

Mitch Myer  
Advent #1 (Hope)  
Sunday, Nov. 27<sup>th</sup>

We are all in need of hope. Let's get that part out of the way. Not just any hope but hope in Christ. The Christmas season is wonderfully consistent, isn't it? Every year we practice similar traditions with our families hearing familiar Scriptures and stories. Advent is a season of hopeful anticipation, where we collectively look forward with hope and anticipation to remembering and celebrating the birth of our savior Jesus.

We do this every year, why does it never get old or tiresome? Because hope is on short supply. The world thrives on hope in material things while the church thrives on hope in spiritual things, at least that is how it should be. We get dragged down by the world and we look a lot like the world in terms of how this all looks year after year. The material things never last or satisfy us in the way we truly need. The story of Jesus' birth brings hope and renewal, that is something we cannot deny.

We also live in a world that thrives on negativity, and the stuff that makes the world go round every day steals our hope – complaining, entitlement, pride, gossip, and fear – just to name a few. And hope in Christ is hopelessly positive, and that is too difficult for people to imagine or believe – there has to be a catch. There is a catch, we lay down our lives for Christ. But it's the best because we always have true hope.

The prophet's play an important role in providing hope for Israel concerning a future messiah. Much like us and the world today, there was an endless amount of complaining, entitlement, and pride present in Israel. There were those who turned from God, but also those who stayed faithful to God. They needed hope that things would be different in the future and that God would remain faithful and fulfill his promises. They needed hope and so do we.

Jesus was also aware of how important the role of God's word has played into his life and ministry. Before he leaves the disciples and ascends into heaven, Jesus tells his disciples this in Luke 24:44-45, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures."

You see, Jesus opening their minds to the Scriptures and how He fulfilled everything that had been written in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms gave the disciples hope. It gave them hope that he had fulfilled so much already, but that he was also going to remain faithful and continue to do what he had promised and what had been foretold about Him. If you hear anything today, let it be this. Put your hope in Christ alone. Put everything else to the side and don't let anything take the place of your true hope, which is Christ and Christ alone.

**1. Hope is an expectant longing and desperation for what we don't have...yet.**

"Biblical hope is a confident expectation and desire for something good in the future." – Desiringgod.org

Jeremiah 29:11 gives us a glimpse of what this means, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

Romans 8:24-25 says, “Now in this hope we were saved, but hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? Now if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience.”

God wants us to put our hope in him, God wants us to have confident expectation of what he will do. It's not too much for God to handle, the pressure is not too great. God wants us to be desperate for Him, he wants all of who we are. At every turn throughout the history of Israel in the Old Testament, they point to the future hope of Christ. When Israel is wandering in the wilderness and losing hope, when Israel worshipped idols instead of the one true God, when the kings and royalty have turned away from God and his commands, when groups have been exiled, and even when things seem to be going alright. Hope is given through God's people that a future messiah would come. Remember, Jesus says that the Law, prophets, and psalms must be fulfilled.

From the Law:

Deuteronomy 18:15 says, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet from among you, from your brothers – it is to him you shall listen.”

Numbers 24:17 says, “I see him, but not now; I perceive him, but not near. A star will come from Jacob, and a scepter will arise from Israel. He will smash the forehead of Moab and strike down all the Shethites.”

From the prophets:

Isaiah 9:6-7 says, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The seal of the Lord of hosts will do this.”

Isaiah 7:14 says, “Therefore the Lord shall give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

Jeremiah 33:14-15 says, “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.”

Micah 5:2 says, “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.”

From the psalms:

Psalm 72:9-11 says, “May the desert tribes kneel before him and his enemies lick the dust. May the kings of Tarshish and the coasts and islands bring tribute, the kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts. Let all kings bow in homage to him, all nations serve him.”

## **2. Our hope in Christ is strengthened by the Word of God.**

Of course it does! We believe that or at least think that, but does it affect the way we live? During this advent season, we are looking forward with hopeful anticipation to the birth of Christ. But what are we doing to set our minds on Christ during this season?

I feel like a broken record when I’m up here sometimes, but I’ll say it again. What we consume with our eyes and ears matters – what we watch, what we read, what we hear – it all contributes to our hope and lack of it. As a follower of Christ, you should be spending time in God’s word so your hope in Christ can be strengthened. Listen to David in Psalm 119, hear where his hope is placed.

Psalm 119:81 says, “My soul longs for your salvation; I hope in your word.”

He longs for God’s salvation. He is yearning for it and wanting it with all of who he is. His hope is placed in God’s word. We place our hope in so many things other than God and his word. It is the reason that we get so discouraged so easily and so off track so often because our hope is just everywhere but God’s word. What are you longing for? When our hope is placed in God and his word, it is Him we long for. It is Him we wait for. Here David from Psalm 130:5,

Psalm 130:5 says, “I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope.”

He waits for the Lord, his WHOLE BEING waits. Instead of worrying and being full of anxiety, do you look to God’s word to see what he will do? And do you place your hope in it? He is patient and knows who is trustworthy and who is faithful, so he is able to wait for the Lord. And once again, his hope is in God’s word. God’s word points us to Jesus. Part of the reason we lose hope is because it is difficult to wait, it’s difficult to be patient.

One of our biggest issues is that our internal desires do not match up with our outward behaviors. That is called a lack of integrity. So many of us live with very little integrity. We say, I love God, I follow Jesus, I love his Word...but the outside doesn’t match that internal desire. I want to be in God’s word says my internal self, but I do not have integrity and discipline for me to actually do that. We need to be people of integrity. Do you want to have greater hope in Christ? Then be in God’s word, it will strengthen you.

So many times, the prophets came to the people of Israel with a word from the Lord that is unpopular or unappealing. To bring a truth from God that the people had forgotten, to remind them of their covenant, to help them see that God is someone they can place their hope in. This is the constant struggle with Israel and with us, God has not followed through, God is holding out on us. I will turn to this other thing, maybe it will give me what I want. When is God going to come through? And then he does, but never in the way you expect it.

However, I think the source of our waiting, our patience, and our hope has to do with how much the word of Christ is dwelling within us. Paul writes in Colossians about how much the word of Christ should dwell in us.

Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

We are often living like the word of God is dwelling in us poorly instead of richly. We act like there is not enough time in the day, it's inconvenient, this other stuff is the priority, etc. Then we act surprised when we lack faith or we feel hopeless about life and our circumstances. Then we might blame God or put it on Him. But God didn't let you down. You just did not adequately prepare yourself to be faithful, to have hope when things get hard. We get so confused why our faith and hope get so low sometimes, but we never connect our hearts and our behaviors. When the word of Christ dwells in us richly, we have hope and can live out the right way: teaching others, singing and praising God, being thankful to God.

The next thing to know about hope is...

### **3. Hope and suffering work together.**

This one may seem a little off or might not make too much sense, but you can't have hope without suffering. Hope and suffering are interconnected. Like we talked about, hope is this longing and expectation and desperation for something greater in the future, something we don't have yet. If we never struggle or are at our lowest or suffer for Christ and his kingdom, we can't have hope because life has never been challenging enough. You can't hope when nothing has ever been difficult or refining or soul-crushing. Hope is born out of suffering. So how do we suffer? What does it look like when are going through the trials of life? Paul gives us a great picture of how hope and suffering are connected.

Romans 5:2b-5 says, “And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

We don't get to hope because of good circumstances, we don't get to hope because of easiness of life or comfort. We get to hope because of hardship. Many of us feel at times like Job when he says,

Job 17:15, “Where then is my hope – who can see any hope for me?”

And many of us we don't suffer well, we don't suffer well at all. We play the victim, we blame God, we don't take responsibility, we clam up, ignore the feelings, and don't enter into the suffering. Notice it does not say to ignore suffering, but to rejoice in it. This is not about suffering of general life circumstances, this is suffering because of Christ. Having hope in Christ is going to be more accessible if we have suffered with/for Christ. Maybe you haven't suffered for Christ. If you haven't suffered for

Christ then what are you placing your hope in? If your hope is in Christ, then you will suffer for him. Jesus's call is simple in the gospel: die to yourself, pick up your cross, and follow me.

We have not been dying to ourselves, church. If you want to have greater hope in Christ then you will probably start suffering for him. Hope in Christ is born out of suffering for him. Suffering is denying yourself, having self-control, persecution, choosing God's kingdom and others over yourself. Suffering leads to hope, and hope does not put us to shame. There is no shame in real, biblical hope in Christ.

#### **4. Keep hold of the hope we have in Christ.**

Once we have the hope of Christ, we should hold onto it with everything we have. Be as constant and consistent as you possibly can, do not waver or falter. And always remember our hope is tied to God, it's not because of us or what we are capable of. It is because of God and his faithfulness and how he keeps his promises.

Hebrews 10:23 says, "Let us hold fast to our confession of hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful."

The last few months of playing on the worship team has given me a blast from the past. I played drums in elementary through high school. Playing drums is important because they keep the beat and the pace for everyone else. I remember my band instructor always holding up a metronome and playing it loudly for us to hear the correct beat and speed of the song. The metronome brings us back to the consistent beat and pace we need in the band. God's promises should be our metronome, always looking back at them in God's word to remember our hope and get back on track with him. They bring us back from chaos and distraction or when we go rogue on our own.

The New Testament writers look back to the prophets to give hope to their readers. Hope is here for everyone through Christ.

Listen to Paul's encouragement in Romans 15:12-13, "And again Isaiah says, 'The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope.' May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."

#### **5. The hope of Christ must be shared with others.**

Hebrews 13:12-16 says, "So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God."

Do you hear the hope in something greater in that passage? "Here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come." The hope is not in the current, but in the future. The main encouragement is to "not neglect to do good and to share what you have." You have something to share, church. You have

the greatest hope to give to others, and this is the perfect time to share that hope – to share what you have.

Peter and John in Acts 4 are being persecuted for their faith and preaching the name of Jesus. Here is their response in verses 19-20, “But Peter and John answered them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.’”

I love that response, it’s so powerful. The CSB says it like this, “For we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

Are you unable to stop speaking about what God has done in your life? Are you unable to stop sharing the hope of Christ with others? Are you unable to stop talking about the hope that Christ’s birth brings?

Hope can seem like it’s on short supply, but it’s not. Hope is abounding in Christ. Now is the time to remember the birth of Christ, to look forward with anticipation and hope that someone great has arrived to bring us what we need.