

## **11-28-21 First Sunday in Advent: Hope**

Sermon- There is Certainty in Hope

Scripture- Luke 21:25-36, CTW- Psalm 25:1-10

Hymns- To be selected by PK, Dave

Theme- God's faithful love for us is the only thing in reality that can give us true hope for the future. In the midst of chaos, there can be calm because Christians hold the only **real** hope that exists, and we need to know it, understand from whence it comes, and cling to it!

### **Introduction: Ready Or Not, Here it Comes!**

I'm having a difficult time realizing we're knocking on the door of December. I'm not sure why, I think it happens to me every year. In January, you think about the fact that it's another year, it's going to last forever, and after 5 minutes, it seems the year is coming to an end. The Christmas season is here, shopping is well under way.

**A. Spiritually, this is the first official day of the Christmas season.** Today is the first day of a season in the church life called Advent! The word Advent means coming. It's "the period of expectant waiting and preparation of the birth of Jesus." It's interesting that the Greek word which Advent comes from is called **parousia**, which means presence or coming.

But in the New Testament this word applies to the second coming of Christ. As the followers of Christ, we prepare for the birth of Jesus, in a sense the first coming of Jesus, **and at the same** time we look forward to the second coming of Christ...**AND we do so with hope...ETERNAL Hope!**

For the next 4 Sundays I have chosen to tell the Advent story as so clearly detailed in the gospel of Luke, as we prepare to celebrate one of the most important days of the year — the day in which God entered our world in human form as a helpless child.

**B. It is through that child our sins are forgiven, and through Him we have the HOPE of life — the offer of abundant life on earth, and eternal life in heaven.**

Today we're going to look at the idea of **HOPE** in Luke 21:25-36. These verses are from a sermon that Jesus preached about the second coming. The celebration of the first coming of Christ and the anticipation of the second coming of Christ are closely connected, because both events teach the same principle: God has His hand on human history. These events remind us that **HIS STORY** is moving in a specific direction.

**I. There are so many people in our world who believe life is random.** Things happen for no reason at all - - without order. They believe there's no meaning, no purpose, no direction. Life's just a bunch of random meaningless events.

**A. I believe Advent teaches us something very different.** If, we are willing, it helps us to see that God has not abandoned us. He's not ignoring us. He has a plan and a purpose, and He's inviting us into His plan. From that plan, we are to take **HOPE**.

You may think the world is spinning out of control, and sometimes our lives feel that way. Too many things are happening, not all of which are good. We experience the hardships and the harshness of life.

Is your world spinning out of control right now? Maybe you're struggling financially, maybe there's trouble at home, maybe you're uncertain of what the future holds, and you think your life is a random series of chaotic events.

But Christmas is a reminder of the promise God has not abandoned you. God has not forgotten us. He's still in control. And as we talked about in our series from Hebrews, God will never leave you nor forsake you!

**B. Some of us approach this season with a sense of dread.** Maybe it's because you'll be alone at Christmas, and you

don't want that. Maybe it's because you feel strapped for money. It's not about gifts, it's about paying your bills. And you don't like that.

Maybe there's just too many demands on your time. Too much stress in the house, too many expectations to meet. Maybe it's the ones who will not be there this Christmas and your sadness overwhelms you.

So, you just want to make it through the next 28 days. Then you'll certainly be fine.

**There IS a better way to approach the Christmas season — a way that leads to victory and joy.** A way that leads to power and hope and expectation. Even if there are some things about this season that aren't perfect!

But, in spite of this, if we can adjust our attitudes, our spirits, our hearts . . . just a little bit, maybe, just maybe, that will help us during this season, and we will experience the grace, mercy, power and love of God.

So, with that in mind, I want to look at what Jesus said in Luke 21 as a way to help us develop some habits which may help us not just during this season, but during the coming year as well.

## **II. First, You Need to Keep Looking Up!**

In Luke 21 Jesus talks about all the negative things that are occurring in the world. It's a pretty scary time. Listen to the first part of our passage:

25 "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves,

26 people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

27 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

28 Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

**A. There will be chaos in this world. People will be fainting with fear at what’s coming.** All of those events will lead to the great glory of the Son of Man, Jesus coming back and saving the day for His people. Wars and revolutions and earthquakes and famines. He said people will experience a sense of fear and distress. But these events will lead up to the climactic return of Christ, when He will come and, quite literally, save the day for His people.

That last verse is striking. Because in the Christmas season, we feel some fear, some anxiety, some panic, some discomfort, some uncertainty.

Jesus says that our worst days are not permanent. They don’t last forever, even though it feels that way. Jesus tells us our redemption is drawing near.

**B. Aren’t those great words to hear? We need to believe in them.** As Jesus was talking about the second coming — I want you to know these words don't just apply to some distant day, they apply to our lives today.

Again and again throughout the Bible we see people **looking up** to God in their most difficult situations. When Joseph was in prison, he kept **looking up** until God delivered him. When Daniel was in the lion's den, he kept **looking up** toward God. When David faced a giant he trusted God would deliver him.

Even the rebellious Jonah, **looked up** and God came through for him. When Paul and Silas were chained and in prison, they **looked up** and sang out to God and God delivered them.

So Jesus says when the world seems to be falling down around you, don't fix your eyes on your circumstances. Instead,

straighten up and **lift up your heads and look to Him**. Only when we **look to Jesus** will we start to see our redemption is drawing near.

We will see how God is intervening. How He is on His way. Just like Jesus entered this world on Christmas day in order to save us - - - to redeem us from our sins, He will enter your life to deliver you as well.

It's not in your time. It's not about YOUR time table. You want it to be instantaneous. But God is not a genie. He's not in the wish granting business. He's in the salvation business.

So whatever's going on THIS Christmas season, good or not so good . . . start the day and continue throughout the day by straightening up your body, looking to God. No matter what you're facing, keep looking up. No matter how dark today may seem to be, keep looking up.

### **III. Second, You Need Take Hold of Your Heart.**

Jesus tells us -

34 "But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.

35 For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth.

36 But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Let's look back at verse 34 -

34 "But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with **dissipation** and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.

Now, we don't often see and use the word **dissipation** in our world. **Literally, it means to be drinking to excess so that you are sick.** It's what we say when somebody has a major hangover.

**A. Basically here Jesus is saying if you don't watch out, you'll be focused on going to excesses because of your concerns and uncertainty in the world.**

And He's right. How many times do we find ourselves struggling with something in life and we try to make ourselves feel good . . . immediately!!

We go shopping to make ourselves feel better. Some drink too much some eat too much! During the holiday season we are encouraged to engage in all sorts of vices and excesses. The vice isn't the issue . . . it's what it's doing to us. It's pulling us away from the One who is in control . . . God.

For many people, this is what this season is about. This is how some live. They indulge to excess. They need to take the edge off of the struggles of life, so their hearts become weighed down.

Their hearts are heavy. For some folks this is all there is. A heavy heart which feels like a huge weight on them. It sucks the energy, the strength, the power, the life and even the breath right of them.

Jesus is telling us, beware that this doesn't happen to you.

In the book of Proverbs, Chapter 4: 23, Solomon wrote ~

23 Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. Your heart is the "wellspring" of life!

**B. If we engage in the excesses of life, the HOPE that is in our hearts can become dim.**

We don't realize how true that statement is. We are the guardians of our heart. All of life flows through our hearts. Think about all of the decisions we make.

We could say the majority of our decisions come from our heart! So, Solomon wisely reminds us to guard our hearts, protect ourselves from the evil which surrounds us.

**Finally, we're reminded in verse 36 to** stay awake at all times, praying that you may have STRENGTH to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

#### **IV. SO, During This Season, We Must Pray for Strength.**

**A. Right now we live in a scary and strange world. At times, we don't know who to trust.** Our trusted movie and sports stars are falling, but here's the problem . . . we are placing **hope** in those people. Our trust needs to be in God and frankly in one another.

Honestly . . . everyday I'm reminded about the ways God has blessed me. I'm not perfect, none of us are. Yet, I am more and more aware of God's blessings upon me every day. And, in our imperfection **we extend this amazing grace to one another.** It's a precious and powerful gift! Pass the **HOPE** around!

The church is supposed to be a place where we can find strength and comfort for the battles ahead. We're in this together. We're reminded that the church is ONE. We are one body, filled with people who are brought together by the power and grace of Jesus Christ.

**B. Pray that you might be strong enough.** In doing this you are proclaiming this - - - - "God, I don't always do what I'm supposed to do. In reality, Lord, I'm pretty weak and scared. But you, Lord, have the strength, the power and the plan. Grant to me the spirit and the strength to endure whatever comes my way."

Christmas reminds us that God is intimately involved in our world. He has not abandoned us, He's committed to you and I... **there is HOPE!** Keep looking up. Guard your heart. Pray for strength. Amen? Let us pray...