**Advent – Hope** – Stephan P Dyer – Snr Pastor NP2C – 8/12/2019

A**dvent** is the period of four Sundays and weeks before Christmas, this year from the 1st December to Christmas Day!)

**Advent** means 'Coming' in Latin. This is the coming of Jesus into the world.

Christians use the four Sundays and weeks of **Advent** to prepare and remember the real meaning of Christmas.

* The Prophets' Candle, symbolizing hope; the Bethlehem Candle, symbolizing faith; the Shepherds' Candle, symbolizing joy; the Angel's Candle, symbolizing peace.
* Hope–Peace–Joy–Love.
* Faithfulness–Hope–Joy–Love.
* Prophets–Angels–Shepherds–Magi.

Today we are looking at the candle of hope.

This candle reminds us of the hope God gave us, His people when He promised to send us a Messiah, a Savior, a Deliverer.

The candle reminds us that this promise was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ. And it invites us to look forward in hope to the day of Christ’s second coming,

His second Advent, when all the promises that were initially fulfilled at His birth will be completely fulfilled at His return.

If you think about it, it is entirely appropriate for Jesus Christ, who is the hope of the world, to have come in the form of an infant, because babies are hope personified.

They are pure potential. Their lives are all in the future.

Is there a mother or father who hasn’t looked into the face of their newborn baby and wondered,

“What will this little child accomplish, what will they become?

A doctor saving lives, a lawyer pursuing justice, an engineer; a painter, a ballerina, an astronaut, a college professor, an athlete, a research scientist. . . anything is possible. And the hope is, that they will succeed great things.

*Stop and think about this*. Mary had even more than the usual maternal pride to justify having great hope for her son.

12 months before He was born, she had been visited by an angel, Gabriel, who gave her this promise:

Luke 1:31-33 (NIV)

“You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.

He will be great and He will be called the Son of the Most High.

The Lord God will give him the throne of his father, David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever;

*And listen* …… His kingdom will never end."

This promise to Mary echoed the prophecy of Isaiah, given **seven centuries earlier**:

The prophesy was carried for 700 years. That’s a long long time

Isaiah 9:6-7 (NIV)

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace there will be **no end.**

He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on **and forever**.

The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.”

Not only that, but Joseph, Mary’s husband had also received a promise:

Matthew 1:20-21 (NIV)

an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

In other words, when Jesus was born God made it clear that this baby was the one for whom the world had been waiting, and watching and hoping, ever since the first man and woman had been driven out of the garden, East of Eden.

A Savior, a deliverer, a king.

Imagine the joy that must have filled Mary and Joseph’s hearts as they looked down at their tiny son, wrapped in blankets, lying in an ordinary manger filled with straw, surrounded by cows and sheep and donkeys.

Imagine the hope in knowing that this child was the one in whom all of God’s promises would be fulfilled.

Knowing that He was the one in whom God’s people would find forgiveness of sins, the one in whom they would find true and lasting peace, the one whose power would establish an eternal kingdom of justice and righteousness.

It must have been pretty overwhelming, as they considered the awesome responsibility God had given them. What a blessing.

I mention all this because it highlights the fact that Christianity is a religion of **hope**.

It is a faith that looks forward to the future, to the time when God’s promises **will be fulfilled.**

That was true for God’s people prior to Christ’s birth, as they looked forward to the birth of the promised Messiah; it was true for Mary and Joseph as they looked down at their newborn son, knowing that the time for the fulfillment of God’s promises had finally come, and it’s true of us today as we look forward to the **return of Christ**. *We are to live every day as if He is coming back tomorrow*.

Our faith is a **future-focused faith**, a religion of **what is to come**, a religion **of hope**.

That doesn’t mean Christianity has no relevance to our daily lives right now. Far from it.

The Christian faith is extremely practical.

Our faith means that the here and now **is not** our only focus, or even our primary focus.

Our primary focus is on the world to come. Though we are living in the Kingdom on Earth.

We live on the Earth, but are not of the earth.

Colossians 3:1-2 (NIV)

 “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”

Our focus is not only on the world to come, but also our future focus, that allows us to live this life on the earth to the fullest.

**Hope is not automatic.**

In fact, sometimes hope is very difficult.

Sometimes our circumstances seem anything but hopeful; on the contrary, sometimes they can seem all but hopeless.

So how do we sustain hope in the midst of disappointment and difficulty?”

How do we keep from being completely overwhelmed by trials and pain?

How do we maintain an attitude of hope when everything in us wants to yield to despair?

When we can’t see a way out? When we want to give up? When we want to ostracize ourselves?

We’ve all faced situations where there seems to be little real reason for hope

– in our jobs, in our marriages, in relationships with family members. Some of us have faced seemingly hopeless medical or financial problems.

Some of you, right now, may be in situations that seem hopeless, so that you are tempted to give up hope.

How do we hold on to hope during those times when our circumstances seem hopeless?

Its really simple, **Put your hope in Jesus**

Put your hope in Jesus. Trust in Him for help.

That may seem obvious, but too often we are willing to seek help from anyone and anything before we turn to Him.

,many a time He sometimes becomes our last resort. And after we’ve exhausted every other option, we **then** go to our Lord.

So if the problem is financial, we don’t look to Jesus first; we look to a banker, or maybe a rich relative or friend We rack our brains trying to think of any way we can put our hands on more cash. Sell the car, have a garage sale, take on extra work.

If the problem is relational, a conflict with a spouse or a family member, we’ll buy books on marriage, counselling, check out articles in magazines, listen to Oprah or Dr Phil, and then finally, we may turn to God for help.

We will try everything we can think of, and then if nothing else works, we will think of praying.

**But that’s backwards! Isn’t it?**

We should go to **Jesus first**, not last.

Listen to what the Psalmist wrote:

Psalm 33:16-22 (NIV)

No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength.

A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save.

But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose **hope** is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.

We wait in **hope** for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.

In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name.

May your unfailing love rest upon us, O LORD, even as we put **our hope in you.**

So, what is the Psalmist saying here?

That kings shouldn’t have large armies, that their warriors shouldn’t ride on horses?

No! He’s saying that even if a king has a large, well-equipped army, it can’t guarantee success.

If he’s relying on that for victory, if his hope is in those things, he’ll be defeated.

**Our hope** should be in Jesus. And when we place our hope in Him, it pleases Him. He delights in rescuing those who place their **hope** in Him,

the Psalm says

His eyes “are on those who **fear him**, on those whose **hope** is in his **unfailing love**, to **deliver** them.”

**He** becomes their **“help”** and their **“shield”;** **He** is more valuable to them than ten armies.

I’m not saying you don’t go to the doctor when you’re sick, or that you don’t go to the bank when you need money, or that you don’t see a counselor to help you work out conflicts in your marriage.

What I’m saying is that you don’t put your **hope** in these things.

You put your **hope in Jesus**. He may use a doctor, or a banker, or a counselor, but your **hope is in Him**, not them.

You don’t trust the doctor to take care of you, you trust in Jesus to care for you **through the doctor**.

*Remember: it’s not the size of the king’s army that matters.*

It’s not the size of your wallet, or the skill of your doctor, or the insight of your counselor that matters.

What matters is whether you are placing your **trust and hope** in our Lord and savior Jesus.

Here’s the question:

When you’re in a situation where your hope is running low, what do you do first?

Do you rack your brain to think of all the ways you can solve the problem?

Do you try to think of people, and resources, and organizations, and plans, and strategies?

And then, if nothing else works, do you finally turn to the Lord?

Where in your process does prayer enter the picture? First? Last? Never?

Here’s what to do.

When your situation starts to seem **hopeless**, just stop.

Say, “Lord, I don’t know what to do.

I’m not sure how to handle this.

But my trust and my hope are in you.

I’m relying on You to resolve this situation.

Please show me what you would have me do. Amen.”

I Councelled a couple some months ago, My advice to them was, When you start to argue with each other, STOP, Pray to Jesus and ask for wisdom.

*It sounds Pretty simple huh?*

*It does NOT need to be a complex or over the top prayer. Just a simple prayer.*

*The Lord is always listening.*

So what will happen if you do that ? Can we guarantee that nothing bad, nothing unpleasant, nothing painful will happen? No.

Can we be guaranteed the outcome we desire? No.

Our hope is not in what we hope God will do.

Our hope is not in one specific result.

Our hope is in God Himself. Keep our focus on Jesus the **hope of the world**.

We **trust Him** to do what is best, and that may not always be what we expect or desire.

But what I can guarantee you, is that Jesus will prove Himself faithful to you, and that He will not disappoint you. You won’t regret putting your trust and hope in Him.

Prayer and hope are important, in fact they are both together, the whole makeup of our faith

*I did this Friday night some silly hour asking Him what to preach on.*

*I had notes to go by, but I felt they were too dark, It was from Isaiah, speaking about Israel’s darkest hour and how they were blaming God for their situation and getting into a bad place, and in the end how Hope got them out. But I had no peace about preaching on that. I like to keep my sermons positive and uplifting.*

*So I searched for other material. I ended up writing 3 sermons.*

*This is the 3rd, the final one that I felt a peace about. Maybe I’ll use the others some other time.*

*Listen… Jesus always turns up when things are needed to be done. Trust in Him.*

Isaiah 49:23 (NIV)

“Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who **hope in Me** will not be disappointed.”

Lamentations 3:25 (NIV)

“The LORD is good to **those whose hope** is in Him, to the one who seeks Him”

Psalm 147:11 (NIV)

“The LORD delights in those who **fear Him**, who put **their hope** in His unfailing love.”

*One caution:*

this doesn’t mean that God’s goodness and wisdom are always immediately evident.

Sometimes it’s only looking back, in retrospect, that we can see how God has been caring for us, providing for us, protecting us.

Sometimes when we’re right in the thick of things, **we can’t see any evidence of God working at all.**

*\*\*Counsellors use the term “you can’t see the woods for the trees”*

But if we continue to **trust Him**, to **place our hope** in **Him alone**, we will **not** be disappointed.

So where does this kind of hope come from?

Let’s be real.

It’s one thing to say, “put your hope in God.”

It’s another to actually do it, especially when the pressure is high and your circumstances look hopeless.

Where do we get the faith we need to do this?

We get this from focusing on Jesus in prayer.

We receive the **faith we need** to place **our hope** in Him.

*Don’t forget here, that we, as born again believers* have someone that we can use in these matters,

the Holy Spirit of God which we received on conversion, our rebirth, the promise from Jesus Himself before He left to be with the Father, the comforter, the Holy Spirit, who will lead us into ALL truth and righteousness.

Romans 15:13 (NIV)

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with **hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”**

Think on God’s promises

One way to develop an attitude of hope is to read your Bible (the WORD); who is the Word?.... think about all the promises of God.

The more you fill your heart and mind with thoughts of the life to come, the less the sorrows and disappointments of this life will disturb your peace of mind.

That’s how Paul was able to write,

Romans 8:18 Amplified Bible (AMP)

**18**For I consider [from the standpoint of faith] that the sufferings of the present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us *and* in us!

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 Amplified Bible (AMP)

**16**Therefore we do not become discouraged [spiritless, disappointed, or afraid]. Though our outer self is [progressively] wasting away, yet our inner *self* is being [progressively] renewed day by day.

**17**For our momentary, light distress [this passing trouble] is producing for us an eternal weight of glory [a fullness] beyond all measure [surpassing all comparisons, a transcendent splendor and an endless blessedness]!

**18**So we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen; for the things which are visible are temporal [just brief and fleeting], but the things which are invisible are everlasting *and* imperishable.

The more we **focus** on the blessings and glory of the life to come, the less burdensome our current problems will seem by comparison.

What makes this statement all the more amazing is that Paul’s own sufferings were anything but “light and momentary” by most people’s standards.

2 Corinthians 11:24-27 (NIV)

“Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own country-men, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.”

That’s what Paul was able to call “light and momentary” troubles.

And he wasn’t exaggerating. In comparison to what was coming to him.

The problem for us isn’t that we think too much of our current problems, but that we think too little of what God has in store for us.

If we gave that more thought, the difficulties and sorrows and pain that threatens to overturn our faith would seem much smaller and less significant.

Finally, what’s the basis for our hope?

What right do we have to place our hope in God?

The answer is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God whose birth we are celebrating.

1 Peter 1:3-4 (NIV)

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.”

*And finaly.*

The Lord showed me very clearly that **Hope** miss-directed is having no faith. And with-out faith it is impossible to please Him.

In fact its a place of **hopelessness.**

Many a time, its when we reach that place of **hopelessness**, we actually find real hope, our hope in our Lord Jesus.

It could be said, that **hopelessness** is the gateway to **Hope**. As its only once we are there, we search for the truth, which is our Hope in Christ.

As born again believers we are so blessed to be able to tap into this Hope.

The world doesn’t have this Hope, in fact until the veil is removed from their eyes they are blind to it.

One of our jobs is as much as we can, is to save these people, pray that the veil be lifted from them.

Remember what faith is people. Listen carefully, This is the Amplified Version plus I have added some of my own.

Hebrews 11:1 Amplified Bible (AMP)

**11**Now faith is the **assurance** (*the* title deed, *the* confirmation) of things hoped for (*it is* divinely guaranteed), and the evidence of things not seen [*it is* the conviction of *a* reality—*it is when* faith comprehends as *a* fact what cannot be experienced by the physical senses].

Here’s the question.

Do you know Him? How are your faith levels? Have you placed your trust in Him?

Are you trusting in Him right now?

If you need prayer. Come up to the front now or ask to be prayed for by an elder of the Church

Never be afraid to do what the Lord is telling you.

**Lets Pray**

Lord give us YOUR understanding of these things I have just spoken about.

Open our hearts Lord give us wisdom; remove any veil that would hinder our spiritual eyes.

Holy Spirit move over this place and touch us with Your power. Surround this place with Your Angels.

Give us visions of hope. Direct our paths Lord. Be a lamp unto our feet.

Father we know you love us.

You love us so much You sent US Your SON.

What a blessing that was.

Let us never forget the reason for that.

That Jesus is our HOPE, our savior of life eternal.

Imagine the absolute honor when Jesus was born. He was surrounded by the so called simple folk of the time. Shepherd’s. people from the Inn, And later as a young boy visited by the Magi, the men from the East who travelled from afar.

Bless You Father

Amen