

Spc132 – Celebrate True Hope at Christmas Hebrews 6:19
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Open your Bibles. Title of the message this morning, “Celebrate True Hope at Christmas.”

Last message we were encouraged to “Experience Christ at Christmas.” These are life-changing, practical messages. I’m doing everything I can to give you the ammunition to genuinely experience Christ during the Christmas season. Which is an anomaly – it doesn’t happen that often. This message, I’d like to challenge us to “Celebrate the True Hope of Christmas.”

As many of us know, Christmas can actually be a very difficult time for some of us. The “holidays” are so closely associated with family and with those we love, that if we have suffered loss or separation or if we are feeling isolated or separated from the things that we associate with the holidays, it can cause a real struggle. It can even lead to depression and a loss of hope – even hopelessness.

And isn’t that *so like* the enemy of our souls – to take the greatest celebration of hope and turn it into HOPE – LESS – NESS.

Christmas is the celebration of the arrival of *true hope*. Christmas is the “*Coming into the world*” of the “*Hope of the World*”. And this hope that we celebrate at Christmas is an *anchor* for our *soul* – both sure and steadfast.

And so as I encouraged you last week to Experience Christ at Christmas, I want to encourage you today to “*Celebrate True HOPE at Christmas.*”

Let’s pray. *Heavenly Father, please open our eyes. Separate for us what our culture has made this holiday and what you made it. Lord show us the true hope that we are allowed, that we are privileged, that we are honored to celebrate at Christmastime. And Lord please today show us how true that hope is and where that true hope should be placed. And give us the courage to tell ourselves if that is really where our true hope is or not. Show us today, individually, where our hope is and inspire us to transform it, to move it to you Jesus. You are our True Hope. Show it to us now, we pray in your name, amen.*

In order for us to be able to celebrate the *true hope* of Christmas, the first thing we have to do is to distinguish the difference between the world’s idea of hope and the Bible’s idea of hope.

The world's idea of hope is often "wishful thinking." As in "*I hope I win the lottery,*" or "*I hope things get better in my life.*" And that is definitely not the hope that came to us at Christmas.

Biblical hope – the *true hope* that we celebrate at Christmas is best defined as, "***A confident expectation based on solid certainty.***"

It's not wishful thinking. It's not even a positive outlook on the future. Biblical hope is *a confident expectation based on solid certainty*. And that is the true hope that we celebrate at Christmas.

Biblical hope is not based on your emotions or feelings and it is never based on the outlook of our circumstances. It does not depend on what you can do for yourself if you'll just try hard enough...

Biblical hope is truly a *personal hope* – meaning it is based completely on a Person. Our true hope is based on God alone. It is based on *WHO* God *IS* and *WHAT* God has *PROMISED*. Biblical hope is inseparable from God himself because our confident expectation (our hope) is founded solely on who God is and what God has promised.

Psalm 33:20–22 (NLT)

20 We put our hope in the Lord. He is our help and our shield.

21 In him our hearts rejoice (celebrate), for we trust in his holy name.

22 Let your unfailing love surround us, Lord, for our hope is in you alone.

Remember the name, biblically, both Hebrew and Greek refers to the character and nature of a person. All that we truly need for eternity is in the Person of God – in Jesus Christ in our lives, empowered by the Holy Spirit, three in one.

Our hope is in the Lord Himself. Alone. And the more you get to know the Lord personally the more your "wishful thinking hope" (the norm of the world) will turn into "confident expectation hope" (norm of the Bible.)

That's my prayer for us. That we would go from wishful thinking hope to the life-changing, confident expectation hope. And the way we do that is by putting our true hope on the unchanging guaranteed nature of God himself.

Hebrew Chapter 6 puts it this way. (Turn there.) The writer is talking about the confident expectation (The Hope) that we have in God and using the promise and the oath that God gave to Abraham as an example.

And so we read the following in Hebrews 6:18-19.

Hebrews 6:18–19 (NLT)

18 So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us.

19 This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God’s inner sanctuary.

This true hope comes from the “*impossible to change*” nature of God. (Immutable.) God’s promises to us are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to *lie* or *change*. And so this true hope is a strong and trustworthy ANCHOR for our souls and it leads us into the Holy of Holies – the inner sanctuary of God’s presence. This true hope is different than any other hope this world could offer and this true hope is what we celebrate at Christmas.

And so, as we approach the celebration of true hope this year, can we ask ourselves what is our hope in? What have we put our hope in? And if you have put your hope in the fleeting and volatile circumstances of this life, I pray you would consider transferring your hope to the true hope of heaven – in the Person of Jesus Christ. May we be more aware of what we are currently putting our hope in and may we have the courage to ask God, sincerely, to change our true hope to him alone.

God has always promised that his true hope was coming in the Person of Jesus Christ – the Messiah. When Adam brought sin into the human race, God immediately responded with the promise of true HOPE, not only in the innocent sacrifice to cover their sin, but also in the first Christmas prophecy in the Bible.

In Genesis 3:15 God is talking to the Serpent (the Devil.)

Genesis 3:15 (NIV)

15 And I will put enmity (war) . . . between your offspring (the devil’s) and hers (Christ); he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

That is the first Christmas prophecy in the Bible because that is what Christmas is ultimately about.

And when God called Abraham in Genesis 12, God promised him that true HOPE was coming. In Genesis 12:3 God promised Abraham,

Genesis 12:3 (NLT)

3 . . . All the families (peoples) on earth will be blessed through you. (Referring to the coming of Christ)

And even through four hundred years of slavery in Egypt God promised that the HOPE of deliverance was coming. And that deliverance did come in the Exodus. And the final step of that deliverance was the Passover Lamb being slain and the blood of that lamb allowing the Angel of Death to Passover God's people.

And through the forty years in the wilderness, God kept the HOPE of the Promised Land in front of his people; and even when the people were faithless – God remained faithful.

Because 2 Timothy 2:13 says,

2 Timothy 2:13 says (NLT)

13 If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is.

That is where our HOPE is solidly placed – in God who always remains faithful and who cannot deny himself (not be who he is.) And God's people *were* delivered out of the wilderness into the Promised Land just as God had promised.

And even through the time of the Judges when God's people vacillated so much between God and the world, still God continued to keep his promises and he rescued his people over and over again, always pointing to the one True Rescuer who would come.

Then in the time of King David (Israel's greatest King) the true HOPE that God had always promised really became the bedrock for God's people.

In 2 Samuel Chapter 7 when King David is wanting to build the Temple (a house) for God, God sends the Prophet Nathan to David to tell David that his son Solomon would be the one to build a house for God.

But then in 2 Samuel 7:11 the Prophet says to David,

2 Samuel 7:11 (NLT)

11 . . . “ ‘Furthermore, the Lord declares that he will make a house for you - a dynasty of kings!

. . .

16 Your house and your kingdom will continue before me for all time, and your throne will be secure forever.’ ”

This promise from God is about Jesus Christ who is in the lineage of King David and whose Kingdom and Throne will last *forever*.

And then in the great poetic books, starting with the Book of Job, the true HOPE that God promises becomes more and more of an anchor for the soul. Job, even in his darkest

hour of trial and suffering stands on his confident expectation based on the solid certainty of God's promise.

Job 19:25–27 (NLT)

25 “But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and he will stand upon the earth at last.

26 And after my body has decayed, yet in my body (or apart) I will see God!

27 I will see him for myself. Yes, I will see him with my own eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought!

In the midst of the most radical tribulation there is the most radical true HOPE. There is the confident expectation based on the solid certainty of God's promise – *that HOPE is coming!*

And then the times of the Prophets! For three hundred years the Prophets of God wrote and spoke and cried out ultimately that God's true HOPE was coming. They also spoke and wrote plenty about the consequences of unbelief and unfaithfulness and sin, but ultimately they pointed to the true HOPE that was coming straight from heaven.

One of the key Prophets to proclaim the coming of the HOPE of heaven was Isaiah. In Isaiah there are incredible prophecies about Jesus Christ – all of which either came to pass or are coming to pass.

In a “first person” prophecy, in Isaiah 61:1-2, it says,

Isaiah 61:1–2 (NLT)

1 The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, for the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed.

2 He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the Lord's favor has come . .

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Israel *knew* this prophecy was about a *person*, the coming of the Messiah – the true HOPE of heaven.

And then when Jesus was beginning his public ministry, he came to his home town in Nazareth on the Sabbath and he stood up to read the Scripture for the day. The scroll of Isaiah was handed to him for that day's reading and it was unrolled at these exact same verses, and Jesus read them we see in Luke 4:18-19.

Luke 4:18–19 (NLT)

18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to

the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, 19 and that the time of the Lord's favor has come."

And then continuing in verse 20.

Luke 4:20–21 (NLT)

20 He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently.

21 Then he began to speak to them. "The Scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day!"

ALL the promises of God have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The true HOPE of heaven is *not* in our circumstances. The true HOPE of heaven is in the Person of Jesus Christ – whose birth we are about to celebrate!

It is *IN* Jesus Christ that we have:

The GOOD NEWS of Salvation

COMFORT for the Broken Hearted

The RELEASE of the Captives

The SIGHT to the Blind

and FREEDOM for the Oppressed.

*Our true hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
and so I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.*

*On Christ, the Solid Rock, I'll stand;
Because all other ground is sinking sand.*

Guys, the true HOPE that we are about to celebrate is the Solid Rock of Jesus Christ and our confident expectation is *firmly grounded* in HIM alone.

Psalm 130:7 (NLT)

7 O Israel, hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is unfailing love . . .

Our true HOPE is in the PERSON of Jesus Christ, *The Lord of Glory*, who was born in the manger.

In two weeks I assume we'll all be celebrating Christmas... but will we be celebrating our true HOPE in Jesus, personally and alone? We love the holiday season. But what a

disaster to celebrate Christmas without personally celebrating the true HOPE we have *IN* Jesus Christ.

With so much outside influence it takes some real effort to separate the holiday from the Person of the holiday. I pray we would put in the effort this Christmas Season to increase our true confident HOPE in the *Person* of Jesus Christ and his *role* in our lives.

I'd encourage you to go to our church website (calvarynuevo.org) or use our phone app (search **wordbymail**.) Click on **RESOURCES**, then click **SCRIPTURE BY TOPIC**, then click **HOPE**.

There you will find twenty-two scriptures that you can *meditate* on and *pray through* or *write about* in your journal. I promise you, if you will do that – sincerely asking God to *increase* your confident HOPE in Christ alone – I promise you, he will do it.

This Christmas season; let's be careful *what* we are putting our HOPE in *while* we are celebrating the Savior's birth. Because our true HOPE is in God alone... in *WHO* Jesus Christ *IS* and in *WHAT* he came to do that Christmas morning.

Our true HOPE is in the *Living God* who came to this earth as Savior of all who would believe.

1 Timothy 4:10 (NLT)

10 . . . for our hope is in the living God, who is the Savior of all people and particularly of all believers.

I pray you would genuinely believe that and that Jesus Christ, *personally*, would become your TRUE and ETERNAL HOPE.

And finally may you receive the prayer of the Apostle Paul in Romans 15:13,

Romans 15:13 (NLT)

13 I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let's pray. *Lord Jesus, that's what we want Lord, we want to go through this Christmas season experiencing you with our hope firmly set on you. Enjoying all the cultural things of Christmas, but at the very core of who we are, having an anchor that is set on you. Lord the confident expectation based on who you are and what you've promised. Heavenly Father, the source of hope, may you fill us completely with joy and peace as we*

learn to trust in you. And may we overflow with confident hope through the power of your Holy Spirit. Drive us to that we pray, in Jesus' name, amen.