

LESSONS IN ADVENT



Hope in 2020

1 Peter 1:3-7 (NRSV)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Teaching

As we begin Advent 2020, we realize that in this season of waiting and preparation, there are a lot of things we are still waiting on. Waiting on a pandemic to end, waiting for church to start back all programming, waiting for a time when it is safe to be fully in community once again. Seasons of waiting are difficult, emotional, and taxing. Oftentimes, though, the waiting is where God moves us and changes us the most. When we have no other

option but to depend on God and trust Divine Timing, we learn a lot about ourselves and the faithfulness of our Creator.

This week we will tackle the idea of Hope. What is hope? Hope is more than just wishful thinking. Hope is the deep desire and trust that a certain thing will happen, or a certain person will show up. Christian hope goes even deeper. Christian hope is alive and breathes life into all who believe the Gospel. In scripture we find three major aspects to Christian hope:

1. Christian hope roots itself in the person and promise of Jesus Christ, and not just a generalized desire for peace on earth, that our material needs will be met, or that everything will turn out just how we want it to. During advent, we remember the past hope that the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ gave to people around him and still gives us today. Dying to ourselves and rising to Christ gives us both temporal and eternal hope. Hope for Salvation and Holy Presence today, tomorrow, and forevermore.
2. Christian hope remembers the promises of the past, participates in the work of the Christ in the present, and looks forward to the return of Christ in the future. Just like in the Old Testament when the Israelites were reminded to “look back” at where God had brought them, we can look back to see the trials, hard days, and seemingly impossible situations God has brought us through. The assurance that God was with us then, gives us faith that God is with us now as we continue to do the work of bringing the Kingdom to Earth as it is in Heaven. This brings us hope that the presence of Christ will continue with us for future days until the ultimate day of resurrection and reconciliation.
3. Christian hope is expressed both individually and communally. We have hope for our own hearts, minds, bodies, and souls. We have hope for our families and friends. And we also have hope for our community of faith, for our church and the Church Universal. As Christians we are called to participate together in the one hope of our calling – Jesus Christ – even though there may appear to be things that separate us. (Ephesians 4) Hoping together for God’s will to be done in our individual lives and the life of our community gives an even greater purpose and

meaning to that hope. The hope of Christ binds us together as we share in the Gospel story.

In our 2020 Christmas season there are so many things we hope for. We long for peace, unity, and answers to so many of our questions. We hope for equality, safety, and health for ourselves and those we love. We desire an end to the pandemic, recession, and so much of our life still being on hold. Ultimately, we hope that God will see us through the trials and tests we go through as individuals, families, and a community. There is work we can do to see these hopes fulfilled alongside our Creator, Savior, and friend Jesus who was born to show us the way.

Discussion/Reflection

- Read 1 Peter 1:3-7 again. What do you hear about hope in this passage?
- From where does our hope come?
- What makes Christian hope different than the hope found in the world?
- There are three aspects of Christian hope we talked about, which aspect is easiest for you to hold onto? Which is the hardest?
- Where have you seen hope in your individual life?
- Where have you seen hope within your community of faith?

Prayer

Creator God, you give us a vision of a world with-out hunger, danger, and strife. A world that is joined in love, compassion, and forgiveness. This vision is our hope. We offer thanks for the gift of Jesus Christ, who was and is the hope of the nations. Amen.

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