

Hope Advent 2020 November 29th

Advent it comes so quickly every year. It's a time of anticipation for us. On Sundays we light an advent candle each week. There are 4 candles, and they represent hope, peace, joy, and love.

Today is we light the candle that represents hope. We need that so desperately. Each day I hear of people losing jobs, fighting major illnesses such as cancer, heart disease and COVID.

I hear of people struggling with abuse of one sort or another, there are many struggling with finances and always we struggle with the death of friends and loved ones.

So, what is it that keeps us going?

How do we cope from day to day?

How do we even get up in the morning?

I believe it is hope!

Every day that we get up we have hope.

But what is hope? It is when you believe that something you want will happen. Hope happens when Desire is accompanied by expectation.

What do you hope for? Are you hoping for an end to COVID? Are you praying that the vaccine comes soon? Perhaps you hope for healing for yourself or simply that no one in your close circle gets sick. Perhaps you hope and pray that

miracles are granted to as families watch their loved ones suffer.

Are you hoping for a traditional holiday, or perhaps a safe one?

Perhaps you hope for something that seems simpler, like a better day where colleagues cooperate, children don't argue, spouses are loving, and friends are kind.

Perhaps you hope for your friends, family to come to church with you

Perhaps you hope that someone accepts Christ as savior and a life is transformed.

Our lives are full of hope or is it just wishful thinking. The definition of hope is Desire with expectation. When we lose the expectation, it really isn't hope, it's wishful thinking.

In the book of Jeremiah, God tells the people of Israel that he has plans for them

Jer 29:10-14

11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. 12 Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 13 And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity.

NKJV

I believe this verse is for us today. God wants us to have hope. No matter what our situation is been

Prov 13:12 says Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.

Hope gives us strength to go on. Hope gives us life in our mind, body, and spirit.

I think the important thing here is where we place our hope.

How do we think our hearts desires will be accomplished?

Who do we look to when we have needs?

I believe we must look to God. Our very dependency should be in him.

If we look to ourselves or others to fulfill our desire, we will find that they often fail.

In fact, Ephesians 2:12 tells us that one time we were separate from Christ and had no hope. We were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

But now as believers we are part of the Body of Christ. We have hope. Not just in this world but in the world to come. Paul calls our hope the hope of the gospel and he says that Christ in us is the hope of glory.

It is our very relationship with Jesus that gives us our hope. Hope for today tomorrow and forever.

Titus 3:7 that, being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

It is the hope that we bank on when our loved ones pass away.

1 Thess 4:13

But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope.

ASV

It is the hope of a better day. Perhaps tomorrow or the next day or week or even longer, but we know that ultimately there is a better day coming.

It is the hope that the prophet Habakkuk spoke of when he said

Hab 3:16-19 "I heard, and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled. Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us. 17 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,

Can you relate to this? The fruit trees aren't budding, the oil isn't flowing (spiritually or physically) the crops are destroyed by heat, cold, rain, drought. There are no cattle, no sheep no economy.

COVID is running rampant. It's been 9 months and although at times we see a light at the end of the tunnel, we know it's still a long way to go.

This may be the hardest year you've ever faced with your family. We are quarantined at home, bored out of our mind, going crazy from isolation, but concerned to the point of not going out and living your life as we always did. Perhaps you or

loved ones have lost jobs because of COVID and finances are shot. You miss your friends, family, and church.

How can we face these situations? All these answers are found at the end of Habakkuk's prayer.

Hab 3:18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.

Hab 3:19 The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he enables me to go on the heights.

Let's read this again, putting yourself and your life in his place

Hab 3:17-19

17 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines,

though the olive crop fails, and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,

18 YET I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.

19 The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.

NIV