

# 12/1/19 - Advent of Hope (Dwelling)

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Date: 24 December 2019

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[0:00] So there's a common saying in our day. Within our language, it's the phrase of, I hope so. You know, for the optimists, they think, is it going to be sunny tomorrow?

They would say, I hope so. For the pessimists, they say, is it going to be raining tomorrow? And, you know, they'll probably say, I hope so. Not to get political, but, you know, some of us wonder if Trump's phone is ever going to die.

And he's going to ever get off Twitter. Many of us could probably say, I hope so. Retail workers, Black Friday is over.

So you often wonder as you're standing in the retail stores, as these crowds come like a stampede from Lion King, dust in the background. They're grabbing stuff off the shelves.

We ask retail workers, is Black Friday ever going to end? We say, we hope so. Having twins, and all of a sudden a family of six, like, boom.

[1:12] People often ask us, are we done yet? I say, I hope so. And there's a big game on today, the Browns versus the Steelers.

The only time when our house is divided. I'm a Browns fan, to some of my regret and embarrassment. But, Browns fan nonetheless. So, many ask us, you know, are Browns going to have a terrible season?

Are they going to win? Are they going to win the Super Bowl this year? And a lot of Browns fans will not actually respond, and I hope so. They will respond, and I know so. They are going to win this year.

About 30 years after the death of Christ, Peter had a pen picked up, per se. A little bit different in their culture and time period. But, you know, you get the point. And in the midst of a time of suffering, he made it a point to communicate hope.

Where we often toss this word around and merely almost just dilute the meaning of the word hope in our culture today.

[2:25] He made it a point to communicate hope. To churches in his day, and also to us today. So, this hope in the passage today, this is a hope not found in our abilities or mere optimism.

That we're familiar with today. It is rooted in a person. In fact, Peter coined this hope in the passage today as a living hope. Which is centered upon, number one, who Christ is.

The person of Christ. The great mercy of God. And the security of our inheritance. And I want to ask you to ask yourself at this time, sitting here, sinners and saints.

What is our living hope? And more importantly, let's not try to define it in our futile attempts. Let's see Peter's definition of the term revealed in 1 Peter 1, verse 3-5.

So, please turn with me. 1 Peter 1, verse 3-5. It'll be up on the screen as well.

[3:38] 1 Peter 1, verse 3 says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.

Kept in heaven for you. Who by God's power are being guarded through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. I want you to think, church, today.

What is your living hope? I want to map out the book of 1 Peter. Because as you're probably wondering, like, why are they doing a topical series? Isn't that a sin for an expositional preaching church?

And you thought I was just going to cherry pick a verse out of context and just talk about it. I fooled you. Let's bring this into context. Let's inform the verse here. Because there's a contextual theme revealed within the first epistle of Peter.

[ 4 : 47 ] And I want you to listen for the theme in these sections of passage. Just focus with me as I read a little bit of context in 1 Peter. But first, let's start out with continuing after what we just read.

It continues. In this, you rejoice. For a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials. So that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Let's fast forward to 1 Peter 2, chapter 2, verse 19 through 25. Listen for the theme here. Let's fast forward to 1 Peter 4, verse 1.

Yeah, Brent's gone off the rails this morning. We're in 1 Peter, man. 1 chapter 4, verse 1. It says, Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking.

For whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh, no longer for human passions, but for the will of God. For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.

[ 6 : 40 ] With respect to this, they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you. But they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

For this is why the gospel is preached, even to those who are dead. And though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirits the way God does.

And then finally, look at verse 12 in chapter 4. Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you, but rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when the glory is revealed.

If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evildealer, or a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, and let him glorify God in that name. And what we read, bringing this into context, you notice the theme here begins with an S, suffering.

[ 7 : 55 ] What a nugget of truth that we entered into within just two verses. Where Peter talks about a living hope. What a nugget of praise here.

Not just found here, but you also find the same words of praise. Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. You see that in 1 Corinthians chapter 1.

You see that over in Ephesians chapter 1. And we find within this book a theme of suffering. And we see the core of who we are being secured, regardless of our circumstances.

So let's talk about that. Living hope. In point 1, hope revealed in the divine sonship of Christ. I have a question for you.

Can hope be found in merely a good prophet? A good teacher? Can hope be found in ourselves? In the best choices that we can make in life?

[ 9 : 02 ] Can hope be found? In verse 3. It says, Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This passage fuels the authority of Christ.

That being originated from God and the Father. This links the being of Christ with a divine heritage in this passage. And the one true God who has eternally existed.

And whom is not bound to time. We see that the importance of who Christ is is because where he came from. He had a divine heritage which empowered his ministry here on this earth.

And this is not a light verse by any stretch of the imagination. But it contains pieces of the depths of truth which man has defined as the doctrine of the Trinity.

Now, we're not going to go in depth of the doctrine of the Trinity because it is so complex. But because we see pieces of it here, we must, if scripture speaks about it, we must speak about it as well.

[ 10 : 07 ] Now, Christianity, it's not a polytheistic belief. It's a monotheistic belief. In which three distinct persons indwell each other and are equal in power and authority.

Only distinctions separate them. Usually when we get to these difficult doctrines, like the doctrine of the Trinity, which is so foundational within your faith, if you can't support and defend the doctrine of the Trinity and you expect to evangelize this world, I got a news for you.

You're going to fall short. Because the other worlds, the other religions, attack the doctrine of the Trinity. The person of the Holy Spirit, the person of Jesus Christ, and the Father.

So you need to study this. And I'm just going to add a little plug here. We're actually going to be doing table talks at a separate time and avenue where we talk about these deep topics of the Trinity.

I think we're going to set up over here. We're going to live stream that starting in January. And us pastors, and maybe if you want to join in, we're going to talk about this stuff to help refine us, to help grow us outside of Sunday morning as well.

[11:14] So I turn to John Piper. John Piper makes everything make sense. He kind of just simplifies the complications of the faith. He says, in one of the best, I think, definitions of the Trinity, he says, God is one in essence and three in person.

Remember, Christianity is monotheistic. But he says, God is one in essence and three in person. The relationship between the essence and that person, then, is as follows.

Within God's one undivided being, known as essence, is the unfolding into three personal distinctions.

These personal distinctions are modes of his existence within the divine being, but are not divisions of the divine being. Try to rephrase that to people.

The doctrine of the Trinity is so foundational, but so complicated and mysterious. But the passage, what this passage is calling for, is for praise in 1 Peter.

[12:27] Because Jesus Christ, because of who he is, rests upon where he came from. It's empowering the ministry and who Jesus was on this earth. He was fully divine, who came from the Father, who miraculously dwelled within man.

with the purpose of saving fallen man. So back to the original question. Can hope be found merely in a prophet, in a good teacher, in a man?

Can it be found in ourselves? Obviously, the answer is no. Not even close. If the law were to weigh upon us like it did upon Christ, we would be crushed.

So Christ, because who he is, he did the work for us and fulfilled the law. Or as Galatians 4, 4-6 says, But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So you are no longer a slave, but a son.

[13:42] And if a son, then an heir through God. This is good news, church. So this hope, church, is the divine sonship of Christ.

The only qualified hope for the world being the same nature, the same being, and the same essence, just found in Jesus. The perfect atoning sacrifice to save mankind in fulfilling the demands of the law and our sins were actually placed upon him on the cross.

And look at this. This is personal in verse 3. Notice it says, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Notice the personal invitation in this.

There is an opportunity for wretched man who couldn't even compare to the obedience of Christ and fulfill the demands of the law. He provided an opportunity for wretched man to have an intimate relationship with God of the universe through his Son.

And pulling in the context of 1 Peter, the entire book, we're not cherry picking and applying this text out of context. We're bringing it in to inform the passage today. What great encouragement in the midst of suffering of this life.

[14:59] A hope which is anchored and perseveres because of who Christ is. You can't change that. No matter how you feel about it. Christ is who he said he was and he came from the Father.

Fully divine. So, no one can take this away. No ridiculous boss at your retail job that made you stand out there like Black Friday really meant something to you.

No unfaithful spouse can take that hope away from you. No job loss can take that away from you. No rebellious kids. No season of depression.

And most of all, no bad diagnosis at the doctor because he's telling you some bad news. This is a hope which is anchored because of who Christ was.

This is a living hope. Nothing can take that away from you for those who know him as our Lord. The second point we see in this passage, we're continuing here.

[16:01] Hope revealed the great mercy of God. You see the passage continue. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

So, Peter continues to define the living hope here, not only qualifying the sonship of Christ, his divine heritage, but now, Peter qualifies it by the attribute of God, the Father, as Christ was an expression of his great mercy.

This is nothing new, church. This existed even in the Old Testament. It's the same God. It's the same merciful God. In the Old Testament, the basis of God's mercy toward Israel is by his covenant to them.

Having established his covenant, he maintains the covenant of love, the covenant of mercy, some of us reformers know as the covenant of grace. It's existed. existed. But also, it's existed by his judgments as well because we kept breaking the covenants of his.

I like Edward Lee's definition here of God's mercy. God's mercy, he says, is a sense of another's misery with a prompt and ready inclination of the will to help the creatures freely.

[ 17 : 26 ] As Calvin says, when God's law shows us our sin, guilt, and the threat of eternal death, then we are prepared to flee to God's mercy alone as the only haven of safety.

So we arrive in the New Testament here. Same God, same mercy. In light of what Christ accomplished for us on the cross, we understand mercy as stressing the faithfulness of God to unfaithful people.

And therefore, emphasizes his pity, his sympathy, and his love for us. The law of God shows us our sin, which is why Christ was no ordinary man.

But his divine being and his essence fulfilled the law of God for us and died a sinner's death. The reason God provided a glorious salvation for mankind is that he is merciful out of his great mercy in this passage.

By the standards and the measuring stuff of God's law, all have fallen short of the glory of God. These sinners, us, need God's mercy because they are in pitiful, desperate, and wretched condition as sinners apart from him.

[ 18 : 51 ] What great mercy we see in this. According to God's great mercy and not by anything that we can do. Because look at this. Notice it says he has caused us to what?

Be born again. God ignites life within the most lifeless beings. He brings the dead to life.

Fueled by his great mercy, it is the power, powerful work of his that works within us and ignites our saving faith and delivers us from a dominion of darkness to a dominion of light.

He delivers us. This word delivering makes me think, obviously, of delivering children to be born again. You had no part in your own delivering when you came as a human being.

It was all because of somebody else's pushing and deliverance. So it is him who causes us to be born again. This is great hope for us who try to meet a measure of God's divine law and try to be good people.

[ 20 : 03 ] This is hope, a living hope because Christ did it for us. God beckons sinners to come to him, but those who are truly changed by God cannot stay the way they were.

But they're given a new family, a new nature, by God's power alone. It is all because he has caused us. He has given these things to us by his great mercy. By the merits of Christ alone, through faith alone, confirmed through the seal of the Holy Spirit at the moment someone trusts in Christ.

So regardless of what you've heard, the word of God says this. And we see the resurrection. If you want any validation that Christ was who he said he was, as scripture testifies to, we need to look no further than the resurrection from the dead.

Church, we see the power of God here. Considering Black Friday, I'm just going to talk about Black Friday, all the illustrations today. many of us probably have swiped that credit card so many times. You go up to make that one swipe that you're just waiting and I hope that money's in there. And once you see those little words, transaction approved, you're like, made it.

[ 21 : 18 ] I often think of the resurrection verifying who Christ was because it is as if a card was swiped.

The death of Christ was that card being swiped, the payment being made for you. And at that resurrection was the saying, transaction approved.

A living hope. The grave could not hold him, church. This is a living hope. His resurrection from the dead was a verification that he did indeed come from the Father.

He was fully divine, though in a form of fully human. This is a living hope. So if this is true, what is God calling you to do today?

Point three, as we come to a close here, we see hope revealed a secured inheritance in heaven. There's a reality in life, positively speaking, for the optimists.

[ 22 : 26 ] No level of earthly happiness, satisfaction, encouragement, affirmation, love, you know, from our spouses and our relationships can compare to that which dwells within you and also awaits you to come.

there's also a reality on the other spectrum of life, negatively speaking, that no level of earthly sorrow, discouragement, defeat, defense, or loss can compare to that which dwells within you as well and also which awaits for you when your life ends.

when you realize this and allow our lives to reveal this in the midst of our suffering, we declare the heaven which dwells within us in which we will unite someday with in the next life to come.

This is not just because we want to reach a destination. You don't come to Christ to reach a destination. You come to Christ to reach a person in the next life to come.

It's because you want Christ. The gospel is not about heaven. It is about Jesus Christ. And that reality is where our devotion must lay.

[ 23 : 41 ] Look in verse 4. It says, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. Because of this living hope, we have our future inheritance being imperishable.

It's decayless. It's undefiled because it's unstained. It's unfading. Using imagery of flowers that wither and decay at the end of their life. Our living hope is quite a hope.

This hope has the power to raise our heads above our circumstances and often our drama in life to where Christ is and see him plain and clear. And here Paul is saying that our inheritance is in heaven and that it is safe for us.

And God will also keep us safe for that inheritance on this earth. Because Christ is who he is according to the scriptures. He accomplished what he accomplished according to the scriptures. Our inheritance is secured and protected in heaven and we also will be secured and protected in this life. Even if we lose it. for the inheritance still awaits.

[ 24 : 57 ] Look at me in verse 5 as we come to a close. Who by God's power are being guarded through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. What a product of us receiving the living hope through the mercy of God.

The means that believers are guarded through faith. No one can take this away from you. No one can disqualify you. This is yours in Christ.

Ephesians 2 the glorious Ephesians 2 8 says for by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not of your own doing it is a gift from God.

Not a result of works so that no one may boast. Often life seems like it's spinning out of control. The day before you're supposed to preach a sermon you're stuck in a hospital holding kids and finagling trying to help them put IV's in.

However knowing that your identity in this life is that of a living hope outside of your circumstances you understand deeply that God is in control regardless of the pain of this life.

[ 26 : 12 ] Regardless of the agony that this life may bring. It's the entire theme of 1 Peter. If this is true what might God call you to do today?

If God's mercy is expressed through Jesus Christ and it's transforming you from the inside out how might this realign the way you experience life today? Or looking ahead within context look at verse 7 through 9 how might this be refining your faith?

Maybe testing you in your faith. Peter understood the words he wrote or had transcribed very clearly and he knew them well.

He died for the truth of who Christ was in which we read today. History recalls that Peter suffered greatly in Rome as a martyr because he was living for this hope that was living within him.

So what might God be calling you to do? Well, for Christians if you see this as the living hope that dwells within you this might help you stay focused upon the living hope.

[ 27 : 25 ] Everything that is in this life that we see that we think really truly matters apart from Christ our circumstances it's all vanity. The book of Ecclesiastes says it perfectly and one thing that I've learned from the book of Ecclesiastes is when he says vanity it's something that you try to pick up and it's just sand.

It looks as if it's of substance and you pick it up and it just falls through your fingertips. It looks promising but it fails to deliver. So maybe this is calling you to refocus your life.

Everything in this life is vanity. However, every trial and praise, every high and every low are equally an opportunity to declare the glory of God.

So maybe this is you this morning to stay focused in suffering and see the big picture for you today. Let the world experience Christ within you.

This is your mission field when you walk out these doors. But maybe you're the Christian who needs to surrender something. Maybe you need to recommit yourself to this living hope.

[ 28 : 38 ] You've been playing games for too long and you know that it's been going on for too long because you get that conviction deep within your heart. God might be calling you to finally surrender that pesky sin that creeps into your marriage.

That pesky sin that unleashes at those Black Friday shoppers. Maybe your co-workers. Maybe your family members. How do you respond in Thanksgiving dinner?

There's a living hope within you that wants to be revealed. It must be revealed. Or maybe God's calling you as a Christian to go when you'd rather stay.

Or maybe to stay or maybe God's calling you to stay when you'd rather go. How is God calling you today to respond?

Church, the significant occurrences we experience in this life will always prove insignificance in comparison to that which lay waiting ahead.

[ 29 : 43 ] And furthermore, for that which is laying ahead for us is secured by the one who secures us in the midst of all of which occurs in this life regardless of their significance.

This is hope, church. This is a living hope. It's not of mere optimism. It's a matter of truth. And maybe you're not in Christ today.

Maybe God is calling you to finally surrender your entire life to him, to trust in the living hope of the gospel. God has mercy for you. It doesn't run dry.

But God took upon the wrath upon himself and took the payment of sin for you. And that payment was verified. That transaction was approved. Won't you accept this today?

Freely. But it does come at a cost of obedience to him. But you will delight in that obedience of having that living hope dwell within you.

[ 30 : 44 ] The disciples once questioned who could be saved if you're asking, I can't be saved. Mark 10, 17 says, with men it is impossible to be saved.

As the disciples were inquiring, with men it is impossible, but not for God. For with God all things are possible. No man can ever save you. Only Jesus Christ can save you.

Your best works, you can help that old lady across the street all you want. It's not getting any closer to Jesus Christ. It's through faith. So in the grand scope of the epistle of Peter's, the narrative of a living hope, that Christ shed his precious blood for you.

Suffered as a substitute, suffered in the flesh, very uniquely for your sins, suffered in front of witnesses, he died in the place of sinners, he died as a substitute for sin once and for all, he was the perfect, spotless, sacrificed, unblemished lamb.

He committed no acts of sin, he ransomed them from slavery to sin. Christ's salvation was planned from eternity past and revealed in history, and today, he completed that salvation through his resurrection.

[ 31 : 55 ] this is the living hope that is alive and active and dwells within us. So I charge you, church, to commit yourself, sinners or saints, to that living hope today, to your faithful creator and continue in the incorruptible confidence of this living hope that dwells within us, who is found in only the person of who Jesus Christ is.

That's our word of prayer as we go into communion.