

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.

I. The Malaise of Hopelessness

A. Advent and the Theme of Hope

1. Advent as Season

a. Welcome

It is the first Sunday of our Advent season here at Cornerstone. It is also the first Sunday we have attempted to worship on site together in nearly six months. Even though we are worshipping together under some cumbersome restrictions, it is my heart joy to welcome you home!

b. Advent as season

(1) Advent, as a season in the life of the church, is more than just a ceremonial observance that comes between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

(2) Advent has purpose.

(a) The emphases in these four Sundays mean to focus our attention away from the distractions of the world.

(b) In this Advent season we intentional, directing our attention on to Christ, on to God's mercy, and on to the wonder of everlasting, life-changing, future-shaping love.

(c) Where the god of this world blinds the minds of the unbelievers, of the people of this age, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ,

i) Advent provides an opportunity for the elect, called, justified, and soon to be glorified people of God to look deeply and gaze contentedly on the wonder of God's saving grace in His Son, Jesus, the Incarnate Word of God, who came and took on human flesh, who dwelled among us as one of us, though he Himself was and is full of grace and truth.

ii) **Advent is an opportunity among the holiday scramble to stop and get our priorities straight.**

2. Advent Themes

a. Four Themes:

(1) There are four themes often associated with Advent.

(2) They are hope, peace, joy, and love.

- b. These words take on a special poignancy this year.
- (1) Hope wanes.
 - (2) Peace falters.
 - (3) Joy fades.
 - (4) Love freezes.
 - (a) **Matthew 24:12 (ESV) *And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.***
 - (b) As a result of increasing lawlessness hearts that were once warm, tender toward the needs and circumstance of others become frozen wastelands of selfishness and pride, cold fortresses where neither God nor those created in His image are welcome.
- c. The need for hope
- (1) **There is desperate need for real hope this Advent season.**
 - (2) In a recent memo to local participating businesses and organizations, Cook County Chamber of Commerce Director Jim Boyd, wrote, “Our businesses face an existential threat the likes of which we have not seen in our lifetime.”
 - (3) Another public commentator, reflecting on the social and philosophical tension rampant in the US today said,
 - (a) “Worldview clashes have been around as long as the fallen world. Today they are more immediately apparent than at most times in Western history.”
 - (b) He called that war of worldviews “visible, palpable, immediate, and inescapable.”
 - (4) I remember, many years ago now, standing in front of the right hand section of pews in the old Baptist Church building, the building that is now Higher Education center.
 - (a) I believe it was a Sunday morning.
 - (b) In my memory I see and hear myself saying something about hope, about how at that point in my life, whatever other spiritual traits I might be developing, I had no trouble with hope.
 - (c) That day seems like a lifetime ago.
 - (d) Today, I need a refresher of hope.
 - i) I am tired of the arguments, the hostility, the lovelessness, the unrelenting wickedness in the world and selfishness in the church.
 - ii) I find no encouragement in the conflicts over political platforms.
 - iii) I am weary beyond words at the separation imposed by COVID-19 from the people I love.

- iv) Personally, I vacillate between feeling more hopeless than hopeful, and I am really looking forward to Messiah's messages this Advent season, especially this word today on hope.

B. Three Questions for Understanding and Abounding in Biblical Hope

1. **Today, on this first day of Advent 2020, we want to focus on Messiah's message of what Paul calls "abounding hope."**
2. There are three questions we want to ask.
 - a. First, what is hope?
 - (1) What do we mean when we speak of hope?
 - (2) Is biblical hope the same as cultural hope?
 - (3) If not, what is the difference?
 - b. Second, once we understand what biblical hope is, and how it is different than the hope society speaks of, we want to ask, "What hope does Jesus offer to those who follow Him in faith?"
 - c. And finally, we will want to ask, "How can we abound in biblical hope of the kind Jesus alone delivers?"

II. Three Questions for Understanding and Abounding in Biblical Hope

A. What is Hope?

1. Hope the way the world uses the word
 - a. Hope - a desire limited by uncertainty
 - b. Examples
 - (1) A new truck for Christmas
 - (2) COVID-19 suddenly disappears without a trace and we all wake up and realize it was just a global dream.
2. Hope the way the Bible uses the word
 - a. Biblical uses of hope
 - (1) **Psalm 42:5-6 (ESV) ⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation ⁶ and my God.**
 - (a) Hope is attached to the person of God, therefore, biblical hope depends on the reliability of God to be as He is.
 - (b) Hope counts on God to always act for His glory according to every aspect of His perfect, holy, wise, powerful, and loving character.
 - i) Hope is not grounded on what God may or may not do in a given moment relative to our personal experience.
 - ii) Hope is grounded in who God is at every moment regardless of our personal experience in the moment.

- iii) That's why the Psalmist knows that He will again praise God, not because the psalmists circumstances will change, but because the God of the Psalmist will never change!

(2) **Romans 8:18-21 (ESV)** ¹⁸ *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* ¹⁹ *For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.* ²⁰ *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope* ²¹ *that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.*

(a) Creation is subjected to suffering, in the hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God

i) We know that creation was created by God with the intent of fully demonstrating the majesty of His glory.

ii) We know that God's mission in creation is that *"the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."*

(b) Is there any chance at all that God will be defeated and disappointed and have to resign Himself to not getting what He ordains?

(c) **Biblical hope is built on the eternal character of God Himself and the absolute certainty that all He declares of Himself and His will is true and unchangeable.**

b. **Biblical Hope: a confident expectation established on the Person of God that all He declares and wills will be accomplished as He intends.**

(1) Biblical hope does not look to political parties, or platforms, or politicians for the future of God's people.

Biblical hope looks not to politics but to God.

(2) Biblical hope does not rest on vaccines to deliver us from death.

(a) We know that death is inevitable, by one means or another.

(b) We may choose to make use of a vaccine for our immediate convenience,

(c) But biblical hope does not put its final trust in a man made chemical as Savior to prevent the

consequences of our inevitable death. **Biblical hope looks not to science but to God.**

- (d) **Biblical hope is grounded in the absolute certainty of the integrity of God,**
 - i) His perfect knowledge of Himself,
 - ii) The perfect rightness of His will
 - iii) and His ability to perfectly accomplish His will,
 - iv) including the realization of every promise He makes, in regard both to life in this world and eternal life in glory with Him.

B. What Hope does Christ offer?

- 1. **Hope for forgiveness of sin**
 - a. Where there is no forgiveness of sin, there is nothing left but guilt and punishment.
 - (1) Think of a courtroom.
 - (a) When the defendant is found guilty
 - (b) Unless there is forgiveness, what remains is the sentencing; in a perfect world, the imposition of a just punishment in proportion to the awfulness of the crime.
 - (2) We are all sinners, guilty before God, the fact is determined, without forgiveness there is nothing left but the full imposition of divine justice.
 - b. **Forgiveness, though, is what God offers sinners who put their faith in Jesus Christ!**
 - c. **Forgiveness is a change of heart toward the misdeeds of others.**
 - (1) Forgiveness is the choice God makes, on account of the sinless death of Jesus, to accept sinful people into His heart as beloved children rather than as the guilty criminals we are.
 - (2) Christ takes the sentence of death on himself on our behalf.
 - (3) **1 John 1:9 (ESV) *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***
 - d. **Sins that are forgiven are forgotten!**
- 2. **Hope for pardon from punishment**
 - a. It is one thing to be forgiven for sin; it is another to be released from penalty.
 - b. A pardon is the act by an empowered authority of reversing a sentence rendered under a verdict of guilty.
 - (1) Presidential pardons
 - (2) Pardon reverses our position relative to the consequences of sin
 - c. **Romans 5:10–11 *For if while we were enemies we were***

reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. 11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

3. Hope for eternal reward
 - a. If death is the punishment for sin, then life must be the reward for faith.
 - b. If eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ is the certain expectation of all who believe, then
 - (1) We may be fearless in this life
 - (2) We may live boldly in this life
 - (3) We may release anxiety over the uncertain in this life because our hope is as absolute as the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice of the Son on our behalf.
 - c. God's accomplished work in Christ grounds salvation hope for Jews and Gentiles alike.
 - (1) **We need to know that our hope is certain, else it is not true biblical hope.**
 - (2) Our hope is not that life in the immediate will be always pleasant and convenient.
 - (3) Our hope is that life in the eternal will be glorious, forgiven, and pardoned.

C. How can we abound in biblical hope?

1. **Romans 15:13 (ESV) *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.***
 - a. Note first that hope is not only of God (related to His character)
 - b. but is from Him (a direct work of His hand in our lives)
2. There are three provisions God makes that enable the believer to abound in hope.
 - a. God fills us with joy (for his love) in believing.
 - b. God fills us with peace (in his forgiveness) in believing.
 - c. God fills us with the Spirit (for obedience and abundance) for believing.
 - (1) Hope that is based on Christ and has the glory of God for its hoped-for treasure is not the product of the unaided human will.
 - (2) If you hope in Christ today and not in money and health and friends and joy and government, that hope is the work of the Holy Spirit. You did not create it.
3. Hebrews 12:2 is the ultimate picture of biblical hope: Jesus, who for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising its shame, and is seated at the right hand of God.
 - (1) **God's absolute acceptance of the life and death of Jesus, certified by the resurrection of Christ, guarantees that**

all who put their trust in Christ, have assurance of hope in Christ.

(2) It is not our own efforts to generate hope that secure hope for us.

(a) **It is Christ's completed and successful work in life and on the cross that secures our future and therefore is the ground of all true hope.**

i) He did not fail.

ii) He does not fail.

(b) That means that as you trust in Him your hope is eternally secured.

b. But let us take this truth one step further. Consider what Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit to reveal the mind and heart of God, writes to us of this matter in this verse.

(1) He prays that the God of hope will fill us with joy and peace in believing . . . SO THAT by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

(2) Look, this hope is the work of God the Holy Spirit in the believer!

(a) It is not the work of self-induced faith, or the work of resigned trust, or the work of human will, or effort, or self-help methodology.

(b) **This hope is the direct production of the Holy Spirit working the glory and power of God in the life of the believer on account of Christ and in response to faith in Him.**

4. Abounding in the Real World

a. They should believe with confidence that everything necessary for their salvation has been accomplished in Christ, and their only need to maintain trust in Christ.

b. They should surrender to the work of the Holy Spirit within them as He nurtures joy and peace in them, resulting in true hope.

c. Their interactions with their circumstances and the world around them should reflect their confident hope in and complete devotion to the ultimate victory of God.