

Our Hope: Its Arrival and Its Coming

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[0 : 00] I get the privilege of kind of kicking off the Advent season. Advent was something we never really did in my home, but we definitely celebrated the birth of Christ.

! And it's something that I definitely enjoy doing every year now with this church body. And as Nathan said, it just really means Advent is just a Latin for the coming of or the arrival of an important person or event.

And there's no greater person in the universe than Jesus our Messiah and no greater event than Him coming to earth and walking among us as a man.

So Christ, our King, He has come and He is coming. That's where I sort of get, I guess, the title for this message that I sort of created late last night in my head.

But really, it's our hope, it's arrival, and it's coming. Our hope, it's arrival, and it's coming. So the plea for this time is that during the holiday season, or I'll call it Christmas season, for those of you who might be offended by that, but whatever you want to call it, we're tempted to place our hope in so many places that really just don't matter.

[1 : 17] A lot of counterfeit hopes, if you would. And it's a time for us to embrace the true meaning of what we try to celebrate this time of the year, which is our hope is in Christ and not in just the counterfeit, superficial hopes that are offered to us during this holiday time.

And on the other hand, I know for a lot of people, actually, this can be a sad time. Christmas season can be a very sad time.

You've lost someone in your past that this just brings back painful memories of. It's a time when we look back and remember good times and kind of are sad that those times seem to not be present with us right now.

And we're going through that. And a lot of people need just hope restored. You've had a setback in life. Something hasn't worked out, and you're filled with sorrow.

So the prayer is that God would fill us with hope this morning, renew our hope, overflowing to where we are empowered to go forward for the advancement of the gospel, for the glory of Christ.

[2 : 28] So really just four things this morning we're going to walk through together. And one simply is our need of a sure hope. Our need of hope. Our need of a sure hope.

So many of us, well, I should, excuse me, all of us, myself included, have taken our hopes and misplaced it in things that could not deliver.

Over the course of our lives, we've all done this. We've put our hope in something, and it let us down. It disappointed us. We put our hopes in a person, in a relationship, something that we thought was going to deliver us from present hard circumstances, and we thought this person is going to, is where I'm putting all my hope in.

It's going to fix all my wrongs and deliver me out of this hard situation. Others placing hope in success, like in their future. You know, like anything from promotion at work to having a salary raised to having a lot of money in the bank.

You're hoping to get into a certain neighborhood, a club, a college, a fraternity, a sorority, a sports team, whatever it is. Like you're putting your hope in those things.

[3 : 41] Like this is going to satisfy me. This is going to give me life. And we all have been let down by those things. Ask people who thought that at one point in their lives, and they'll tell you it didn't deliver.

However, it always left us empty. So last night, I was out to eat with my wife and some of her friends, and I kind of threw this out there.

I was like thinking about using this as an illustration today. And I'm just going to go for it anyway. I said, how many of you have seen the movie Lonesome Dove? And they were like.

And that's what's wrong with America. And so I know that some of my guys and some of my boys know Lonesome Dove, but it's just an old great Western with Tommy Lee Jones and Robert Duvall. Very hardcore cowboy movie. And in the movie, though, there's like a young damsel in distress named Lorena. And she is stuck in this little border town and really wants to get out of that border town and go to San Francisco.

[4 : 48] Her hope is she wants to go to San Francisco. There's all these incredible people and things going on. But she's stuck in this Texas-Mexican border town called Lonesome Dove.

And she puts her hope in this kind of hard, old, dusty cowboy named Jake. And she's putting her hopes in this guy to take her to San Francisco, not this Jake.

He's a Jake Spoon in the movie. So she's putting her hope in this cowboy to take her to San Francisco. But the older, more rugged, more tender cowboy in the movie, Augustus McCray, played by Robert Duvall, he's a kind-hearted cowboy.

And he tells her, knowing that Jake's really kind of a lowlife and a scoundrel, he tells her, Jake's too leaky of a vessel to put much hope in. And then he goes on, he says, but then again, we all have leaks after all.

So we put our hope in leaky vessels. And the Bible has a term for that. It's broken cisterns that hold no water. So deep theology and Lonesome Dove.

[6 : 01] And many of you have placed your hope and are placing your hope in leaky vessels. And they're going to let you down. They're going to disappoint you every single time.

I have a friend that some of you know. And he feels like if you meet this guy, you just think this man is like a military machine. He is a walking human weapon in every sense of the way.

And his hope was to get into this very elite group in our military. And he had like gone through things that probably 99.9% of the people fell out of.

And then he got to the very end and didn't make it. And he is like seriously crushed right now.

Seriously going through that and trusting the Lord. But really having a hope in something that he had felt like his whole life was directed towards.

And all of us have experienced that serious letdown before. And a lot of us have lost hope completely. You've been thrown down to the ground so many times that you're scared to get back up.

[7 : 07] You're scared to even hope for anything anymore. Scared of being let down again. And there's many times when I was in the hospital and I was scared to hope that I actually might have a normal life.

Because I've been thrown down so many times. Every time I thought I was getting better, I wasn't. And once all of us have tasted the bitter disappointment, so many times our hearts get sick and crushed.

And the scripture says in Proverbs 13, Hope deferred makes the heart sick. But a desire fulfilled is a tree of life. So without hope, like we are sick.

Very sick. Our souls are. And in a lot of ways, when we talk about hope in our language, in the English language, most of the time, we're not really referring to it in the sense that God's word tells us.

We're usually almost substituting the word hope with something that's really just called wishful thinking. We desire, we push ourselves into something that we imagine and fantasize about that we want to happen.

[8 : 14] And we put all our efforts into that. It's what governs our beliefs and our decisions, but it's not real. Instead of actually looking at evidence and factual things that point to truth, we follow like the sinful desires of our hearts.

And we have wishful thinking, even though they're void of reality most of the time. But why is everything that way? You know? Why is it that whatever we put our hope in just always lets us down?

Always lets us down. Why are we all leaky vessels? Well, the answer, very simply, that most of you are very aware of, is that the scripture tells us that we all have exchanged the truth about God for a lie.

And we worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator who is blessed forever. So giving our hope and our love to the things of this world, so just say like horizontally instead of vertically, that seriously disorients us and leaves us to where we have no real hope at all.

We, instead of giving that to the immortal, invisible, the only God, instead of giving it to Him, we give it to people, to things, to junk, material stuff that's going to burn up one day and doesn't matter. [9 : 37] We put it there. And God calls this trading or this exchanging of our love and our hope in Him to the things of the world. He calls that idolatry in scripture.

So, in Jeremiah chapter 2, connecting it to what we said a minute ago about leaky vessels, forsaking God, the fountain of living waters, and carving out broken cisterns that hold no water. That's what we all have done. We've turned away from God to the world and said to the stuff in the world, give me only what God can give me. And it's disgusting. And we fail. And that's why our hope diminishes. So, instead of possessing fullness of life and possessing the love of God, listen to this.

Jonah chapter 2, verse 6. This is what Jonah says. He says, Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love.

[10 : 41] Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. So, our hopes are going to be destroyed if we turn to the things of this world, to anything at all, other than the only living God.

And in 700 B.C., the prophet Isaiah spoke about the same idea of our need for restoration and hope. Isaiah 64, verse 6, he says, We all have become one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are polluted garments.

We all fade away like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls upon your name. No one rouses himself to take hold of you. For you have hidden your face from us.

That's a big deal. In the Hebrew language, and in their culture at this time, to see God's face was the greatest blessing. The max, the best, to see God's face.

The worst was for God to hide His face from you in disfavor. And he's like, You have hidden your face from us and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities.

[11 : 51] So, 700 years before Christ came, there was a cry out for a need of a real hope to come to us. And so, where can we put it?

And that's the second thing. Number two is the source of our hope. And I just want you to see one verse. Look at Romans 15, verse 13. Romans 15, verse 13.

We've got one verse here, and then a main text we'll look at in just a minute. But the source of our hope, Romans 15, verse 13, is what it says. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit, you may abound in hope.

So, there's only one safe place, only one sure deposit that you can put your hope in, and that's not going to let us down.

It's not a leaky vessel. And that is like the only living God. That's the only thing. Nothing else can deliver.

[13 : 07] So, may the God of hope. So, God is both the source of our hope and the supplier of our hope. Paul says He is the God of hope, declaring something about the very essence of God.

Like, it's a part of who He is, His nature, His character. He is a God of hope. And so, He doesn't just inspire hope in us, like He is the author of the hope in us.

He doesn't just dispense out hope from Himself. He's like, it's a part of His very being, His very essence, His very character. And so, He is a God of hope for us to just dive into completely.

The only thing we can take sure confidence in. So, Christian hope, along like we just mentioned a minute ago, Christian hope is not wishful thinking. It's like the total opposite, actually.

Most of the ways that the Bible uses the words hope, both Old and New Testament, is opposite from how we ordinarily use it. It's used around 200 times, at least in the Old and New Testament.

[14 : 12] And as we begin to draw it out, you can kind of put together, more or less, a meaning of what biblical hope is. So, as always, for great definitions of things, look to John Piper, everybody says, this is what biblical hope is.

Here's a good definition, I think, expresses what the Scripture says. He says, hope is a confident expectation and desire for something good in the future.

a confident expectation and desire for something good in the future. So, hope implies looking forward to something in the future with joy, enthusiasm, and a big word, confidence.

So, you're not just, it's a real thing that you are sure is going to happen. But you're looking forward to it, a good thing, a desirable thing, and your confidence and your hope is in it.

So, the answer is hope in God, not cross your fingers and hope all turns out well. Psalm 62, verse 5 through 7, this is a description of the sure and confident hope we're talking about.

[15:26] This is David, and he says, for God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress.

I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation and my glory. My mighty rock, my refuge is in God. That's like a confident thing, like he is not going to let me down.

This is a sure deal. My full trust, full confidence is in God. So then, if God is a God of hope, and we are hopeless creatures, he has to find a way to initiate that with us.

He has to find a way to bring that hope to us, right? If you want to think of it that way. And that's where our Christ comes into the picture. That's where Jesus comes into the picture.

That's at least number three, which is the dawning of our hope. And here's our big text. Look at Luke chapter two. Incredible story in the gospel of Luke, after the birth of Christ.

[16:42] Kind of towards this similar thing that we look at towards Christmas. Just a very awesome story. And a little tip just for studying the Bible. I know sometimes like, like, like, let's say you're looking for a word like, thanks, or hope, or joy.

And you just go to the back of your Bible, look to the concordance, and find every, every verse that has the word in it. Like, it's not always the best way to study something. Just, just a tip there. But oftentimes, you may not see the word in a translation.

But, at least in terms of topical studies, look for stories that illustrate what that means. So, this is a story that illustrates what real hope is. It, it pictures it perfectly.

So, Luke chapter two, starting down in verse 22. And this is after the birth of Christ. And after the shepherds and the angels, you know, come and worship, worship God.

And finding the baby lying in a manger. All of that. This is after all that happens. And then, verse 22, we see, in this little text, example of two people, Simeon and Anna, that had an incredible life-giving hope and the Messiah.

[18:04] Verse 22, And when the time came for their purification, according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. As it was written in the law of the Lord, every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord and to offer a sacrifice according to what it said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. And this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel.

And the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple.

And when the parents brought in the child, Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word.

For my eyes have seen your salvation, that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light of revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory to your people Israel.

[19:30] And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is opposed.

A sword will pierce through your own soul also, so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed. And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanel, of the tribe of Asher.

She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years when she was a virgin. And then as a widow until she was 84.

So this is a lady up in the age. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour, she began to give thanks to God and speak of Him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

So here's a story of these two people. First, Simeon, probably a much older man. That's kind of how I envision it.

[20:39] No, it doesn't say that. He's waiting to kind of part from this world. And God tells him, like, I'm going to, you're not going to leave until you see the Messiah that I have promised.

And he was a good, devout man, giving himself daily over to the Lord. He was waiting for the consolation. So what Wes and Liz just sang about, the consolation of Israel, the comfort that God would bring to His people by sending someone to deliver them from their sins.

And he was trusting in the Old Testament messianic prophecies. This man knew the Scripture. He knew what the real Messiah coming would be like for the forgiveness of sins and for the salvation of the people.

If you see that, he said that this salvation will not just be for Israel. It will also be for the Gentiles, for the nations. So he spoke this over them. And then he then revealed to Mary that on that day, a sword will pierce your heart.

When you see your son crucified, you're going to suffer when you watch him die. And any mother would know how hard that would be. But then it goes on.

[21 : 54] It's like the Holy Spirit was empowering him to do all these things. And man, just such an awesome relationship with God that God had promised him, you won't die until you see him.

And then when they brought him up, he knew it was him. There he is. This is the one I've waited for. And he will bring salvation to the nations. So then you have Anna, this prophetess who came out and again spoke truth over him.

These people who had longed to see the real Messiah, not the false Messiah that so many in Israel have been waiting for, but the real Messiah to come and bring salvation from sin and death and to restore us back to God.

That's a, I mean, can you imagine just the waiting and the watching, the hope that they had to have to wait for God's Messiah to come. So that's like the incarnate hope.

So truth, or excuse me, joy and hope dawn on us at the incarnation. thousands of years after waiting to the redeemer, Christ came into the world and we know that he was Emmanuel, God with us.

[23 : 07] One of my favorite quotes, some of the college students have heard me use this before, but one of my favorite quotes about the incarnation is from St. Augustine probably in the fourth century.

This is what he says about Jesus. He took to himself what he was not while remaining what he was. He continued to be what he is while appearing to us as we are.

You have to almost look at it and dissect that about real more time. He took to himself what he was not, namely human flesh, while remaining what he was, while remaining in essence God.

he continued to be as he is, God, while appearing to us as we are in human flesh.

And so, this hope, as Romans says, Paul says this, this hope does not disappoint us. This hope does not put us to shame. Romans 5 and 6. This hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit whom he has given us.

[24 : 16] for while we were weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. So not when you had helped God to save yourself or gotten yourself in a certain mode where God could save you, it's while you were weak, while you were helpless, while you could do nothing, Christ came and died for you.

So, that is what we celebrate now, looking back on Christ's first coming into the world as a man, walking among us and then dying on the cross and then resurrecting from the dead.

So because of that, brings us to number four, the future of our hope. The future of our hope. So, maybe two more places for you to look, but I just kind of want you to see this.

1 John 3, towards the back of your Bible, in those last few epistles of John. 1 John 3, and go to verse 2.

So this is about the future of our hope. So we're celebrating, looking back at Christ's arrival and His humility, and now we're looking forward to Him returning in glory and majesty.

[25 : 29] 1 John 3, verse 2. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is, and everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure.

This is a text about the second coming of Christ. It's this idea that we place our hope on the second coming of the Lord. And when He comes, all the sin and all the stuff that you deal with right now, be gone.

And when you see Him, we will be like Him. We will become like what we were meant to be before the fall. It's incredible for people who have problems like me.

Like, I can't wait to that day. And on the other hand, it says this, do you know how you believe this? Like, I know if I give you a theology test and say, hey, do you believe in the second coming of Christ?

Most of you would say, yes, I do. Here's where it says it in the Bible. There you go. But the evidence that you believe that is in the next verse.

[26 : 48] Verse 3. Everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure. are you readying your soul for that day?

Are you readying your life? Are you just sort of putting it off like something that actually will not happen? Which proves that you actually don't believe it a lot of the time. We go through seasons. We go in and out of that. But I'm just saying that if our hope is real, we will prepare ourselves for that day. Preparing yourself for something very important for our bridegroom Christ to come back to take us to the marriage feast of the Lamb.

Are you readying yourself for that? Purifying yourself just as He is pure? So that is the hope that we have is He's going to come back and He's going to take us and death and sin will be no more.

So, in conclusion, just a few things to sort of latch on to to kind of work out a lot of this. In conclusion, we need to celebrate during this time leading up to Christmas and really always, but especially now, that we have a real, confident, sure hope in Christ.

[28 : 04] That He came to us and He is coming back. And to hold on to that hope and not let go. I don't know why I've just been thinking about so many movies lately. No idea. I haven't been watching many movies.

But the other one that I could latch on to and if you think I'm a bad Christian for watching this, just come talk to me later. But it is the Shawshank Redemption. One of my top faves.

It's a horror movie to watch, but like the message and the theme of the movie is incredible. And the theme of the movie really is hope. It's about this man, Andy Dufresne, who gets thrown in prison for life.

And he's innocent. He's an innocent man. And he's thrown in for life. He's there with a lot of guys who are guilty. But they threw him in the hole for several weeks where he couldn't do anything and just sat in the dark.

And when he got out, he said this, there are some places in this world that aren't made of stone that there's something inside of us that they can't get to.

[29 : 04] They can't take it away. They can't touch it. It's yours. And then Red, who's played by Morgan Freeman, his buddy, he says to him, what are you talking about?

And Andy replies, hope. And then Red says, hope? Let me tell you something, my friend. Hope is a dangerous thing. Hope can drive a man insane.

It's got no use on the inside of the prison. You better get used to that idea. So he's had his hope smashed so many times that he's like, just make your peace with it.

You're never getting out of here. Stop hoping in that. Are you going to go crazy? And then Andy refers to a friend of theirs who was released earlier, an older man who had committed suicide.

And he's like, like that? Like this guy? He lost hope and he died? And at the very end of the movie, both of them are out of prison. Andy ends up escaping and Red gets out and later on he writes him a letter and he says, Red, remember, hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things and no good thing ever dies.

[30 : 13] And so remembering that hope for us is a good thing. I used to write that on my hospital board in my room, like remembering that hope is a good thing. And then I would write underneath that, get busy living or get busy dying.

And every day I had to choose that. Like, are you going to just lay here and are you going to die or are you going to get up and are you going to fight? And so during this time, a few things you can do. Be devoted to reading God's Word over the next few weeks and always, but like if you're struggling with that, use this time to hone in on it. Give yourself over to the reading and meditating in the Scripture and God's Word, asking Him to use that to renew your hope.

You know, like many of you are dry and dead and hopeless and you're like, I don't know why. Well, it's very, very elementary you to think, but most of the time you're dry and dead because you haven't really been putting your mind, your heart into God's Word and you wonder why you're so lifeless.

I mean, I've been to people that walk with the Lord for years and this still happens. And you make, we make time for anything and everything other than let's meditate on the truth.

[31 : 26] And when we don't, we begin believing lies about that we tell ourselves, that the world tells us and we have to be going back to God's truth to remind us of what we, to expose those lies,

expose those untruths.

So just stop. Make a stand. Ask God to help you dive into His Word. Do it with someone that you know and ask Him to use that to build up hope in you.

Listen to this. Romans 15, verse 4. It couldn't be any clearer. For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might find hope.

Alright? Romans 15, 4. So if you're not doing that, you're going to be discouraged and you're going to be hopeless. It's really how it is. So in addition to that, as you read God's Word, search in your life for misplaced hopes.

Like where am I putting my hope right now where I shouldn't be? Where am I trying to get hope from that I know is going to let me down? A lot of times the people around you can see that clearer than you, so sometimes ask them and just accept their answer.

[32 : 48] Take it or leave it. Ask God to expose it. So search for misplaced hopes in your life and then pray asking God by His Spirit to renew that hope in your soul to go out and face the world.

If you don't have any hope, you can't face what's out there. You just can't. You can't face yourself and you can't face the world. So ask God, plead with God to use His Word by His Spirit to renew that hope in you.

And in closing, in closing, I just want you to look at Psalm 42 with me. Years ago, I was going through a pretty dark, spiritually depressive time in the hospital in Birmingham.

It was during one of those times I thought I was done, like I was hopeless. and my parents had just brought me my laptop and they went away to see some friends and I just immediately just like got on Desiring God's website and this, the title of the message at the very first of the page was Spiritual Depression in the Psalms.

I'm like, click, click. and Psalm 42 was what He preached on. And a lot of the times we suffer and we're hopeless because we're listening to ourselves instead of preaching the truth to ourselves.

[34 : 14] And this is what this is about. Psalm 42, let's read the first five verses. As the deer pants for flowing streams, so my soul pants for you, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have become my food day and night.

Ever felt that way? While they say to me all the day long, where is your God? These things I remember as I pour out my soul, how I would go to the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival.

Why are you cast down, O my soul? Why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, my salvation and my God.

Just join me in prayer.