

# The Promise of Hope

## Hope Fulfilled

### Introduction

One of the interesting aspects of A Christmas Carol by Dickens is his use of the past, present, and future in presenting a story of redemption that addresses the social and cultural challenges of the day. As Dickens rightly assumed in his writing, the most impactful of these engagements is the present. This is true because regardless of the past, while certainly influencing the present, does not have to have power over the present. To the contrary, future outcomes are inextricably tied to the present.

So, while the past and the future were important, it was the present that Dickens was seeking to change.

The same is true of The Promise of Hope we celebrate at Christmas. Last week we talked about the gospel Hope Foretold. And while that truth has certainly influenced the world to the present, it doesn't mean it has power over the present. For Hope Foretold to have the power to impact the present and the future, it must become Hope Fulfilled. This is where our focus will be this morning.

**ILLUS:** In A Christmas Carol, the Ghost of Christmas Present was Dickens picture of Hope Fulfilled. His depiction is that of Father Christmas (for the English this character personified the Christmas spirit – a king that brought with him abundance, joy – jolly even, with compassion and sympathy). One that gave the invitation to Scrooge to come so Scrooge could know him better because “You have never

seen the like of me before!" Then we read (or watch in Disney's A Christmas Carol – Ultimate Ghost Story) this line

...

Scrooge: Hey, I see you wear a scabbard but no sword. Ghost of Christmas Present: Indeed, peace on earth, goodwill toward men.

Tiny Tim – I hope the people saw me in church because he is a cripple and it might make pleasant for them to remember upon Christmas day who made lame beggars walk and blind men see

Scrooge – Kind spirit, say Tiny Tim will be spared ... if these shadows remain unaltered by the future, the child will die ... No! ... What then if he is to die, he had better do it and decrease the surplus population

Death starts ticking on the Ghost of Christmas Present.

This giant of a king of which Dickens wrote, "notwithstanding his gigantic size [was able to] accommodate himself to any place with ease." A trait that one Anglican Priest said was a reflection of King Jesus' incarnation, coming as a babe in Bethlehem.

This Jesus – A King who accommodated Himself to us. Bringing with Him joy, abundance, peace on earth goodwill toward men, sympathy, compassion, and whose time on earth was limited by death – He is Hope Fulfilled and the very One who can, because of what He accomplished in the past through His birth, death, burial, and resurrection,

radically transform our present, and eternally change our future.

This is the One of whom Paul wrote ...

**Romans 15:8–13 (NKJV) — 8** Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, **9** and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: “For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name.” **10** And again he says: “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!” **11** And again: “Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!” **12** And again, Isaiah says: “There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope.” **13** Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is Hope Fulfilled.

## Hope of Promise Fulfilled (8)

This was to the Jews

**Micah 5:2 (NKJV) — 2** “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.”

**1 Samuel 17:12 (NKJV) — 12** Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem Judah, whose name was Jesse, and

who had eight sons. And the man was old, advanced in years, in the days of Saul.

**Matthew 1:22–23 (NKJV) — 22** So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: **23** “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

Hope is not found in probabilities but in promises.

## Hope of Mercy Fulfilled

This was for the Gentiles and Paul goes into 4 Old Testament quotations that encompass the Law, Prophets, and writings noting God’s mercy on the gentiles.

**Romans 9:15 (NKJV) — 15** For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.”

**Micah 7:18–19 (NKJV) — 18** Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy. **19** He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea.

**Matthew 9:13 (NKJV) — 13** But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

**Romans 9:16 (NKJV) — 16** So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

**1 Peter 1:3 (NKJV) — 3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

## Hope of Joy Fulfilled

**Isaiah 12:1–6 (NKJV) — 1** And in that day you will say: “O LORD, I will praise You; Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me. **2** Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; ‘For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.’ ” **3** Therefore with joy you will draw water From the wells of salvation. **4** And in that day you will say: “Praise the LORD, call upon His name; Declare His deeds among the peoples, Make mention that His name is exalted. **5** Sing to the LORD, For He has done excellent things; This is known in all the earth. **6** Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion, For great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst!”

**Luke 2:10 (NKJV) — 10** Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.

**ILLUS:** Christmas Blues – “the advertising hype and picture perfect imagery is fictional; don’t let it define your experience (Amir Afkhami in Psychology Today)

“Joy to the world the Lord is come.”

## Hope of Peace Fulfilled

**Luke 2:14 (NKJV) — 14** “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”

Peace is only necessary when conflict is present. And sin brought conflict between God and man.

**Romans 5:1 (NKJV) — 1** Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Justice, Grace, and Mercy

**ILLUS:** Hark the Herald Angels Sing – “Peace on Earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled”

**John 16:33 (NKJV) — 33** These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

## Hope of Faith Fulfilled

**ILLUS:** Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David ... the same in the OT as the NT.

**Luke 2:15 (NKJV) — 15** So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.”

“God does the filling with joy and hope; our only responsibility is to believe.” (Swindoll, 341-342)

**Acts 16:31b (NKJV) — 31b** ... “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved ...”

**Romans 5:1–2 (NKJV) — 1** Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus

Christ, **2** through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

**ILLUS:** “Joy to the world the Lord has come. Let earth receive her King. Let every heart prepare Him room ...”

## Hope of Life Fulfilled

Abound “more than enough”

Moses told the Hebrews that God is your life – because He is the giver and sustainer of life!

But there was no hope of life with a gift.

**ILLUS:** Disappointment in presents. When in things such as presents, hope is lost because of the object. There is no hope lost in Christ, it is in that hope we find life.

**John 3:16 (NKJV) — 16** For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

**John 10:10b (NKJV) — 10b** ... I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

## Conclusion

“Joy, peace, faith, and hope are essential Christian qualities.” (Stott, 373)

These all came to us in the coming of Christ – this is the very meaning and reason we celebrate Advent (coming – the coming gerund) in this season.

The truth is that this season will likely not be any less busy, tiring, and at times frustrating. But it doesn't have to be filled with misplaced hopes because we have The Promise of Hope and this Hope has been Fulfilled – Hope of Mercy, Joy, Peace, Faith, and Life. And Hope has a name – His name is Jesus.

I want to end where we began. At the end of this section in A Christmas Carol as the Ghost of Christmas Present is preparing to die, there emerge from his robe two poor and underserved children Dickens names ... Ignorance and Want.

With the coming of Jesus Christ leading up to our present, these are the two things that all of us don't have to be.

Promise, Mercy, Joy, Peace, Faith, and Life.