

Series: **Christmas 2023**  
Today's Title: ***"Holding onto Hope"***  
December 10, 2023 – *Hebrews 2:14-16, 10:23*

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**Objective:** To encourage believers with the hope we have in Christ.

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Hope.

Christmas is a season of hope.

In a shallow and commercial sense, it's a season of hope as people hope for that special gift.

Kids hope for the toy – or the computer game – or a new phone.

Some families hope for a peaceful gathering with extended family.

Others hope to spend time with their adult children – who have moved out of the house and are so busy they rarely have the time to visit.

Hope.

It's a great word – and even a better attitude.

It's so positive.

Hope anticipates the best outcome.

*'I hope you have a great day!'*

*'I hope you can make it for dinner.'*

*'I hope you get better soon.'*

We're about to enter another year – 2024!

Most of us enter the New Year with hope – optimism that our plans for the New Year will succeed.

- Expecting our resolutions to become reality.
- We anticipate the new clothes we'll have to buy when we lose those 30 lbs.

Kim and I are in a season of hope.

Becoming a grandpa has surprised me.

***It's surprised me how mentally disruptive it is!***

I didn't expect to be so consumed by it – looking countless times at the pictures of Capri we receive via text.

How dominating the thoughts are of spending time with our granddaughter – and of course, Brian and Gianna.

And we recently found out that Ben and Jessica are expecting their first baby!!!

Jessica's due date is in the last ½ of May 2024.

Needless to say – in this Christmas season – and as we move into the New Year – Kim and I are full of hope as we look forward to grandchild #2!!!

Not only do grandchildren inspire or generate hope, but we see hope all throughout the Christmas account.

In the gospel of Luke – in **chapter 2** – we read of the birth of Jesus.

When Jesus was just over a month old, Mary and Joseph brought Him to the Temple for the ritual of purification for Mary.

You can read about the purification ritual in **Leviticus 12:1-8**.

Mary and Joseph make the short trip – a few miles - from Bethlehem to Jerusalem – to the temple.

They go to the temple to present Jesus, their firstborn, to the Lord, and they also bring a sacrifice to offer for Mary’s purification – a ritual performed after giving birth.

After the ritual and sacrifice, Luke tells us of an 84-year-old widow named Anna, who spent every day at the temple – “giving thanks” to God.

On this occasion though – her thanksgiving was very specific – because Luke tells us:

**Luke 2:37b-38**

“...at that very hour she (Anna) began to give thanks to God and to speak of Him (baby Jesus) to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.”

“...to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.”

That’s the long way of saying: HOPE!!!

God had revealed to Anna that Jesus was the One – the promised Messiah – whom the Jewish people had been waiting for – and hoping for – for hundreds of years!!!

*Hope of* redemption.

*Hope of* freedom – liberation from the Romans.

*Hope of* life and liberty.

*Hope of* spiritual blessing and spiritual life.

Later in the N.T., in the book of Hebrews, we read about the first advent of Jesus – His birth – His incarnation – God taking on flesh.

We read of how we – “the children” – humanity – share with Jesus - the same flesh and blood.

It’s an amazing concept – but more than a concept – an amazing reality – an amazing historical event – when the sovereign God who created all things – is over all things – who exists outside of time and outside of the created universe – subjected Himself – to the limits of the created world – to the limits of time and the limits of a human body.

**Hebrews 2:14a-15, 17**

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things...”

The natural question is, *‘Why would God do this?’*

Why would God – who is Spirit – bound and limited only by His own nature – why would God take on human flesh and submit Himself to the confines and restraints of the created world?

**Hebrews 2:14b-15**

“...that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,  
15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”

Don’t you love when the Bible answers the questions – in such plain, simple language?

He became flesh – Jesus was born – to “...destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil...”

That’s amazing news!

- Have you ever dreamt – **or hoped** – that death could be disarmed?
- That the grave could be neutered?

Well... that’s exactly what Jesus did.

That’s why Jesus was born – to die, and then to rise from the dead – defeating death and sin.

This is why the Apostle Paul could write:

**1 Corinthians 15:54-55**

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

It all goes back to Bethlehem – to that little stable – and the little baby – wrapped in swaddling cloths, laying in a manger. (Luke 2:12)

But that’s not all! (I feel like an infomercial – like Billy Mays or Phil Swift!!)

There’s more!

**Hebrews 2:17**

“Therefore, He had to be made like His brothers in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”

Jesus was born – He took on human flesh – not only to defeat the devil, but to serve us – as a high priest for all people – to “make propitiation for the sins of the people.”

“propitiation” – that’s one of those weird, theological, Biblical words that nobody ever says or hears – unless they’re in church – listening to a sermon!!

**Propitiation** = *appeasement, conciliation; atonement.*

Averting the wrath of God by the offering of a gift.

Jesus was born – “He had to be made like His brothers in every respect...” to defeat the devil – and to offer Himself as the offering – the gift – the sacrifice – for our sins – so God’s wrath toward our sins would be appeased – or paid for – atoned for – satisfied.

- Could we hope for anything better than that?
- Could we ever dream of a greater hope – than the ability to avoid evil – and to be reconciled to God?

Christmas hope – is not really about presents.

Although for some...that is their Christmas hope.

It’s the extent of their hope.

But it’s hoping for the small things – the insignificant things.

It’s like hoping for a chocolate bar – when the chocolate factory is available!!

The writer of **Hebrews** – later in the book – gives us some wisdom regarding hope.

He writes about hope of the highest level of importance.

He gives us something to attain to – to elevate our ambitions to a higher level.

**Hebrews 10:23**

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.”

“...hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering...”

What causes your hope to waiver?

I know what causes me to abandon hope.

- Pain.
- Fear.
- Loss.
- Disappointment.
- Conflict.
- Failure.
- The presence of evil.
- Death.

But the writer tells us not to waiver – not to abandon our hope.

Why? How?

“...for He who promised is faithful.”

If our hope is limited to this life – to the things of this life, we may have satisfaction – joy – pleasure – success – fulfillment – and purpose – *for a time*.

But it won't last.

The things of this world satisfy – but only to a point.

They appease – only for so long.

## **But God.**

He promised to give us all these things – forever – for eternity!

Don't give up your hope... don't waiver from your hope.

Don't hope only for temporal things – short-term things.

Start hoping for bigger things – eternal things!

- Start hoping for things that money can't buy.
- Start hoping for things only God can supply.
- Start hoping for things that are heavenly – eternal.

God has so many blessings He wants to give you.

He has so many ways to enrich your life – ways the world can't compete with.

So, don't waiver - because He is faithful.

He is faithful to the promises He's given.

He was faithful in sending His Son – to defeat the devil – and to take away our fear of death.

May you experience the unlimited hope of Christ this Christmas.

I pray you hold onto that hope – and never let it go!!

*Close in prayer*