

# **“Hope: Past, Present, Future”**

*December 3, 2023*

Luke 2:25 - 38

## **I. Introduction:**

1 Corinthians 15:17 says, “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.”

Because of its importance, we need to take time to reflect on the meaning of the birth of the Savior of the world—without Jesus’ birth, there could be no death or resurrection of Jesus Christ and as 1 Cor. 15:19 says, “We ~~are~~ would need to be pitied more than all men.” Just as people prepare their homes and other surroundings for Christmas—just look around the sanctuary, we need to prepare our hearts for the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior. Every year the commercial world reminds us earlier and earlier that we need to prepare for Christmas. They want your wallet and what’s inside it; God wants you and what’s in your heart. It’s difficult to do, but I would challenge each one of you to get away from all the commercialism bombarding you daily and take time during these days of Advent to review the real Christmas story. Prepare your hearts and minds for Christmas—the birth of the Savior of the world.

## **II. Hope in the Past—*The Messiah is coming.***

As Leah and Bob read earlier, one of the meanings of Christmas is hope—hope in the past, the present and the future. Christian hope isn’t wishful thinking—“I hope I win the lottery,” rather, Christian hope is to expect with confidence. Before the birth of Jesus Christ, there was hope—a confidence—in the coming of the Messiah, i.e. “*His Advent.*” Like Simeon and Anna, those who feared and trusted God were looking forward to the coming of God’s Anointed One—the Messiah; the Christ. This was their hope. This is hope in the past—the Messiah is coming.

Throughout the Old Testament, there were over 100 prophecies concerning the One to be sent from God. The first promise is found in Genesis 3:15. After being caught in their sin of disobedience, Adam, Eve, and the serpent were standing before God. Since Satan had been the tempter, God cursed him and said, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” From the beginning, God said—God promised—that the offspring of the

woman (*notice it wasn't "woman and man" just "woman"*), the offspring of the woman—the Promised One—would crush Satan's head. Jesus' death and resurrection would do just that—Satan would lose his fight for power. **Hebrews 2:14** says, *"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too, i.e., Jesus Christ, shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil."* Through His death and resurrection, Jesus crushed Satan's head.

In **Deuteronomy 18:15** there is another prophesy of the Messiah—another reason for hope. As Moses was coming to the end of his life, he told those who had followed him through the Wilderness that *"The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him."* In **Isaiah 7:14** we have one of many familiar prophesies that are read this time of year: *"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."* In **Micah 5:2** are the familiar words: *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."* These are just some of God's promises to His people; giving names, times, and places. God's Anointed One—the Messiah—wasn't just a wishful thought, He was coming. For those living in the past, this was their hope—their confidence in a future event. The writer of Hebrews put it this way in **Hebrews 11:13**, *"All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance."*

During the passing years, false teachers and false prophets led many astray but there was always a remnant that had hope—a confidence—that God would raise up the promised Messiah—Someone to bring peace and prosperity to Israel. Simeon and Anna, from our Scripture reading this morning, were some of those who had been waiting for the Promised One. They had confidence--hope in God. Through the years, they had continued to watch for His coming. God rewarded them for their patient waiting by allowing them to hold the Savior of the world in their arms. God often rewards those who wait patiently.

Simeon and Anna weren't the only ones looking for the Messiah. **Turn to John 1:43-49**. Although it was thousands of years after the time of Adam & Eve and hundreds of years after Isaiah & Micah, Philip and

Nathaniel were still looking for the Messiah. They hadn't given up their hope. They continued to look until they were rewarded—they saw the Promised One, the Messiah, and were called to follow Him.

Through His prophets and the Old Testament, God had promised that the Messiah—the Christ—was coming. **Numbers 23:19** says, “God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfil?” Those who trusted God could look forward with hope, with confidence for the coming Messiah. It was as good as done. For the few that were still watching, their hope—their confidence was rewarded. God kept His promise in the past.

### **III. Hope in the Present**

The Messiah—Jesus the Christ—has come and gone, but today we can have hope, too—hope--confidence in the present.

**A. First, you can be confident of having eternal life—right now**, today as well as into the future. **Turn to Romans 10:9-10.** “**You ARE saved**”—this isn't something that happens in the future; it's not something that **might** happen if . . . You **ARE** saved from an eternity in hell the instant you “**believe**” and “**confess**.” You can be confident of that—God said so. The Apostle John wrote in **1 John 5:13**, “**I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.**” As Paul told the Philippian jailor in **Acts 16:31**, “**Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.**” This is a promise for today not just the future. This is a hope based on God's Word—not some man's word. The instant you believe, the Holy Spirit comes to live in you—you have eternal life. Notice by the way, that works—doing things—has no part in “earning” eternal life.

**B. You can be confident that you are a child of God.** You may not be a mover or shaker of the world, but, if Jesus is your Lord and Savior, you are special, you are part of God's family. In **Galatians 4:7** the Apostle Paul put it this way, “**You are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.**” You can be confident that you are a child of God and as **Romans 8:16** says “**heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.**” You aren't the 5<sup>th</sup> or the 50<sup>th</sup> or the 1000<sup>th</sup> child. You are a child of first rank or standing, you have God's might, wisdom, wealth, and love at your disposal, all you have to do is call out to

Him as His son or daughter. James 1:5 says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”

**C. As God’s heir, you can be confident of God’s protection.** God is in control of everything that comes your way. He is never caught off guard; there is nothing that is too big for Him. Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” God is smarter than you and stronger than you and He loves you; He isn’t going to allow something that will only hurt you to come into your life. Our hope in God is really a confidence in His goodness and His promises—all of which we find in His love letter to us—the Bible.

#### **IV. Hope: Future—*Jesus is coming again.***

There’s hope in the past, there’s hope in the present, and, finally, we can have hope in the future. There are other prophesies, promises from God, which have not yet been fulfilled. Isaiah 2:2-3 says, “In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.’ The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” In Matthew 24:44 Jesus said, “So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.” Turn to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.

This is our future hope—Jesus is coming again. Just like Simeon and Anna, Philip and Nathaniel, the prophets, and the people of the Old Testament, we need to be watching for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent of Christ. He is coming for His children, but He is also coming back, not as a Lamb to be slaughtered, but to establish His throne and kingdom that will be without end. And we, as His children, will reign with Him forever. Revelation 17:14 says, “They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings-- and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.” This is our future hope: *Jesus is coming again, and we will be with Him.*

## V. Conclusion:

At Jesus' 1<sup>st</sup> Advent many didn't recognize Him as the Messiah—they had given up hope—they didn't have confidence in God or His Word. We must not give up our hope or confidence in Christ's second coming—His 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent. God's promises concerning the 1<sup>st</sup> Advent—the coming of the Messiah—were fulfilled in His time; [Galatians 4:4](#) says, “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman;” so we can have hope—we can have confidence—that those promises concerning the present and the future are true now and will come true in the future—“when the time has fully come.”

So, if we have hope—if we truly believe that Jesus Christ is coming back, what should we do? *So, what are you going to do?* Should we sell all we have and go up on a mountain top and wait? Should we live for today and not plan for tomorrow? Let me give you a hypothetical situation. Suppose you are the parent of a child, and you have to go out for a while. You tell your child that he may stay home, but you want him to clean his room before he goes outside to play. Then you leave. You are gone for a couple of hours and when you get back, your child is outside playing but his room hasn't been touched—he didn't expect you to come back quite so soon. What would your response be?

We are like that child. Jesus gave us a job to do when He went away—do you know what it is? In [Matthew 28:19-20](#) Jesus said, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” As a child of God, you need to be ready for His coming—His 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent. You need to be busy doing the task He has given you to do (making disciples, baptizing them, teaching them). You need to use the talents and gifts God has given you so that when He comes again you won't stand before Him embarrassed. Your confidence—your hope in the future needs to be just as strong as your faith in the past and present. Are you really anticipating Jesus' return at any minute? Remember, in the last chapter in the last book of the Bible in [Revelation 22:12](#) Jesus said, “Behold, I am coming soon!” Do you have hope?

## Communion Devotion – December 2023

1 Corinthians 15:12-20

Not everyone can have the same confident hope of the future, since not everyone is a child of God. When we talked about our present hope earlier this morning, the verses we read from **Romans 10**, as well as others like **Ephesians 2:8-9**, tell us that the only way a person can become a child of God, and have a hope of an eternity in heaven, is to believe that Jesus paid the penalty for that person's sins and to make Him his or her Lord and Savior. There is no other way. If you have been trying to earn your way into heaven, it's not too late—accept God's gift of eternal life and have confidence in all of His promises. **John 3:36** says, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.” This is God's promise and our hope—our confidence for the present and the future.

**1 Timothy 1:15** says, “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” We come to the Communion table this morning to remember and celebrate the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior—Jesus Christ. “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” and we know—the Bible tells us—that if we believe on Him, we will be saved—saved from an eternity in hell and saved to an eternity in heaven. If Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, this is the hope—the confidence—the surety—that you do have, and we can celebrate together. If you do have this hope, then whether or not you are a member of TBC, we invite you to join us in the time of celebration and thanksgiving.

Jesus appointed the broken bits of bread/cracker and the juice to be reminders to His children of the results of His love. Jesus allowed His body to be mauled and beaten and nailed to a cross so that the debts of our sin could be paid. My sin and your sin caused the death of the Savior of the world. This was and still is an amazing love. As a child of God; as you think of what He has done for you, what is your response to His love? Are you going to continue to live your life in your own selfish way or are you going to allow the Holy Spirit to change you so that you can become more like the One who died for you?