

The Gift of Hope - Romans 5:1-11
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

Well, its started. Have you made your Christmas list yet? What do you want for Christmas? There is a little bit of Ralphie from *A Christmas Story* in all of us. At the beginning of the season we have our wishes, and the month of December represents this long season of waiting to see if the gifts under the tree will match the longings of the heart. Or at the least, we watch our kids go through this longing and dreaming, having put their hope in parents, grandparents, and Santa to bring their Christmas list to reality. As we get older our "Christmas list" changes a bit, but longings and desires are still there. This is week one in a new Advent series we are calling *All I want for Christmas*. The Advent season is a season of waiting, longing, expecting. On one level, it is waiting for Christmas day and the announcement that Jesus truly did come in the world. This waiting aligns us with the Old Testament saints who receive the promises of the future Messiah who would usher in God's Kingdom of justice and righteousness. They lived between their redemption from slavery in Egypt and their future redemption given by the coming King. But they waited generations for the fulfillment of these promises. Advent culminates in the celebration fo the birth of that King, Jesus born in Bethlehem. Yet, Advent is also a reminder that we too are waiting. Christ has come, bringing us redemption. On the other hand, we are still broken people, yes, redeemed and save broken people, but the taint of sin is still alive and well in us. So we are broken people living in a broken world, and we are also awaiting an advent of Christ into the world. That wait has lasted 2,000 years and counting. Yet, we can declare that just as sure we are that Christmas Day will arrive, so will that day. The final day when Christ returns and all the promises of God are fulfilled in its fullness.

So Advent comes with four major themes, hope, love, peace, and joy. Each week we light candles as reminders of the Old Testament people's longings, reminders of what was brought to us in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Reminders of how we who have trusted in Jesus have had these great themes poured into our lives through our faith in Jesus. And reminders that all of these will one day be fulfilled in fullness when Jesus comes again. So here is my encouragement for you as families. If you don't already have a family advent candle, make one together, and light the candles as the month proceeds, remembering these themes and the promises that are wrapped in them. What we will find that the coming of Jesus truly did bring us all we really want for Christmas.

The first promise is hope. Hope is a tricky word, because by definition hope is the expectation of a reality that is different from the one being currently experienced. Suffering, hardship, pain, heartache are part of living in this world. Furthermore, if we read the words of Jesus, He is actually clear that we should expect tribulation in the world, and the rest of Scripture concurs. Often hope is little more than a positive mind set or wishful thinking. "Everything happens for a reason, and things will get better," we might say patting someone who is suffering on the back. Yet, what is the basis of that sentiment? In all honesty, this sort of hope is a dangerous thing, if it is rooted in self-confidence or the wishes that some cosmic fairy will make things better.

Yet, throughout the Scriptures hope is both promised and commanded. We are told to put our hope in the Lord, and "those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength (Isaiah 40:31). Biblical hope is not optimism, a simple belief that things will get better. In fact, Biblical hope at times accepts the reality that our lives are hard and they may not improve. Yet we hope, because the hardship puts is in a state of waiting that becomes the petri dish in which Christ works out the beauty of our redemption through the transformation of character that makes us more and more like Jesus. And the hardship comes with a litany of promises made by God that are true for us because Christ has come and is coming. We enter into those promises through our faith in Jesus which has made us right with God. What makes hope in

our Christian experience is not the sentiment of hope, but the beauty of the One in whom we hope. Hope looks back knowing that God is faithful, and he who proclaimed it will do it (1 Thessalonians 5:24). The Old Testament saints hoped for the day Christ would be born and redemption would come to Israel, but the basis of that hope was the Exodus story and their deliverance. Now we wait in expectation, but our waiting is tied to God's prior faithfulness in history and in our lives. Christ was born, died, and rose. And we have been saved and rescued. We know God is faithful. But hope also looks forward, not in positive wishful thinking. Christian hope anticipates the absolute fulfillment of all God's promises and the beautiful future reality that our relationship with Jesus will one day be face to face. So light a candle this week thanking God for the hope we have in Jesus.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Psalm 56	Psalm 57	Psalm 58	Psalm 59	Psalm 60	Matthew 1	Matthew 2

Reading from this past week: Romans 5:1-11

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Romans 5:1-11

Family Worship

Song - *Joy to the World/Our God Saves*

https://youtu.be/xxg_cwEX0ro

Gospel Project

Unit: Into Captivity

Story: Every Person Matters

Big Picture Question: What makes people special?

Answer: People are special because we are made in God's image, as male and female, to know Him.

Scripture: Psalm 139

New City Catechism

Question #48: What is the church?

Answer: A community elected for eternal life and united by faith, who love, follow, learn from, and worship God together.

Verse: 2 Thessalonians 2:13

Scripture

Romans 5:1-11

- What is hope? Why is hope potentially both a dangerous and beautiful thing in our lives?
- Where does the world place their hope?
- What is the basis of Christian hope? How does the birth of Jesus connect us to this hope?
- How has God been faithful to you in the past? How is God's faithfulness foundational for us to experience true hope?
- What are some of the promises God has made? How does hope in the future fulfillment of these actually work backward, bringing heaven to us now?

Prayer

*This is the first week of Advent. If you have a family advent wreath, light the first candle and give thanks for the hope we have because Jesus came into the world.

*Pray for our Genesis Kids family movie event this weekend.