



## Sermon Guide: Heavenly Hope in a Heavy World - “Encountering God”

Mark Anderson | Dec. 17

In this sermon, the third part of a series called Heavenly Hope in a Heavy World, Mark Anderson focuses on encountering God in the midst of our struggles. He speaks on the theme of the intimate presence of God in our lives, especially during times of need. Mark begins by illustrating how God seeks us when we are lost, heals us when we are hurting, and sets us free from bondage. God is always present, even when we are unaware of His nearness.

Mark delves into the dual nature of God's power and vulnerability, highlighting Jesus' humanity and the solidarity He shares with us. He points out that Jesus, while performing miracles and demonstrating divine power, also lived an ordinary life, experienced rejection, and sought companionship. This duality underscores the deep connection between God and humanity. Referencing Henry Nouwen, Mark emphasizes that God's love is manifested not by removing our pain but by sharing it with us, leading to new life and resurrection.

At the center of his message, Mark outlines that:

'If we are lost... God comes seeking;  
If we are hurting... God comes healing;  
If we are in bondage... He comes to free us;  
If we are in debt... He pays the ransom;  
If we are selfish... He shows the way to love;  
If we are unloved... He draws near;  
If we are unwanted... He gives us a role.

### Key Takeaways:

- God's pursuit of humanity is relentless and personal, akin to a shepherd leaving the ninety-nine to find the one lost sheep. His desire is to rescue and restore us to wholeness. [\[08:13\]](#)
- God's empathy is not about eradicating our struggles but about entering into them with us, offering solidarity that leads to resurrection and new life. This perspective shifts the focus from seeking escape to finding purpose and presence within our trials. [\[24:46\]](#)
- The accessibility of Jesus, born in a stable, breaks down barriers between the divine and the marginalized. His birthplace allowed the outcasts, such as shepherds, to witness the divine. This accessibility challenges us to see God in the unexpected and to embrace His lordship in humility. [\[19:11\]](#)

## **Discussion Questions**

1. What does John 1:9-14 reveal about the world's response to the true light, and what is promised to those who do receive it?
2. Reflecting on Luke 15:4-6, what actions does the shepherd take upon losing one sheep, and what is his reaction upon finding it?
3. Considering the promise of renewed strength in Isaiah 40:31, how might this passage inform one's understanding of hope during times of struggle?

## **Application Questions**

1. Which of these statements speaks to you the most:

'If we are lost... God comes seeking;  
If we are hurting...God comes healing;  
If we are in bondage... He comes to free us;  
If we are in debt... He pays the ransom;  
If we are selfish... He shows the way to love;  
If we are unloved... He draws near;  
If we are unwanted... He gives us a role.

2. Think of someone in your community who may feel lost or overlooked. What is one tangible action you can take this week to extend God's love and compassion to that person?