**Groaning in the Spirit**

**The Word**

Read together Romans 8:18-27

**The Big Idea**

The Spirit is our comforter and companion during this “already/not yet” existence, filling us with hope and helping us groan well.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Sunday’s message distinguished between the postures of groaning and grumbling. How would you articulate that difference? When life is hard, how can you discern whether you are groaning or grumbling?

2. As you consider the role of the Spirit in this passage, how can you more intentionally engage the Spirit in your life at this time?

3. Consider the quote offered on Sunday: “We often think that we are praying to God from a position of independence. But this is not the Christian idea. If our prayer reach or move Him it is because He first reached and moved us to pray.” What questions and issues does that quote raise for you?

4. Bonus question: How do verses 19-22 fit into your understanding of what eternal life will look like in terms of the role of creation?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

I. Our already/not yet existence

 A. Paul uses the metaphor of childbirth (v. 22)

1. We experience the tension of eager expectation and suffering

2. We hope and groan

 B. The Creation itself hopes and groans (v. 19-22)

1. God subjected the creation to the curse/futility when sin entered the world (death, decay, etc.)

2. The creation groans in hope for the day it will be freed and reach the glory of a new heavens and a new earth.

 C. We hope and we groan

 1. We hope for the day we will receive our full rights as adopted children of God

 2. We groan

 a. There is a difference between groaning and grumbling

b. Many of us groan in different areas of our lives (physical, emotional, relational, etc.)

II. The Spirit’s role in our lives in the already/not yet

 A. He fills us with hope (v. 23-25)

 1. The Spirit is the “firstfruits of eternity”

 2. He is both a guarantee of eternal life and a foretaste of eternal life

3. But this hope does not take away our groaning, and in fact can actually increase our sense of tension in the already-not yet

4. Imagine someone giving you a taste of your favorite meal an hour before you are able to enjoy the whole meal.

B. He helps us in our groaning (v. 26-27)

1. He “helps” us in our weakness: the word conveys the idea of helping by joining in an activity or effort (Like Aaron and Hur helped Moses hold up his staff during the Israelite battle: Exodus 17:12-14)

2. “We don’t know what to pray”: Sometimes situations are so complex, painful, and confusing that we’re not even sure what to pray for.

 3. “The Spirit intercedes through wordless groaning”

a. Consider how the Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children and cries the “Abba” cry through us (v. 15-16)

b. Here it seems as though, in a similar way, the Spirit is groaning through us: he is producing holy, faith-filled groanings in the midst of our weakness and confusion.

 4. “The Spirit intercedes in accordance with God’s will”

a. We don’t know what to pray for, but the Spirit always knows exactly what to pray for

 b. We are weak and confused, but he is strong and clear

 5. “He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit”

a. God the Father searches the dark caverns of our hearts and what he sees are these Spirit-inspired holy groanings/longings for God’s kingdom

b. God the Father always answer these prayers in line with his kingdom purposes and our ultimate good (v. 28)

 C. In prayer we are being brought into the life of God himself

1. “We often think that we are praying to God from a position of independence. But this is not the Christian idea. If our prayer reach or move Him it is because He first reached and moved us to pray.” – P.T. Forsyth

2. “Prayer is not simply our grocery list of requests that we bring before our heavenly Father. Prayer is an activity inspired by God himself, through his Holy Spirit. It is God siding with his people, and, by his Spirit, bringing forth prayer that is in keeping with his will and his ways.” – Gordon Fee

III. Our call is to groan well with hope

“The church is not to be apart from the pain of the world; it is to be in prayer at precisely the place where the world is in pain. That is part of our calling, our high but strange role within God’s purposes for new creation. There is a challenge here to every church, and every Christian: to be willing to shoulder the task of prayer of this kind, prayer in which we are caught up in the loving, groaning, redeeming, dialogue between the Father and the Spirit. –NT Wright