

January 4, 2026

“The Snow Will Melt”

Psalm 147:12-20

Intro:

I was chatting with another father the other day about how busy this month was going to be with out-of-town sports tournaments every other weekend for his kid. If it was me, I would have been complaining about how exhausting it would be doing all that travel, and the excessive number of games to get ready for. His perspective was, yes it is busy, but it sure helps the long month of January to go by faster.

January always seems like a long and often cold month. We are coming down from the high of Christmas, there aren’t any special events or long weekends to look forward to, and the days don’t seem to be getting any longer. And did I mention the cold? And the snow? Although maybe there is more snow to worry about later in February or in March.

The point is that for me, January is a long and dreary month and the only bright spot is that I get to celebrate an anniversary with Cindy (this year will mark 18 years that she has put up with me). Many people just sort of trudge through hoping it won’t be too bad and that the rest of the year will be better.

Our Scripture passages this morning challenge us to a different perspective. Please note that they are not talking specifically about January – that is just the season we happen to be in right now. They are talking about a season of life where things are not good and there doesn’t seem to be an end in sight.

Jeremiah’s Call for Joy:

By and large, Jeremiah isn’t the most upbeat or positive of prophets. He was given the thankless job of speaking to the Israelites in the season where they were taken into exile, a season that would last so long that they were encouraged to put down roots, build families and friendships, and pray for blessings for the

country that they were to be exiled into. The end of this exile would be something for the next generations to see, not the one entering into it.

Hearing such news would not be encouraging. This wasn't the first time that the people were carted off after a battle or a war, but this was the first time that it completely decimated their population in that way. And it was the first time that there was no hope of a quick reversal of fortune. I can't fathom what such an experience would be like, but I can imagine that it would be hard to find anything resembling hope or joy in it. Yet, that is exactly what we find Jeremiah encouraging the people towards in chapter 31. He has been given a word, a vision, from the Lord about the time when the exile will be over. When the people who were so displaced will be able to return home. When they will have finished their season of consequences for sin, and will be able to enter into a new season filled with promise and hope.

Listen again to the language used by Jeremiah to signal this change in fortune: "Sing with joy!" "Shout with praise and joy!" What are they to shout? They are to call on God to save His people, to turn their fortunes around. It is interesting that this is how they are to call on God to act. Usually when things are going wrong, when there doesn't seem to be a light at the end of the tunnel, people are inclined to cry out to God in anguish and sorrow and desperation. Jeremiah is saying that even though it hasn't happened yet, God's track record and character is such that there is hope and even a guarantee that He will save His people – there is reason to call on Him with joy because the people know He will come through. The hope of this is so strong that tears of joy will stream down people's faces, that young women will dance for joy – and men of every age will join in with them. Their mourning for what they have lost will turn to joy for what they will regain. Everyone will feast on all that is good about God.

This is kind of reaction that one might expect after the fact, but Jeremiah is saying it will happen even before it becomes reality. That is faith. That is hope. That is the comfort that comes from knowing just how good and great God is.

The Snow will Melt:

Psalm 147 was written to that same group of exiled Israelites. It is also a psalm of joy and hope. It echoes the same notes of optimism, because of who God is, that Jeremiah speaks of. Even when things seem to be at their worst, God is still good and He is greater than any of those things. The extended promise that Psalm 147 gives us is that not only is God greater than the circumstances, but He will bring those difficult times to an end. He is in control of all that exists in creation.

In the third section of the Psalm there is a careful set up for the reader to make sure we have things in the proper perspective. Before we read about snow and hail and “who can stand up to such things”, we read about God strengthening the bars of our gates, blessing being given, and hunger being satisfied... Basically, verses 13 and 14 are saying “Don’t worry! God has all you need in any situation.” This is important because the next verses move us into the not-nice part of life. There will be snow (the long dark January of our souls!), there will be frost, and there will be hail that could beat down our joy and our will. To give an idea of just how demoralizing things could be, the question is asked, “who can stand against all that freezing cold?”. Who indeed!

But then comes the hope. Then comes the turnaround. January will end. It will give way to February (the joyful shorter month!) and then March, and then the days get longer and the weather a bit warmer. And that is the promise. Just when we feel like the winter will never end (continuing with the snow theme/imagery), God causes a wind to blow that will melt the snow and thaw the ice. New life and new hope appear. This is the promise. The promise that what has happened is not guaranteed to continue to happen. That God will make good on all the promises that were talked about in the first part of the section.

Conclusion:

This is the hope and encouragement, and to a degree, the challenge for us today. To see the low points of the “snowy” seasons in our life as being only temporary. We do not live in January forever (even if it seems like it). There will be a new season. We might not know what it will look like. It might seem frightening at

first. But when we see it, when we notice it coming, we are not called to run from it or to complain about it or to hang onto the frozen pole of our current situation out of fear of the unknown.

Instead, we are to sing out praise to God for what He is about to do. To dance with joy because God is going to be with us in this next season. Some of you who are more pessimistic might say, “Yes, but what if the new season is worse?” It may very well seem that way, but the encouragement here is to also see God being present with you in the new situation, and trusting in His control.

The transition from one year to another is often a time to look back and reflect on what was, and to look forward to what could be. It is easy to dwell on what has gone wrong this last year and to allow that to colour your vision of what this new year will bring. But don’t give in to that temptation. Let God bring you into a new joy this year that will shape and strengthen you in new and wonderful ways.

Amen!