realize that you really are powerless.

Several years ago now, my wife was in the hospital for a couple of weeks when her blood started to shut down and they had to rush her into the operating room for emergency surgery. It was late in the night and as I remember they took her into this sterile state of the art operating room with all of the surgeons and nurses and technicians where all of the life and death activity was happening. They led me to this dingy little waiting room with musty old couches and last year's magazines, where all I could do was wait and weep and pray, and cling to Him and His word. And in some way or another God leads each of us into the waiting room of faith where all we can do is wait and pray and claim His promises and wait some more.

Waiting means letting go, giving up the controls, releasing the timetable, laying down my supposed rights to order the universe the way I think is best. The Psalmist says he's holding on to the Word of God and waiting like a night watchman who waits for the morning. He has no control over the cycles of the sun and moon. He has no power to turn on the dawn and make the darkness go away. All he can do is wait. Waiting requires patience, surrender, humility, and trust. For most of us, slowing down and waiting seems

like a big waste of time. But it's in the humility of waiting that we discover that God is all that He has promised to be. There's a hidden door of hope and confidence in the waiting room of faith. So what is God asking you to wait on as you look towards 2006? What do you need to let go of and release to Him? In what area of life is He calling you to wait? Is it a relationship? A career move? A wayward son or daughter? An illness? An area of spiritual growth? Ask yourself: What is God asking me to release and wait on in this New Year? Take a minute to respond to that question.

Well, this has been a great song to ponder and sing together this morning. And now it's time to begin our New Year by coming to the Lord in communion. This morning we're going to physically get up out of our seats and come to the communion table. There is something about that physical act that says Lord, I'm coming to meet with you in a personal way this morning. And I encourage you to bring one or two of these thoughts you just wrote down and say Lord, I'm here this morning needing more of you in this area of my life. Or Lord, I don't want to start 2006 without a fresh touch of your forgiveness and cleansing in this particular area or attitude. Lord, I release this to you. I've been trying to hold on with all my might and now it's time to let go and take my place in the waiting room of faith.

#### IV. HOPING

So this psalm starts by crying to God from the depths but it ends by shouting out to the men and women of God, telling them to hope in the Lord! He says: **"O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption. He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins"** (vv. 7-8).

This is a great word of encouragement for the new year. It tells us to step out in confidence. Some

of the things on your list this morning represent huge challenges that you can't possibly do in your own strength. But here's the promise. The Lord's love is an Unfailing Love. He will not let you down and His purposes for your life will never be detoured or left undone. He is full of redemption. Do you hear that? The apostle Paul said "If God is for us, who can be against us." No matter what you face today He will be faithful to complete the work He's begun. So we can go from this place this morning with absolute assurance that God goes with us as we confidently hope in Him.

There's a final question on your insert that asks: How can I celebrate and live out this confident hope?

I'm going to ask you to take that question home with you today. And later on this evening or tomorrow, maybe you want to do this as a couple if you're married or with a friend, just say "You know, here are some things that I think the Lord wants me to address in 2006. And I want this to be a year where I live out my faith in the confident hope that He's going to meet me every step of the way. I know I have some challenges ahead, so can you help me to stay accountable to live out this hope? So, let's talk together about how we can take some significant and courageous steps forward in 2006."

And then finally I encourage you this morning to stick that insert in the front of your bible, or on your refrigerator, and pull it out once in a while throughout the year and check in with God about these things.

Let's celebrate Him this Year Year's day!

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