

## **Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.**

**Sunday December 2, 2019. "Help is on the Way: HOPE".**

### **A. Intro.**

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message this past Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper in your own spiritual walk.

Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

### **B. Sunday's Message.**

This past Sunday we began Advent. For those of you who didn't grow up in church, or in a church with a liturgical calendar emphasis, (another conversation for another day), Advent is the four Sundays before Christmas, that prepare us for the coming of "The Christ". There is a belief among some in the church that Christmas has not only become overly commercialized, (you don't have to be in the church to believe this), but the lead up to Christmas has nearly removed any anticipation and waiting the people surrounding the first Christmas story felt.

We do have a sense of anticipation, but it's mostly about; family, gathering, food, presents. However, we flood this month after Thanksgiving with so much Christmas anticipation, all of the above, we miss the spiritual anticipation. The wait for the coming savior. Before Jesus was born, there was this waiting, hoping, longing for the promised Messiah. The one who had been promised in the Hebrew scriptures who would come and save, rescue, God's people. They didn't sing Christmas carols, hang lights, buy presents. They just waited...and hoped for this savior. The coming of "The Christ".

So Advent is this time of expectation, waiting. Not for all of the trappings that come with Christmas. But that whatever we've been thru over the past year, all the ups and downs, the giant battles and more, even if we're in the midst of those struggles, **we could find the Christ**. The one promised to save and rescue us in the midst of our hopeless.

And that's how we begin this advent season.

So... let's get the juices flowing with a little reminiscing about what Christmas means to you.

**How was Christmas celebrated when you were growing up?**

**Were there any spiritual traditions that surrounded Christmas?**

**What did they mean to you?**

### **C. Scripture.**

Sunday we began with the story of Mary and Joseph and Zechariah and Elizabeth...or Zack and Liz as pastor Lamar referred to them. An unlikely couple who found themselves in the middle of this unfolding story. An unexpected pregnancy, a suspicious husband, a judgmental community, an angry king. All of these emotions surrounded that first Christmas story, and can feed this thing we all wrestle with called shame.

The theme Lamar drew from this story is how this message of hope, salvation, is directed to those who wrestle with shame. In the middles of these battles we're facing, and the feelings of worthlessness and despair they produce, we can find meaning and acceptance in the story of the coming of the Christ.

Brené Brown defines shame as; ***“the fear of disconnection- it’s the fear that something we’ve done or failed to do, an ideal we’ve not lived up to, or a goal we’ve not accomplished, that makes us feel unworthy of connection. Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging”.***

Let's interact with this definition.

**What does this quote say to you about shame?**

**Does this understanding connect with you in any way? How?**

**How have you experienced this? When?**

Even though the central characters were Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary, and Joseph, Lamar turned to Psalm 25 to address this presence of shame we do find in the Christmas story.

So...read **Psalm 25:1-5** and then we'll unpack it.

**How did the passage speak to you?**

**Where does shame tend to come from?**

**How did the Psalm passage address and talk about the issue of shame and God's role?**

Lamar then talked about all the different categories of shame or where shame can originate from. Condensing that list, shame basically comes from; our body appearance, abilities, roles we have to fulfill, addictions, experiences, things that have happened to us, basically where we may differ from our society's norms or expectations.

Christmas can be tough in feeding a sense of shame because we are bombarded with all of these images of what Christmas is supposed to be like- family, presents, certain feelings, and more that we are supposed to feel or experience during the holidays.

But there is **hope**. This expectation, not in a belief or wish that our holidays will happen in a certain way, but rather **in the story of the coming of the Christ**. The savior. The one who would be the promised deliverer to the pain, struggles, and often shame we experience.

So...in this understanding of what Christmas can be about, an understanding of this psalm, a 'fuller' and richer understanding of hope, and what the coming of the Christ actually meant.

**What are one or two things you can do, think, believe differently, this year to make your expectations or understanding of Christmas, the coming of The Christ something deeper?**

The story of Christmas, the coming of Christ is one that brings hope. May you find that hope this year.