

“Hope: Past, Present, Future”

November 29, 2020

Luke 2:25 – 38

I. Introduction

Well, here we are again—another Advent season, another Christmas. But we have never seen an Advent season like this one. Usually, even before Thanksgiving, there is a feeling of Christmas in the air. People are making an attempt to be civil—even being nice to one another; except perhaps on Black Friday. Children are on their best behavior—someone is making a list of who is naughty and who is nice. Everyone is involved in buying Christmas presents and boasting of the great buys they found; others are celebrating that they have finally gotten something for everyone on their list. They are finished! Most are looking forward to family gatherings at Christmas: to tables loaded with food, presents under the Christmas tree, and seeing relatives that they haven’t seen since the last Christmas. Usually, there is hope and peace and joy and love all around—but not this year.

This year things are different. Regardless of your particular view, the pandemic *has* created a world without hope. Although it’s not true, the feeling is that if one gets covid, it is a death sentence. For the majority, things are rather hopeless. The only hope one has is in finding a vaccine that works AND that it can be distributed quickly and safely. Periodically, the shelves in stores are void of particular items: toilet paper, disinfectants, certain foods—recently, Linda has been having a difficult time finding cleaning supplies. Shopping for essentials is often hopeless. The inability of the Republicans and Democrats, whether in Washington or in individual states, to work together to combat the pandemic or the results of the massive closings and shutdowns hasn’t helped to bring peace and joy. The directives, sometimes with the force of being a law, to cancel or mega-reduce family Christmas dinners and get togethers has also done away with joy. The bickering and fighting over ballots and the election results has done away with any peace and joy as well. All the animosity and concern, even worry, has done away with love between neighbors. For the world, for those without Jesus Christ, this Advent season has no hope, no peace, no

joy, and no love. Solomon summarized all this in [Proverbs 14:32](#), “When calamity comes, the wicked are brought down, but even in death the righteous seek refuge in God.”

Rather than encouraging you to ignore all the commercialism and focus on the real Christmas story—although that is still true, this year we need to remember that as Christians we can have hope, peace, joy, and love in the midst of all the divisive issues around us. [Psalm 42:5](#) says, “Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.”

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

As Joe and Meredith 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 are over 100 prophecies 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 were 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.” Through His death and resurrection, Jesus crushed Satan’s head

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.**” Another familiar verse, another prophesy, is found in [Isaiah 7:14](#), we often read it 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 often rewards those who wait patiently.

Simeon and Anna weren’t the only ones looking for the Messiah. [Turn to John 1:43-49](#). Although it was thousands of years after the time of Adam & Eve and hundreds of years after Isaiah & Micah, Philip and Nathaniel, like Simeon and Anna, 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, a confidence 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. Second, you can be confident that you are a child of God. You may not be 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. The Apostle Paul put it this way in **Galatians 4:7**, “**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—**turn to Romans 8:15-17.** If you are a child of God, a Christian, you are an “**heir(s) of God and a co-heir(s) with Christ.**” You aren’t the 5th or the 50th or the 1000th 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. **James 1:5** says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”

C. Third, 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 vindictive; 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. **Micah 7:7** says, “But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me.” You can be confident of God’s protection.

IV. Hope in the 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 prophecies, 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.” **Turn to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.**

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 2nd Advent of Christ. He is coming for His children, but He is also coming back, not as a Lamb to be slaughtered, but to establish His throne and kingdom that will be without end. And we, as His children, will reign with Him in heaven forever. **Revelation 17:14** says, “They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will

triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings-- and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.” This is our future hope: *Jesus is coming again, and we will be with Him.*

V. Conclusion

At Jesus’ 1st 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 not give up our hope or confidence in God’s protection in the present time and in Christ’s second coming—His 2nd Advent. God’s promises concerning the 1st 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—**“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 tell you a story. 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, baptizing 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 can have hope in the present—God is with you and will protect you, but you also need to be ready for His return—His 2nd 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 & hope in the past and the present. 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!”** Do you have hope?