

A Thrill of Hope

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[0 : 00] Long lay the world. You know, you might have even felt it as we kind of, in this service, as we kick off the Advent season.

And often time Christmas feels like a time of joy, and it is, but there is also a weightiness to the beginning of it.

Because for most of us, our experience of life isn't only and sometimes even isn't primarily defined by what feels like hope.

There's a heaviness and a longing that exists in all of our hearts, and it's good to reflect on that. The Bible is not silent about the realities of our groanings in this life.

In Romans 8, verse 19, it tells us that, The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

[1 : 06] For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 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.

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. The world is broken, and we feel it.

And of course, we as humans, we learn and we adapt. We build new systems of thought to deal with it.

We come up with new philosophies that we hope will deliver us from the brokenness. We come up with new technologies to blunt the edge of the pain of life.

We create new movements that are supposed to inspire us towards a better future. We dream about and try to forge new societies.

[2 : 17] And yet, in every age, futility remains. Everything that seems to promise the ultimate freeing of humanity from the chains that bind us, casts us back into the same bondage.

Everything we try, every place we put our hope, evil persists. Suffering is common.

Death consumes. And it's not just the brokenness in the world, obviously, that causes our hearts to mourn. It's the brokenness in us as well.

Paul laments in the book of Romans, For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

Now, if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law that it is good. So now it is no longer I who does it, but the sin that dwells within me.

[3 : 26] For I know that nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh. For I have the desire to do good, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

Now, if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I, but the sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I do right, evil lies close at hand.

For I delight in the law of God in my inner being, but I see in my members another law, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

Wretched man am I who will deliver me from this body of death. You see, our systems, our technologies, our movements, our means to our own salvation don't work, and they'll never work because whatever you do, you can't overcome the brokenness of people with a system.

But since the very breaking of the world, God has promised us He'll rescue it. He is not a God who is not active.

[4 : 55] He is not a God who is apathetic. From the very beginning, He said, I will do it. And the prophets of old, what we call the Old Testament, spoke of it, and they longed to see it.

They spoke throughout their ages of a day when God would rescue His people, when justice would roll like a river, when everyone who was broken and lost in chains would be brought home.

And yet, long lay this world in sin and error pining for years and years.

You know, when we say someone is pining away, it's a mournful image. It's the image of someone who is sick with sorrow and loss.

Someone who is yearning and focusing on maybe something that was and can't be again or something that they hope and never quite seems to come.

[6 : 00] How true are the words of Proverbs 13, 12 when it says, Hope deferred makes the heart sick. But a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.

The baby in the manger isn't just a cute traditional Christian story. It was the inauguration of the healing of the world. It was the greatest rescue operation in history.

And it wasn't just a rescue for the world, though it was. It was rescue in capital letters for the world and for nature and for society and for the nations, but also it was a rescue for us in the most personal of ways.

God can often in his marvelous movings hit more than one target with one stone. And in the process of saving this world, he doesn't lose the intimate gaze for each and every one of us.

In Luke's gospel, we read of a man who had been longing to see that salvation, who had also been longing to see the fulfillment of a personal promise that had been made to him about it.

[7 : 28] In Luke's gospel, chapter 2, it says, 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 in his arms and he blessed God and he 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 revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

When Simeon, who had waited long to see that the fulfillment of that promise made to him, held the baby Jesus in his hands, he knew he could depart this world in peace.

Nothing had changed in that moment except he had seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. Jesus is the thrill of hope that this weary world has waited for.

[8 : 59] When Jesus inaugurated his time of ministry here on earth, when he stepped out of the shadows of history and into the pages of the gospels we see, it says, he walked into the temple in his hometown and they handed him a scroll and this is what he chose to read.

When the first thing he wanted you to know about why he had come, it says in Luke chapter 4, and he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up.

As was his custom, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him and he unrolled the scroll and he found the place where it was written, the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

And he rolled up the scroll and he gave it back to the attendant and he sat down and the eyes of all the synagogue were fixed on him and he began to say to them, Today is this scripture fulfilled in your hearing.

[10 : 24] The Bible tells us even though we feel the weight of this world, the thrill of hope has come. The weary world actually has a reason to rejoice now because Jesus has come to save us.

We want the world to be unbroken. We want the things in our lives that are broken to be fixed. But the thing we need most is to be brought home to the one who made us.

And it is a salvation that stretches from the very edges of creation to itself. So if you long to see the end to death, you long to see the end of violence, you long to see the evil that seems to hold sway of this world put to heal, the salvation applies to that.

But it is also a salvation that gets into the very most intimate places of our lives and our families and our own personal stories.

Jesse talked about this in prayer. Where are you longing to see hope? Where do you need a thrill of hope?

[11 : 55] It is the same Jesus. Jesus. So in this season of Advent, as we do this a little different and we do our best to focus our eyes on Jesus, today you are invited to see the hope of the world.

I know it feels like and it looks like evil and darkness is the most true thing, but it's not. Jesus coming to this world testifies that hopelessness is not the truest thing anymore.

When he stood up and read from the words of Isaiah, what he was telling them is the dawn has come and the day may not be over, but it will not stop until the light of the glory of God fills every piece of this earth.

So this morning, you're invited to bring your long deferred hopes to the Savior. My heart is sick, God, from long deferred hope.

Friend, Jesus is the life that you seek. Our band is going to start making their way back towards the stage. This is really a place in this service today that is a place of response.

[13 : 29] So if you're here and you're not a follower of Jesus, it's always exciting for us when you're here, and I know this can always feel a little strange if church isn't your thing, but whether you follow Jesus or not, I've talked to enough people over the years to know all of us feel the brokenness of the world.

And it's kind of strange because from a purely natural point of view, we really don't have any right to feel that way about it, but we do. Even if you have no spiritual or religious inclinations, we all feel the sorrow of evil.

We don't like what the world is, and I bet if we're honest, we don't always like who we are either. better. And if you haven't figured it out yet, no system can fix it.

No political victory, no educational enlightenment, no economic prosperity that would come your way, nothing can fill that void except Jesus.

Your soul needs something bigger than this whole world can offer it. Your sin requires a price you can't pay.

[14 : 53] And it's for this that Jesus came from a throne of endless glory, as we sing often, to a cradle in the dirt. For you. If you want that hope, it can be yours today.

There'll be a prayer on the screen behind me. That's maybe one way you can respond, or we'll be down front after, would love to tell you about Jesus. I promise you, he is the thing your heart is waiting for.

If you are a follower of Jesus, whether this Sunday finds you in a season of mourning, or a season of happiness, there is always a thrill of hope for us, because your future is secure.

And not just your long distant future, tomorrow, Jesus will be with you. And the day after that, Jesus will be with you. Our sin rises up, like Paul says, and condemns us, and the blood of Jesus says, mine.

We are delivered from ourselves. We are delivered from the chains of a world that is passing away. rejoice is an appropriate word for us. Whether it is a sad time or a happy time in your life, you can rejoice.

[16 : 19] Jesus is with you. Take a moment and bring to him whatever it is you need to put before him.

And then for those of us who are followers of Jesus, we'll have this moment of communion. So when you're ready, you can come to the table, take the elements back to your seat and partake of them.

And when you do, you can remember that every step Jesus took once he came to this earth was a step towards the cross. That was the cost of the hope we now have.

And when he ate this meal with his disciples all those many years ago, he didn't say, let's let's just enjoy this last time together because the ride is coming to an end.

He said, do it in remembrance of me. In remembrance of the fact that there is always hope. That my body, my blood is enough.

[17 : 31] And one day he'll make it all whole. father, we give you this moment. God, we feel the weight of the world.

We feel the weight of disappointment in our hearts at how our lives have gone. We feel the fear of what tomorrow might bring. Jesus, I pray by your spirit you will speak a better word to this great people today.

I pray, Holy Spirit, you will come and somehow in the way only you can do, you will help those who feel that to know that you're close.

maybe it's just, maybe just hope, Lord, just the hope that maybe there is a light at the end of the tunnel. God, we don't know where else to go.

You are all we have. Nothing else is going to scratch the edge. We come to you, Jesus. You said if we came, you wouldn't turn us away.

[18 : 34] And so I ask that right now, that you will give your spirit whatever measure is needed to whoever is here. Father, I ask that in Jesus' name.