

Hope Illuminated in Advent

I. Introduction

A. Advent Giving Project

1. Eman (Emmanuel) and Jess Perez are the Directors of ASELSI. RVF has partnered with the Perez family for a little over a year
2. ASELSI is located in Chichicastenango, Guatemala and was established to primarily serve village pastors throughout Guatemala, but they have grown over the years to also include a free clinic and special needs school
3. Our goal is to give toward their annual Pastors and Leaders conference, which is open to anyone seeking to serve their local church community. Many of the attendees are graduates or current students of the ASELSI Bible Institute
4. It costs roughly \$16,000 to run the conference. Our goal is to raise \$5,000 toward to assist in offsetting the cost for this conference both for ASELSI and the local pastors who will be paying to attend.
5. Last week we raised roughly \$600. You can give online (select Advent Giving in the drop down box); check (write Advent Giving in memo); or by cash.

B. Advent

1. Meaning

- a) Comes from the Latin word 'Adventus' which means 'coming, approach, arrival .' It begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and culminates on Christmas day. Advent is a preparatory season. It has significance because it is a season of looking forward and waiting for something greater, both for the annual celebration of the event of Christ's birth, and for the time when Christ will come again.

2. Purpose

- a) A season of contemplation and celebration.
- b) A season of preparation and anticipation.
- c) "When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long

preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming."¹

3. Themes

a) Hope, Peace, Joy, & Love

C. First Sunday of Advent: Hope

1. We often use the word hope, with a sense of doubt, a wishful thinking if you would. This is not the way it is used in the Scriptures.
2. Two Hebrew words in the OT that are translated as hope. The first is *yakhal*, which means 'to wait for.' This is used in Genesis, when the author tells us that Noah *yakhal* for weeks for the flood waters to recede. The second word, *qavah*, also means to wait. Interestingly it is related to the Hebrew word *qav*, which means cord. The imagery here is that pulling a cord tight, when you do this you produces a state of tension until there is a release. "That's *qavah*, the feeling of tension and expectation while you wait for something to happen."²
3. Hope in the Scriptures then is about waiting in the midst of the tension, but waiting for what? For most in the OT, it is expectant waiting for the Lord.
 - a) Isaiah 8:17, "I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him."
 - b) Psalm 130: 5-7, "I wait (*qavah*) for the Lord..O Israel, hope (*yakhal*) in the Lord!"

II. Hope Illuminated in Advent

A. Hope in the Promise Fulfilled (Luke 2:22-32)

1. Our passage begins with Mary and Joseph presenting the infant Jesus at the temple, in obedience to the Law of Moses. In this moment, we witness the fulfillment of God's promises. Simeon, a righteous and devout man, guided by the Holy Spirit, takes the baby Jesus into his arms and declares, "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation."

¹ <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/holidays/what-is-advent.html>

² <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/yakhal-hope/#fn-3>

2. Advent is not about the surprise arrival of the Messiah, but rather the fulfillment of his promised coming.
 - a) Everyone loves a surprise at Christmas, but that is not what Christmas is about. For centuries God had been promising the coming of his messiah to redeem and restore all things. As we've seen over the last year, beginning in Gen. 3:15, YHWH had been promising "his people a serpent-crushing offspring."³
 - b) The OT reveals much about the coming Messiah. The prophet Jeremiah tells us he will come from the line of David (Jer. 23:5-6); the prophet Micah tells us he will come from the town of Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2); Isaiah tells us his conception will be miraculous, born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14). Throughout the ages YHWH revealed great details concerning the arrival of the Messiah. The real story of Christmas isn't a story of surprise but of fulfillment.
3. This reminds us that God is faithful to His promises. Advent is a season of waiting, but it's not a passive waiting; it's an active anticipation of God's promises coming to fruition. The birth of Jesus is the realization of the hope that had been proclaimed for centuries. Just as Simeon held the promised Messiah in his arms, we too hold onto the promises of God, trusting that He will fulfill them in His perfect timing.
4. How have you seen God's faithfulness to you in the past? In what areas of your life are you struggling to believe God's promises? What might it look like for you to find hope in God's faithfulness today?

B. Hope in the Midst of Conflict (Luke 2:33-35)

1. As Simeon continues his prophetic words, he speaks directly to Mary, saying, "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed."

³ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/advent-meditation-hope-fulfilled/>

2. Part of the concept of hope is tension...tension is part of what it means to experience hope in Jesus. One of the things that creates tension in us is the conflict we may experience in light of our relationship with Jesus.
3. Conflict among people
 - a) “Humans will resist Jesus. For them, Jesus will not be a hope of promise fulfilled, but a figure who is to be opposed.”⁴
 - b) Matthew 10:34, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.”
 - c) “He quickly goes on to show he does not mean that he comes to incite violence. He means rather that his call to allegiance brings conflict—conflicts both among people and within people. Just like any peacemaker who has ever lived, Jesus makes people mad, and he often cause struggle and strife. Yet this is the way his peace comes.”⁵
 - d) “The coming of Jesus into our lives makes us peacemakers, yet it also brings conflict. If you are a committed Christian, then, you will know both the triumphs of peacemaking and the heartbreak of opposition. Christians often feel like the psalmist when he wrote: ‘I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war’ (Psalm 120:7).”⁶
4. Conflict within People
 - a) Mary’s own conflict, pain, misunderstanding.
 - b) “There are thousands of men and women who go to churches and chapels every Sunday, and call themselves Christians...But you never see any ‘fight’ about their religion! Of spiritual strife, and exertion, and conflict, and self-denial, and watching, and warring they know literally nothing at all. Such Christianity...is not the Christianity of the Bible. It is

⁴ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, 2 vols., *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1994), 247.

⁵ Timothy Keller, *Hidden Christmas : The Surprising Truth Behind the Birth of Christ* (New York: Viking, 2016), 118.

⁶ Keller, 122.

not the religion which the Lord Jesus founded, and His Apostles preached. True Christianity is 'a fight'."⁷

5. "When Simeon's prophecy is viewed as a whole, one sees a prophet at peace because he knows that God's salvation has come. Salvation's light has come in Messiah; Simeon rejoices. But the picture is not entirely rosy. For the promised One is variously perceived, and many in Israel will reject him. In the path the child takes, his mother will feel pain; but his ministry will expose who is hostile to God. The messianic Son will be a light to the world, but his shining will bring division as he shines forth. Many will be raised to the Light, but tragically others will fall in judgment, having missed the promise."⁸

C. Hope in the Devotion of the Faithful (Luke 2:36-38)

1. The passage concludes with the introduction of Anna, a prophetess who had been widowed for many years. Her life was marked by devotion to God, spending her days and nights in the temple, fasting and praying. When she sees the baby Jesus, she too recognizes Him as the fulfillment of God's promises.
2. Anna's life of devotion teaches us a valuable lesson about hope during Advent. In our waiting, in our anticipation, and in our daily lives, may we be characterized by a steadfast commitment to God. Through prayer, fasting, and a life surrendered to Him, we find hope that transcends circumstances. Anna's example challenges us to be faithful in our service to God, trusting that our devotion is not in vain, and that the hope we carry is anchored in the unchanging nature of our Lord.

III. Closing Thoughts

- A. As we journey through the season of Advent, let us anchor our hearts in the hope found in the promise fulfilled. May God's past faithfulness motivate hope for the future. May we be reminded that we look forward by looking backward,

⁷ J. C. Ryle, *Holiness : Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots, Moody Classics* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010), 111.

⁸ Bock, 250.

trusting in nothing other than God's character. In the midst of the conflict, may the tension—may this too produce hope in us—as we await the day where that tension will be released, where hope is finally and fully fulfilled. And in our waiting, in our hoping may we be active like Anna. May our waiting and hoping be marked by faithful devotion to Jesus as we away his return.

B. Bibliography

Bock, Darrell L. *Luke*. 2 vols. *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, vol. 3. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1994.

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