

Waiting in Hope

2020 Advent

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On Facebook is where we're going to find satisfaction and desire, then we'll spend our time there curating our life to get those "likes." We change how we live, we change how we spend our time and our spending habits all to achieve a hope. Hope is something that the world understands and it pours out to us their hope on a consistent basis through their advertisements and their sales and their platforms but the satisfaction of that hope and fulfillment does not last.

The Christian faith and the Bible are both full of hope for this life, and this season of Advent when we, as Christians, remember the first coming of Jesus Christ, we should display the strongest, the boldest, the most joy-filled hope that this world has to offer, and while there are many different hopes that are in the Bible, I want to weave for us today a fourfold hope that we can take with us from day to day. You see, hope is only as strong and satisfying as the person in whom we put it in. Let me say that again: hope is only as strong and secure as the person that we put it in. As we begin to weave our fourfold hope, I want to start with this: a coming hope. A coming hope in scripture. We find in Genesis 3:15 this hope, this promise, that is given of a coming hope. God speaks to the serpent and he says this after Adam and Eve have fallen, he says, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

Promises are dangerous things to give out, especially to children, because they remember those promises in ironclad memories like Fort Knox. They constantly bring it up to you, "Do you remember you promised to do this? Do you remember you promised to do this? When are we gonna do this? You promised. You promised. You promised." And the reason that I know that people, and especially children, remember promises is because Brad Brosius still owes me a game of HORSE that he promised nearly 20 years ago. We remember promises and we put our hope in those things and we bring them up constantly to the person who made them, "You need to make good on this promise."

And God made a promise that there would be one who would come and crush the serpent's head, and God spoke that in the presence of Adam and Eve who had just fallen and they wanted that hope to be fulfilled because they remembered everything being perfect. And that's why when Cain is born, Eve rejoices. "This is it. God has promised

one to come and he's given us this seed that's going to crush the serpent's head." The hope has come. If you read the story, you know it's not Cain. He murders Abel. Hope dashed. When is this hope coming? We follow the line of Seth and we think maybe this is the one. They've begun to call out to God and worship God. We follow the genealogies and they all end with "and he died. And he died. And he died." The serpent in death seemed to continue to win generation after generation after generation and, "Where is this hope, God? You said you would send one to crush the serpent's head to make things right." Maybe when Noah comes. God has said he's sorry that he had made man but Noah has found grace in the sight of God. No, not even Noah and his family are that hope because Noah's heart is still sinful. Just as Adam and Eve took the fruit that was forbidden, so Noah abused the fruit of the vine and sinned. And we could go through example after example in the Old Testament as we wait for this hope to be fulfilled and we think, "Maybe this is the one. Maybe this son is the one who will put things right. Maybe it's Abraham or Isaac or Jacob. David." And then we're all waiting for this hope that was promised in the beginning. Then the prophets come along and they say, "He's still coming. The one who's going to crush the serpent's head is still coming. The root who is going to be shoot that comes out of the root of Jesse, he's coming. Wait."

This hope had captured all of Israel in their heart. Then you think of Peter as he describes the prophets. He says this, "Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully." Inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you. They knew they weren't going to have that hope in their lifetime and they still pursued on. They still stayed faithful because that hope was secure in God. That promise was secure. It didn't matter if they got to see it, if they were able to stay faithful and true to what God had called them to, they would do it.

For you and I today, do we hope, do we have a hope that is causing us to search diligently, to inquire of God in our prayer time? God has promised to redeem a people for himself from every tribe, nation and tongue. Do we pray for that? Do we long for that hope to be fulfilled? Do we long for each generation to know God? Do we make disciples and baptize them so that they might know this hope?

The hope for the one who would crush the serpent's head helped the Israelites remain faithful. They continued to hold fast to the word of God given hundreds of years previously but this fourfold hope isn't just in the past. It's not just one that says, "Hey, he's coming," but secondly, is a fulfilled hope. The Savior has arrived. If you have your Bibles, if you haven't them open to Luke 2 looking at what Joel read this morning about Simeon, Luke 2:25, a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. He was righteous and devout and he was waiting for the consolation of Israel. He'd been waiting all of his life. He'd been a little boy in Israel hearing all these stories, hearing all the promises, hearing of the hope that was coming, and he's waiting and he's righteous and he's devout and the Spirit of God revealed to him that he wouldn't die until he saw the Lord's Christ. What a promise.

You see, the journey of hope in the world begins in Genesis but it doesn't end there. Yes, there's lots of twists and turns through human history as they await the Messiah. Isaiah promises a son to be given. Those are the words that Eve spoke, right? "This is it. This is my son." You think of Rachel in Genesis 30:6, "God has given me a son. We're waiting for a son." "Unto us a son is born," Isaiah says. And here a son is brought into the temple and the Spirit says, "This is the Son. This is the Son of God, the Lamb of God who's going to take away the sin of the world."

You see, this longing for years and years and years for finally the consolation to come for the hope to be fulfilled is the same type of longing and waiting that writers and authors put into their stories. You think of "The Chronicles of Narnia," it's always winter but it's never Christmas. The hope is never realized. We've been waiting for years and years and years.

And Simeon takes Jesus up into his arms and he says, "Lord, now you're letting me depart in peace." His name shall be called Prince of Peace. "For my eyes have seen your salvation." We've been studying in John the fact that Jesus was in the flesh. "The Word became flesh." The second person of the Trinity became flesh. "He dwelt among us." And we see it right here in the Christmas story. Don't let it pass you by when you read it on Christmas morning. "I have seen your salvation." It's a person. It's Jesus. He's the one that we've been waiting for. He's the one that we've hoped for and longed for.

The long-awaited one has come. The angels have announced his birth to the shepherds. Foreigners have traveled across the country to bring him gifts and to worship him. Kings and lords who don't submit tremble in fear because of the excitement and joy produced by this one. He lives a perfect life. No one is able to bring a charge against this one as he lives his life, even when they hire professional liars. Jesus speaks with an authority that the religious leaders look and say, "Well, who taught this person that?" The hope is fulfilled because it's the Son of God. The waiting and longing for God to fulfill his promises is here. Paul says in 2 Corinthians, "All of God's promises are yes and amen in Jesus Christ."

"We have seen him with our eyes." Simeon's faith that God would fulfill his promises is now sight. His faith has become sight. "I have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples." This isn't just for Israel, it's for all peoples, "a light for the revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel." He is an Israelite above all.

"Hope has come to earth. We've waited for him." And realizing that Jesus has come, the long-awaited Savior changes how we live. We have a hope that does not put us to shame. This hope in Jesus Christ changes how we weep, not without hope because we have a hope of resurrection. It changes how we battle indwelling sin, we have hope that one day that sin will be put to death finally. We have hope of salvation that can change our children, that can change our neighbors, that can change nations because Jesus Christ is the eternal hope that we've been waiting for. We have hope in eternal life that allows us to store up treasure in heaven rather than being concerned about our earthly treasures.

When you and I have hope in Jesus it transforms how we live moment by moment. We live in the moment for eternity. We don't just look for the gratification right here for us, we look to see how will this impact eternity because we have a hope that is set to eternity not just here. We become hope-filled people. More than that, we become hope-fulfilled people.

Christ has come. He is here but he didn't stay on earth. Jesus lived, he died, was buried and is now at the right hand of the Father but he didn't leave his people alone. You see this fourfold hope. Yes, we saw the promise and we waited, and now we see Jesus has come to earth and we have hope but what about right here, right now? What's my hope right now? So the third part is a present hope, the Spirit given. Let me read to you Ephesians 1:12-14. I'll start in verse 11. Paul says to the Ephesians, "In him we have obtained an inheritance," that is, our salvation, "having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory." We hoped in Christ and now we're given a present hope. The Spirit of God communicates that to us right here, right now.

You see, when Jesus was raised from the dead and he was about to ascend into heaven, the disciples said, "When are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" And Jesus said, "That's not for you to know. You wait for the Holy Spirit to come upon you and you take this good news to everyone." Those who trust in Jesus receive power from above, the indwelling Comforter, the one by whom when life comes crashing down around us and the desires of our life are not fulfilled, we can cry out, "Abba, Father," and we're assured of being heard because we have the Spirit. When sin overwhelms us and we don't see to have a way of victory, we know the Spirit helps us put to death the sin that is within us.

The fulfilled hope is not simply a hope that we have in the past and we just keep looking back, it's right here, right now for us because we have the Spirit of God in us, people of God. We are indwelt with the third person of the Trinity. We have hope. Yes, we can look back and we see that the Messiah has come but we rejoice that we have the Spirit of God right now today. You see, tomorrow when we wake up and our kids don't listen to us again, and our spouses speak a harsh word to us or ignore us, and our bosses and coworkers lie about us, the good news that Jesus came needs to be communicated to us in that moment. The hope that we have that Jesus came needs to be given to us right there and that's where the Spirit comes in. We have hope in Christ and the Spirit of God communicates that to us. "You are sealed. You have an eternal hope that will be yours. Don't fall away." He is our present hope for moment by moment.

Peter says that we need to be ready to give an answer for the hope that's in us. How do we do that? If you read through the New Testament, one of the greatest evidences of having the Spirit indwelling you is what you speak, and when Peter says you need to be ready to give an answer for the hope that's within you, you need to say, "Lord, I need you to give

me the words. I need you to allow me to articulate the scriptures. I need you to help me to speak the gospel boldly without fear." And that's where the Spirit is, he's within us to help us understand the scriptures, to speak them boldly, confidently, and as we keep in step with the Spirit that hope becomes more and more vibrant in the fruit that he produces in our life, the love, the joy, the peace, the gentleness, the kindness; it begins to grow because the Spirit is communicating that hope to us. But we don't just grow alone, we grow within the community of the church. It moves us every day to become more like Jesus Christ.

We need to be reminded of this, this hope, on a consistent basis because this world so quickly falls into despair. We need real, solid, get out of bed hope that's unwavering. Men, you and I need a hope that is rock solid so that we no longer need to lash out in anger for a sense of control in life. Ladies, you need a hope that is so sure that it doesn't matter what the world says about your image or your Instagram photos because you have worth and value in Jesus Christ. We need a hope that lasts beyond the middle age crisis that reaches past all of those things into eternity, and that's what Jesus has for us and he communicates it to us through his Spirit that he's given to us, hope that will never put us to shame.

But our world is so rampant with a lack of hope. It says if you're a success then you have your hope, then everything will be okay if you're a success. Ever since I was a boy I've been captivated by the Olympics and the Ironman events, these people who spend their life year after year, day after day training for one event that will be over in a couple of seconds. Maybe it'll last for a week or two if they're in a tournament, but they've spent years, their whole life training up for this one event and then a lot of them fall off into the unknown, into depression. There was one lady who was an Ironman athlete and she won the competition six times and she tells the story that she fell into depression for weeks and weeks at a time after she was at the pinnacle.

The hope that the world offers doesn't last, Christian. The hope that you have in Jesus Christ is fulfilled and it's given to you and communicated to you through the Holy Spirit. You have a hope to offer to the world. Be ready to give an answer. Be ready to show that hope and the joy in the way that you live. You see, we've just spent this last week saying thank you and counting our blessings, and then on Friday we all went and looked for the greatest deal that would actually help us fulfill that hope that we really didn't think we had. That's how fast the world's hope goes away but we have a fourfold hope that I'm hoping to weave for you. God gave a promise in Genesis. It was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. We have the hope of the Spirit given to us right now today but, folks, there's a future hope, a future hope of the coming King.

Leaders often bring hope with them whether it's on the political realm or on the sports field or even in fictional stories. There's always a leader who's coming to bring hope whether it's Disney's "The Lion King" and the message is the king has returned, or whether it's J. R. R. Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings," the last book is the return of the king. There's hope when this leader comes back. When the king comes back there's hope.

And we are waiting for the King to return and to put all things right. We are waiting for the fulfillment of all things to be made new.

Listen to how the Apostle John writes of this in Revelation. He says,

1 ... I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6 And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.

What a vision. John sees the new heaven and the new earth and we're given this glimpse into eternity. And we think of Isaiah when little children are able to play with reptiles that would normally strike out and kill them, and when lions lay down with lambs, and all things are made right and the nations aren't fighting against each other and there's peace. And if you have a pulse here today, in your heart you should be saying, "But it's not like that yet because it's not like that in my house, it's not like that in my own heart. There's war, there's conflict, things are falling apart. When," should be the cry of your heart, "When are all things going to be made new? When is this going to happen? I have a hope but things just seem to be falling apart everywhere!" Creation joins you in that cry for the creation, Paul says, was subjected to futility not willingly but because of him who subjected it in hope. Creation knows the revealing of the sons of God is coming so it's crying out but not futility, not emptily. There is going to be a fulfillment of this hope.

They're waiting and just like the prophets of old who for hundreds of years waited and waited and waited, Christian, you and I are waiting too. We are waiting for the King to come back. We are waiting for him to set all things right. Yes, we have a hope that we look back to but we also have a hope that we look forward to, a hope when everything will be made right, the longing for the Prince of Peace to bring peace to this world. We wait for him to defeat death. You remember all those genealogies, "And he died. And he died. And he died." And John says death will be no more.

You see, when we offer hope to the world, we don't offer a slim, easy, digestible hope that goes away in a minute. The Bible and God presents a life-altering, life-answering, life-giving hope that changes everything about us. You see, when everything's falling apart we can answer why and we can say, "But it's not always going to be like that because there's a King coming who's going to put it all right and he died for you." We

offer hope that is sure whether we see it in our lifetime or not. Dear Christian, you might not be here when Jesus returns but it's sure. It's just like the prophets of old. You might not see it but you can be excited about it in faith and know that God keeps his promises because he always has.

As we finish, we see this fourfold hope is strong because we look back to the promise that was given, we look back to see that it was fulfilled and we have a hope right now in the Spirit of God who communicates that to us, but we long for the hope to be complete. I want us to think about the hope that we offer to those around us. That hope should put us into a deeper and greater trust in who our God is. When we think of the hope that Simeon has waited for his whole life and he says, "Lord, I've seen your salvation that you have prepared in your time," but Paul says that in Galatians, "in the fullness of time God sent his Son." God is working in his time and we are his people and we trust and wait for him. Is that the hope that we offer to one another? Are you waiting in hope? Are you waiting with complaining or are you waiting with hope? And dear Christian, we need one another because there's days when it looks like everything is going to fall apart and I need my brother or sister to come and say, "Wait in hope. He's coming. The King is coming."

Not only that but we have an answer for when life is not all as it should be because we're waiting. We don't have to act like we don't know what's going on but we live in hope that Jesus is coming, that he's going to make all things new, that King Jesus is coming and we offer that hope by saying, "Submit to him. Believe in him. Follow him." Maybe you're here and you understand what hoping is because you're hopping from hope to hope. "The next relationship, the next job, the next car, the next phone or whatever, that'll give me hope, that'll give me reason to live and to get up and go to the next thing in life," and you've been searching for years because it doesn't satisfy. Come to Jesus. He is the one who will satisfy. He is the one who offers living water. Did you hear it at the end of Revelation when he said, "I looked and I saw this city," and Jesus says, "I will give them to drink." And that's what he says here on earth, "Come to me all you who are thirsty and heavy-burdened and I will give you rest, I will give you hope."

A fourfold hope: a promise given, a promise fulfilled, the presence of the Spirit, and a future hope in the King returning. Christian, we have a strong hope. Let's live in light of that.

Pray with me.

Father, as we come before you remembering, remembering that the hope and the desire of the nations has come and now you're seated at the right hand of the Father and we wait and we long for your return, may we be people who live with hope. And we pray these things in your name. Amen.