

Advent 2019: Hope - Luke 2:21-24

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[0 : 00] So that by the power of the Holy Spirit, you may abound in love. See this? There's only one safe place, one sure deposit for all of us to place our hope in.

Only one non-leaky vessel, the living God. Made the God of hope. And in our text, if you read this, made the God of hope, we see here that God is both the source of hope and He is the supplier of hope.

Paul's declaring something to us about the very nature of God Himself. God does not just inspire hope in us. He is the author of that hope.

He doesn't just dispense hope out to us. Hope is a part of His very nature, His very essence. And in the Scriptures alone, the word hope is implied or used 200 times.

Very distinctive meaning of hope in the Scripture is almost opposite of how we use it in our everyday language. We do it all the time. Very different. But biblical hope is not just wishful thinking or a desire for something good to happen, but rather it's a true, confident hope.

[1 : 18] If you're looking for just a simple definition, I think the Bible can sum it up. And in this definition of what is biblical hope, here you go.

A joyful, confident expectation and desire for something good in the future. A joyful, confident expectation and desire for something good in the future.

Hope implies looking forward to something in the future with joy, enthusiasm, confidence, expectation, surety. It doesn't just mean, as the brother said earlier, it doesn't mean just cross your fingers and just hope something happens, knock on wood.

It's seen in verses like Psalm 62. For God alone, my soul waits. My hope is from Him. So, God is the source of hope and He is the supplier of hope.

And so, when we say hope in God, again, it's just very different than what most of us use that language for every day. Most of our language is centered around wishful thinking, including my own from time to time.

[2 : 28] And here, very simply, I guess wishful thinking could be summed up as forming our beliefs and our decisions according to what might be pleasing to imagine or fantasize about.

So, that's what we think about. We want, we fantasize about this and so we really desire for that to happen rather than looking at the evidence behind something and putting our hope in something that's actually real.

And so, some of you have applied wishful thinking to God. And that's led you to say things either out loud or in your heart such as, well, I put my hope in God to do this or that and He let me down.

Beware, right? I humbly want to remind you that hoping in God doesn't just mean hoping that He will bring about a particular circumstance and granting it the way that you wish it to happen.

That doesn't what hoping in God looks like. That's not what it looks like. It's good and right for us to go to God and pour out our desires to Him, our requests to Him. He invites us to do that.

[3 : 38] But our hope is not based in how He chooses to answer those prayers. Our hope is in God Himself, in His character, in His promises, in His relationship and love with us.

So, hope is in God Himself, in His person. So, hope sounds like, regardless of the outcome of this particular situation or circumstance, my hope is in God.

That's what it sounds like. My hope is in God because of Christ. And I put my hope in His sovereign plan in working out all things for my good. Hope actually says this.

I think most people in the world can never say this about what they mean when they say hope. Job 13, verse 15. Hope says, though He slay me, though He kill me, I still will hope in Him.

That's what true hope looks like. It's a hope in the person of God Himself. Even if God takes my life, I will trust Him and put my hope in Him.

[4 : 49] Even if He takes everything I have, I will put my hope in Him. That's what biblical hope looks like. So, most of you are familiar with the story of how Kathleen and I had our daughter.

Come ask us later. We'd love to tell you the whole story. But as we were praying for our child, we were putting our hope in God. And our hope didn't rest in the outcome of that prayer.

It wasn't, God, if you give us a child, you're fulfilling our hope. Our hope is in you, regardless of whether you choose to do this or not.

Our hope is in your providence and in your love for us, because you've already given us the greatest gift we ever, ever could have asked for in Christ. So, that's why one of the reasons why we've named her Kara Hope, is because our hope has been in God.

And it serves as a walking, living reminder of that for us now. So then, if God is the God of hope and we are a hopeless people, God has to initiate in some way to bring that hope to us.

[6 : 03] You see that? If we are a hopeless people, the God of hope has to give that to us in some way. And we see this in the first advent of Christ and His coming, His incarnation.

So, for the rest of the day, we're going to be in Luke chapter 2. So, go turn to Luke chapter 2. So, oftentimes, we may not see the word hope used in our text, but we can read stories in God's word that demonstrate and illustrate what true hope really looks like.

And one such story is found in Luke's gospel. Right in the midst of what we deem as the Christmas story, a man named Simeon and a woman named Anna. Two reliable witnesses that testify of the identity of the Savior.

So, we'll start in verse 21. Verse 21 of Luke chapter 2. At the end of the eight days, when He was circumcised, He was called Jesus, the name given to Him by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

And when the time had come for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord. As it is 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 is said in the law of the Lord.

[7 : 34] A pair of turtle doves are two young pigeons. And here we see our third point, third and final point, the arrival of our hope. The arrival of our hope.

And we see in this story, Mary and Joseph coming to present Jesus to be circumcised according to the law and that Mary would offer up a sacrifice because after 40 days, she would be deemed as pure again for worship.

So, she offered up two pigeons or two turtle doves. And we see this, that our hope has a name. His name is Jesus.

His name is Jesus. His very name says salvation. The Lord is salvation. Our Yahweh is our salvation.

The promised Messiah of the world. The world. So, hope dawns at the first advent of Christ coming here. Emmanuel, God with us. And so, we go on in our story.

[8 : 39] And again, we're going to see these two older people, these two elderly saints who stand as two reliable witnesses to testify of who Jesus is.

Verse 25. 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 for the revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

[9 : 48] 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 the thoughts from many hearts may be revealed. So we see this encounter with Simeon.

His very name means to hearken, to listen, the one who kind of waits patiently for something to happen, which is a very fitting name for this elderly saint. He was righteous and devout, a good

man.

And he was waiting. He had been waiting for years for the consolation or the comfort of Israel to come. One who would come and deliver the people.

He was putting his trust in the promises of God's word, such as Isaiah 25, where it says, It will be said on that day, Behold, this is our God.

[10:55] We have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord we have waited for. Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

He was familiar with the prophet Isaiah who said that. So he had been waiting for this day and night. So Simeon knew the promises of God and placed his hope fully in them.

And he imagined the joy in his eyes. He was led by the Spirit of God into the temple at that very day, at that very moment, and the Spirit impressed on him, That is the child.

Can you imagine the joy in his eyes? And how many people would have laughed at Simeon, like, Oh, Simeon, that's a touching sentiment, but you're too old. There's no way you're going to see the Savior.

And he would respond with something like, Well, God promises that he will send a Messiah.

Yahweh takes true pleasure in those who fear him and those who hope in his steadfast love.

[11:59] Many of us are wavering in our hope because we are not familiar with the promises of God. All we've grown very, very nearsighted, and we cannot see those promises in our lives.

So he had a strong anointing of the Spirit, and he realized that this is the child under the guidance of the Spirit. And he understood that that child was going to be the very Messiah one day, and that many people would rise, and many would fall based on that child and what that child did.

And then we move on, and then we see another saint, an elderly woman named Anna. Let's look at verse 36. And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Thameel, of the tribe of Asher.

She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin. And then as a widow until she was 84, she did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.

And coming up that very hour, she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.

[13:26] And there the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him. So you see this older woman.

I think if you add it up, she's about 105 years old. She's a devout Jew. She's from the tribe of Asher, which is remarkable at this time because most Jews had no clue what tribe they came from because of all the captivity and dispersion.

She was there. And clearly, a woman in her society would have outlived her usefulness. She was a widow. She was weak. She was vulnerable.

But she didn't fear. She had her hope in God. There's something very special about her. She designated a prophetess, which we could talk about later. But Anna was fervently devoted to God, watching, praying, and worshiping, waiting for the redemption of Israel.

She knew that there was a national cry to see the Messiah. So that national cry was also her own personal heart's cry. I want to see the Messiah.

[14:38] And suddenly, right in front of her, there was the one that she had been waiting for. Can you just imagine, like, walking up to Mary and Joseph and be like, what's the child's name? And they're like, she said, they say, Yeshua, Jesus.

And she goes, really? Is that his name? The Lord is salvation? And that joy that came over her face as she stands there, and she turns around and starts boldly proclaiming, announcing, this is Emmanuel.

O Israel. Our redemption is here. Our consolation is finally here. And she stood there proclaiming that in the temple grounds. So, a story of Anna's hope, of Simeon's hope, a great hope for us to emulate.

What are a few things that we can take away from this? One, do you have an evident hope? An evident hope. Because Anna and Simeon, their hope in God was real because for many years, they lived this out.

They had a hope in God, praying and waiting patiently for Him to fulfill His promises. And many of us claim that we have hope in God, but we don't persevere in that hope.

[15:51] We turn to counterfeit hopes to deliver us from what we want, to give us what we want. In reality, we grow impatient.

So, Christmas is a good time for us to ponder that and to put our hope back in God. Also, do you have a hope in the promises of God's Word? Many Jews knew the Scriptures, but they read them through a certain lens that prevented them from actually seeing the Messiah when he got there. Very clearly, though, Anna and Simeon knew the promises of God's Word and they had their hope in that Word. They knew what Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms, they knew they had to be fulfilled.

So, give yourself this season to reading God's Word and meditating upon His promises and ask Him to renew your hope in the process. It says in Romans 15 that God has given us the Scriptures that we might have hope.

And lastly, do you have hope to see the true Savior? And in the context, again, many Jews were looking for a Messiah, but it was a Messiah of their own making, one that would deliver them from a Gentile Roman rule and restore Judah back to the former days of old, like the days of David.

[17:12] And that's evidence in their history. Very, not long after Jesus was born, around 4 AD, there was a huge revolt in Galilee and around 2,000 Jews were crucified trying to bring about this new state.

Simeon and Anna had no such hopes of that kind of Messiah. Their hope was not in their circumstances. Their hope was only that God would send a Savior to deliver them from the bondage of sin.

That is the Savior that we also look back at and now look forward to. In closing, look at Romans 5 very quickly. Romans 5, verse 5.

Do we rightly understand who Jesus is? And do you want to have your hope renewed?

All of us long for a hope that does not disappoint us and does not put us to shame. And in Romans 5, verse 5, we'll start here, and it says, hope does not put us to shame or hope does not disappoint because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who He has given us.

[18:32] For while we were still weak at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. So, I pray that for myself and for you that our hopes would be renewed in Christ this Christmas season, during this Advent season.

His is the only hope that will not disappoint us or put us to shame. And the God of love has poured that out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. And so, let's pray together and ask God to instill this kind of gospel hope in us.