

# “Hope: Past, Present, Future”

December 3, 2017

Luke 2:25 - 38

## I. Introduction:

Because of its significance, it is important to take time to reflect on the meaning of the birth of the Savior of the world—without Jesus’ birth, there could be no death or resurrection and as **1 Corinthians 15:14** says, “**If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.**” Just as people prepare their homes and other surroundings for Christmas—just look around the sanctuary, we need to prepare our hearts for the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior. The commercial world wants your wallet and what’s inside it; God wants you and what’s in your heart. It’s difficult to do, but I would challenge each one of you to get away from all the commercialism bombarding you daily and take time during these days of Advent to review the real Christmas story; use the various Advent devotionals and other materials that are available and prepare your hearts and minds for Christmas—the coming of the Savior of the world.

## II. Hope in the Past—*The Messiah is coming.*

As Nancy and Barb read earlier, one of the meanings of Christmas is hope—hope in the past, the present and the future. As we have seen before, Christian hope isn’t wishful thinking—“I hope I win the lottery,” rather, Christian hope is to expect with confidence. Before the birth of Jesus Christ, there was hope—a confidence—in the coming of the Messiah, i.e. “*His Advent.*” Like Simeon and Anna, those who feared and trusted God were looking forward to the coming of God’s Anointed One—the Messiah; the Christ. This was their hope. This is hope in the past—the Messiah is coming.

Throughout the Old Testament, there were prophesies concerning the One to be sent from God. The first promise is found in **Genesis 3:15**. After being caught in their sin of disobedience, Adam, Eve, and the serpent are standing before God. Since Satan had been the tempter, God cursed him and said, “**I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.**” From the beginning, God said—God promised—that the offspring of the woman (*notice it wasn’t “woman and man” just “woman”*), the offspring of the woman—the Promised One—would crush Satan’s head. Jesus’ death and resurrection would do just that—Satan would lose his fight for power. **Hebrews 2:14** says, “**Since the children have flesh and blood, he too, i.e. Jesus Christ, shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil.**”

In **Deuteronomy 18:15** we find another prophesy of the Messiah. As Moses was coming to the end of his life, he told those who had followed him through the Wilderness that “**The LORD your God**

will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.” In [Isaiah 7:14](#) we have one of many familiar verses that we read this time of year: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” In [Micah 5:2](#) we read the familiar words: “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” These are just some of God’s promises to His people; giving names, times, and places. God’s Anointed One—the Messiah—wasn’t just a wishful thought, He **was** coming. For those living in the past, this was their hope—their confidence in a future event. The writer of Hebrews put it this way in [Hebrews 11:13](#), “All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance.”

As the years went past, false teachers and false prophets led many astray but there was always a minority that had hope—a confidence—that God would raise up the promised Messiah—someone to bring peace and prosperity to Israel. Simeon and Anna, from our Scripture reading this morning, were some of those who had been waiting for the Promised One. They had confidence--hope in God. Through the years, they had continued to watch for His coming. God rewarded them for their patient waiting by allowing them to hold the Savior of the world in their arms. God rewards those who wait patiently.

Simeon and Anna weren’t the only ones looking for the Messiah. [Turn to John 1:45-49](#) where Jesus was beginning His 3-year ministry and He was gathering His disciples. Although it was thousands of years after the time of Adam & Eve and hundreds of years after Isaiah & Micah, Philip and Nathaniel were still looking for the Messiah. They hadn’t given up their hope. They continued to look until they were rewarded—they saw the Promised One, the Messiah, and were called to follow Him.

Through His prophets and the Old Testament, God had promised that the Messiah—the Christ—was coming. [Numbers 23:19](#) says, “God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfil?” Those who trusted God could look forward with hope, with confidence for the coming Messiah. It was as good as done. For the few that were still watching, their hope—their confidence was rewarded. God kept His promise.

### **III. Hope in the Present**

The Messiah—Jesus the Christ—has come and gone, but today we can have hope, too—hope--confidence in the present.

**A. First, you can be confident of having eternal life—right now**, today as well as into the future. [Turn to Romans 10:9-10](#). “**You ARE saved**”—this isn’t something that happens in the future; it’s not something that **might** happen if . . . You **ARE** saved from an eternity in hell the instant you “**believe**”

and “confess.” You can be confident of that—God said so. The Apostle John wrote in [1 John 5:13](#), “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may **know** that you have eternal life.” As Paul told the Philippian jailor in [Acts 16:31](#), “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.” This is a promise for today not just the future. This is a hope based on God’s Word—not some man’s word. The instant you believe, the Holy Spirit comes to live in you—you have eternal life. Notice by the way, that works—doing things—has no part in “earning” eternal life.

**B. You can be confident that you are a child of God.** In the world’s eyes no one here is a mover or shaker of the world, but, if Jesus is your Lord and Savior you are special, you are part of God’s family. In [Galatians 4:7](#) the Apostle Paul put it this way, “You are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.” You can be confident that you are a child of God—[Romans 8:16](#) says that we are “heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.” You aren’t the 5<sup>th</sup> or the 50<sup>th</sup> or the 1000<sup>th</sup> child. You are a child of first rank or standing, you have God’s might, wisdom, wealth, and love at your disposal, all you have to do is call out to Him as His son or daughter.

**C. As God’s heir, you can be confident of God’s protection.** God is in control of everything that comes your way. He is never caught off guard; there is nothing that is too big for Him. [Romans 8:28](#) says, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” God is smarter than you and stronger than you and He loves you; He isn’t going to allow something that will only hurt you to come into your life. Our hope in God is really a confidence in His goodness and His promises—all of which we find in His love letter to us—the Bible.

#### **IV. Hope: Future—*Jesus is coming again.***

There’s hope in the past, there’s hope in the present, and, finally, we can have hope in the future. There are other prophesies, promises from God, which have not yet been fulfilled. In [Isaiah 2:2-3](#) we read, “In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.’ The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” In [Matthew 24:44](#) Jesus said, “So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.” In [1 Thessalonians 4:16-18](#) we read, “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”

This is our future hope—Jesus is coming again. Just like Simeon and Anna, Philip and Nathaniel, the prophets and the people of the Old Testament, we need to be watching for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent of Christ. This time He is not coming as a Lamb for the slaughter, He is coming back to establish His throne and kingdom that will be without end. And we, as His children, will reign with Him in heaven forever. This is our future hope: *Jesus is coming again.*

## V. Conclusion:

At Jesus' 1<sup>st</sup> Advent many didn't recognize Him as the Messiah—they had given up hope—they didn't have confidence in God or His Word. We must strengthen ourselves, we must not give up hope or confidence in Christ's second coming—His 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent. God's promises concerning the 1<sup>st</sup> Advent—the coming of the Messiah—were fulfilled in His time; [Galatians 4:4](#) says, “**But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman;**” so we can have hope—we can have confidence—that those promises concerning the present and the future are true now and will come true in the future—“**when the time has fully come.**”

So, if we have hope—if we truly believe that Jesus Christ is coming back, what should we do? ***So what are you going to do?*** Should we sell all we have and go up on a mountain top and wait? Should we live for today and not plan for tomorrow? Let me give you a hypothetical situation. Suppose you are the parent of a child and you have to go out for a while. You tell your child that he may stay home, but you want him to clean his room before he goes outside to play. Then you leave. You are gone for a couple of hours and when you get back, your child is outside playing but his room hasn't been touched—he didn't expect you to come back quite so soon. What would your response be?

We are like that child, Jesus gave us a job to do when He went away—do you know what it is? In [Matthew 28:19-20](#) Jesus said, “**Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.**” As a child of God you need to be ready for His coming—His 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent; you need to be busy doing the task He has given you to do (making disciples, baptizing them, teaching them). You need to use the talents and gifts God has given you so that when He comes again you won't stand before Him embarrassed. Your confidence—your hope in the future needs to be just as strong as your faith in the past. Are you really anticipating Jesus' return at any minute? Remember, in the last chapter in the last book of the Bible in [Revelation 22:12](#) Jesus said, “**Behold, I am coming soon!**”