

# Hope In The Waiting

It is the season of Advent. This first Sunday of Advent 2023 we are talking about hope in the waiting.

## Introduction

This is the season of the year when we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. The Church has traditionally celebrated each Sunday in December leading up to Christmas Day by teaching and contemplating on four of the main themes that Jesus brought to us. These things are hope, peace, joy, and love.

Each week we will be talking about one of these topics leading up to Christmas when we celebrate the birth of Jesus. We also light a candle each Sunday. You will see that we have the first candle lit. This candle is for hope and leads us to today's encouraging message, hope in the waiting.

2000 years ago Israel and the world were ready for a mighty move of God. God had been silent to Israel for 400 years. Israel had been occupied, first by the Greeks then by the Romans. They were oppressed and longed for the freedom they once had. The people anticipated a deliverance from God and expected the Messiah to come and free them.

The promise of hope found in the scripture was what they were clinging to. There was hope in the waiting.

## The Promise of Hope

We all need hope. Without hope, we will die. We have to be able to look to tomorrow and know that it could be better. Imagine living under military occupation. Imagine not being allowed to live according to the customs of your ancestors. That was Israel 2000 years ago.

It wasn't the first time Israel faced adversity. We read throughout the Old Testament in the historical books about Israel's calamities and captivities. One of the wonderful things about God through all of Israel's trials and tribulations is he did not forget them nor did he forsake them. He did allow their captivity and troubles to teach them lessons. However, he always loved them and encouraged them.

One such instance was when Israel was invaded and taken over by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. After conquering Israel, he had the Israelites carted off to Babylon where they lived in captivity. This happened in the year 597 BC. During this time God was speaking to his people through the prophet Jeremiah.

God was using Jeremiah to point out the ways that Israel had strayed from him and how they needed to return to him. One of the pivotal things God spoke to the Israelites through Jeremiah is found in Jeremiah 29:11 which says:

### Jeremiah 29:11

(11) For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

This is a promise of hope that the Israelites clung to. God does not want to punish his people. He has more grace than we can imagine, but, we must also detach ourselves from our selfish sinful nature.



We can endure the trials and tribulations of today and see past our current situations with hope for a future because God promises a hope and a future. But this hope is not inherently within us, it is a gift of God, just as Jesus is. Jeremiah tells us that God will give us a hope and a future. There is no hope without God.

The Apostle Paul also writes to the Hebrews living in Rome about hope. Let's read Romans 15:13:

Romans 15:13

(13) May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul's prayer reinforces the idea that hope is from God. He is the one to give it to us. We merely need to pray and ask God for hope. But not just any hope, pray for an expectant hope.

### Living in Expectation

Each day we must face life in this fallen and dying world. We read in scripture about the end of times. We read about the fall of this world and the final battle between good and evil. That day is coming. Each day leading to it will get worse and worse until Jesus returns.

There are some practical things we can do to keep moving forward and not fall prey to the devil's schemes and ways. We must believe God's promises to deliver us, know that God has our best interests in mind, and know that God has a plan and a purpose for each one of us. We must live in expectation standing on God's promise of hope in the waiting.

Part of having hope while we wait for God's timing to play out is expecting God to do great things in and through us. Jesus is the greatest gift God has given us and the second is the Holy Spirit. The gifts of the Holy Spirit were given to us so that we can be God's instruments in this world. We are his ambassadors.

We cannot live with an expectant hope without God and this means we must stay in contact with God. Staying in contact with God is simply spending time reading our Bibles, spending time daily in prayer, and spending time reflecting Jesus to everyone we meet. Doing these things daily will draw us closer to God and result in living a life in expectation and give us hope while we wait for Jesus' return.

Spending time reading our Bibles will show us that time and again God has delivered his people. He has brought them out of the trials and tribulations that they have often brought on themselves. God wants to see us live victorious lives. He wants to see us all live victorious lives. The only way to do that is if we reflect Jesus to those around us who do not know him.

We must live in expectation with hope that can only come from God as we prepare for Jesus' return.

### Advent as a Season of Preparation

We celebrate Advent because it gives us something tangible to use to focus on Jesus. There is nothing special about lighting a candle each week other than to remind us of the aspect of Christ that we are reflecting on that week.



Use this season of Advent to prepare you to live a better life for the Lord. This is your chance to start fresh. It is a great time to look at your own heart and ask the Lord to show you areas that need to be addressed or cleaned up.

Every homeowner knows that there are regular tasks and maintenance you must do to keep your home in good condition. Regular cleaning, painting, and repairs are necessary to keep your home livable. Our hearts and lives are the same way.

We must do regular things to keep our hearts clean and our lives reflecting Christ every day. A few moments ago we talked about reading our Bibles and spending time in prayer daily. This helps us prepare our hearts for Jesus to take up residence in our hearts and it helps prepare us to reflect Jesus in all we say and do.

We must also continue to be the hands and feet of Jesus each day wherever we find ourselves, whether at home, at school, at work, or in the marketplace.

### Conclusion

Having hope in the waiting is easy when we are spending time with God each day. He understands where we are and what we are going through. Nothing surprises God. He sees our hearts, knows our attitudes, and because of Jesus understands our temptations.

To have hope in the waiting we must get closer to the Lord. This can only be done by spending time with him. You can do that by reading your Bible daily, spending time in prayer daily, and serving others daily in Jesus' name.

Something I like to do in December is read the gospel of Luke. There are 24 days in December leading up to Christmas and there are 24 chapters in Luke. Each day in December read the corresponding chapter in Luke. December 1<sup>st</sup> read Luke chapter 1, December 2<sup>nd</sup> read Luke chapter 2, and so on. This will help you prepare to celebrate Jesus' birthday on Christmas day and it will also help prepare you for life every day as we patiently wait for Jesus' return.

There is hope in the waiting and it is found in Jesus.

