December 18, 2022

1 Peter 1: 3-15

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Hey, everybody! So, Bethany is always telling me when I’m speaking to make a joke. Yep, it’s on cue – you’re already laughing. Good job! But the joke I was actually going to use was that our crowd would be pretty small tonight with all of the Snowbird people going home for Christmas break, but what a good crowd tonight. It’s good to see people visiting family who have come to spend this Christmas season here. It’s a special time of the year. And I know for me, just thinking through this Advent Season, I actually wanted to start tonight by reading something from *Desiring God[[1]](#footnote-1)* on Advent. I know for me, as a new believer, there was a long period of time where people would talk about Advent and I really didn’t understand what they were talking about. So, I want to start off our time tonight reading about Advent and what it is.

We are a people of promise. For centuries, God prepared people for the coming of his Son, our only hope for life. At Christmas we celebrate the fulfillment of the promises God made—that he would give a way to draw near to him.

Advent is what we call the season leading up to Christmas. It begins four Sundays before December 25, sometimes in the last weekend of November, sometimes on the first Sunday in December. 1 Peter 1:10-12 is a clear description of what we look back to during Advent.

*Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. (1 Peter 1:10-12 )*

For four weeks, it’s as if we’re re-enacting, remembering the thousands of years God’s people were anticipating and longing for the coming of God’s salvation, for Jesus. That’s what Advent means—coming. Even God’s men who foretold the grace that was to come didn’t know “what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating." They were waiting, but they didn’t know what God’s salvation would look like.

In fact, God revealed to them that they were not the ones who would see the sufferings and glory of God’s Christ:

*They were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.*

They were serving us. We Christians on this side of Jesus’ birth are a God-blessed, happy people because we know God’s plan. The ancient waiting is over. We have the greatest reason to celebrate.

That’s what we’re going to do tonight. We’re going to look at Jesus.

In our Advent readings over this past month, we’ve been able to reflect on Scripture, pointing us to the coming, to the birth, and the celebration of our Savior, Jesus Christ. For me, for many years, as I mentioned before, I didn’t even know what Advent was, but it has grown to be one of my favorite times of the year. For me, more than New Year’s, it has turned into a time of reflection over the past year. A time to reflect on good times with my family and friends, reflecting on growth that I have seen the Lord do in my life, but it’s also been a time to reflect on seasons of struggle and trials. Not only do I reflect on my own personal trials but I reflect on times where I have been walking with some of you through your personal trials and seeking the Lord’s guidance through those trials. And as I reflect on these times I’m continually thankful that our God doesn’t leave us to struggle on our own. God sent His Son Jesus to rescue us. He sent Jesus to rescue me. He sent Jesus to rescue you. And Jesus is the hope of the world and we celebrate this truth, not only during this season, but every day we should celebrate Jesus as our only hope.

But are we? Are we living like that? Are we keeping that in view? Or are we hoping in other things? Are we hoping in comfort, money, a job, a relationship? Are we looking to and giving ourselves to other things, hoping they will satisfy and bring us happiness? See, this time of the year is a great time to look back on the past year and self-evaluate, to really examine what our life is about and what we have been hoping in.

I know myself, and if I take my eyes off of Christ, if I stop hoping in Him, I will, in my flesh, start hoping in myself or other things. God knew this. He knew and knows that outside of the work of the Gospel we are a hopeless people that will forever be trapped in darkness and live lives separated from Him.

 We will be looking tonight at 1 Peter 1: 3-15. So, if you have your Bibles you can go ahead and turn there. And as we look at it, I want us to pray that God would use His Word to help us and to lead us as we look back on this past year and as we walk into this next year. So, follow along with me as I read through verses 3-15. It 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, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 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. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,…

Pray with me, again.

Lord, I pray right now that you would use your Word to speak to us, to cause us to reflect on our lives, to cause us to examine how we’ve been living in light of your Gospel. I pray, Father, as you’ve done with me this week in preparation, I pray that you would continue to help us and point us to your Son, Jesus, and help us to walk in repentance of things that we are doing against you, a holy and righteous God, a Father who loves us dearly, a Father who loved us enough to send His Son to pay a debt that we couldn’t pay. So, Father, I pray right now that your voice would be the only voice that we hear and that you would help us, Lord; help us to seek you first in everything we do. And Lord, I pray right now that you would use me as your mouthpiece and that we would hear only your words. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

This past week, as I was preparing for today, I started looking at different ways people have defined this word, ‘hope.’ That’s what we’re looking at today – Jesus is our only hope, our Living Hope. One definition I came across, the guy said, “To cherish a desire with anticipation, a feeling of expectation.” We use this word all the time: “I hope we win this game...I hope I make a good grade…I hope the Blue Devils lose. I hope Virginia Tech wins.” We use that word and it’s like the definition says; we use it in a way that we’re anticipating a good outcome, a feeling of expectation. But as followers of Christ we know this hope Peter is writing about is different.

A quote I got from the *Reformation Study Bible* says,

A key word in this epistle is Hope. In the Bible hope is not uncertainty or wishful thinking, but a confident expectation of future blessing based on facts and promises. In other words, biblical hope has reference to something that is certain but not yet fully seen or experienced. Living indicates the undying and permanent character of this hope.

And I love the way the Lord led Phil Wickham to write this song. It’s the way that the Lord led him to define in his mind what He is speaking here in 1 Peter. Later on, we will be singing this song, but listen as I read through this song that talks about this Living Hope.

How great the chasm that lay between us, How high the mountain I could not climb

In desperation, I turned to heaven and spoke your name into the night

Then through the darkness your lovingkindness tore through the shadows of my soul

The work is finished, the end is written, Jesus Christ my living Hope

Who could imagine so great a mercy? What heart could fathom such boundless grace?

The God of ages stepped down from glory to wear my sin and bear my shame

The cross has spoken, I am forgiven. The King of Kings calls me His own

Beautiful Savior, I’m yours forever Jesus Christ, my living Hope

Hallelujah, praise the One who set me free. Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me

You have broken every chain, there’s salvation in your name

Jesus Christ, my living hope

Then came the morning that sealed the promise, your buried body began to breathe

Out of the silence, the roaring lion, declared, “The grave has no claim on me!”

Jesus, yours is the victory

Hallelujah, praise the One who set me free, Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me

You have broken every chain, there’s salvation in your name

Jesus Christ, my living Hope

I started working through and thinking through this verse and how the Lord was using it to create that definition of hope, that Living Hope, in my mind. I started yesterday just journaling out and using Peter’s words, and I began to write. It started off,

His mercy, God’s mercy has caused us, has awakened us, has rescued us to be born again to a Living Hope. How? How has He done this? Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead— Jesus’ death and resurrection has caused us as believers to be born again!! This Living Hope is not a hope that will fade away or lose any of its power. Verse 4 says it’s a Living Hope that has an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. God is keeping it in Heaven for you, for me—- As believers no one can take this Living Hope from us. Why? Verse 5 says, “By God’s power,” and no one is taking anything away from God? Verse 5 says, “By God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Is this the view, the way you look at the world? Is this the filter, the lens that you see all of the world through, that you see all of your life through? Is this the hope that you are walking through trials with? As believers we have been called to live differently than the rest of the world. We know this is not our home. We have been called to face trials differently. In verse 3, Peter 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.

We face trials with a Living Hope. What is Peter describing here? If we are not facing trials with a Living Hope, what would be the opposite of that? If we are not going into trials this week and next week with this Living Hope in view, what is the opposite? It’s a dead hope.

 Let’s look at it from a different perspective. James 2:26 says,

Faith without works is dead.

That means that a faith that is not producing fruit is barren. It is also dead. It is a dead faith. So the way we just look at that now, let’s go back and think about this Living Hope. Living Hope is a hope that has power, power from God, and hope that has power from God produces fruit. It changes people’s lives. It changes the way we walk through trials.

This Living Hope, 24 years ago, completely flipped my whole world upside down. See, for the first 21 years of my life, I lived without this Living Hope in view. I wanted nothing to do with the Gospel. Jesus changed that. April 1999, He completely changed my whole world and He showed me that there was hope. Because I had been living my life searching for hope in relationships, through self-medication, through alcohol and drug abuse, and I found out in April 1999 that I didn’t have to live like that anymore, and He completely changed my life. And now I see trials, I see my life, through a different lens.

This Living Hope should also be pushing us to love in such a way that it brings glory and honor to Jesus and not to us or anything else. 1 Peter 1:13-15 says,

 Gird up your minds, be sober, set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as He who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct.

This Living Hope, again, not only came into the world to save us from sin and death, but He came to rescue us daily from our former passions – namely living for and worshiping self. Peter uses the word ‘former’ meaning ‘past.’ Meaning that as followers of Christ those that are living with this Living Hope in view do not operate, do not live in such a way, that drags your past life back into the present. I know that for me, anytime I take my focus off of this Living Hope and start operating in my flesh, I’m reaching back to my former ignorance and dropping it right back into the present. We do that, don’t we? When we walk in that former ignorance, and I do that from time to time. We all do that as believers. There are times where we walk in the flesh and what we are doing when we do that, when I go back to how I operated those first 21 years of my life, when I lose my temper, when I become prideful, when I become jealous – In that moment, what I’m doing is I am dragging the past, that former ignorance, and I’m dropping it into my present, and I’m taking my eyes and my hope off of Christ, and what I’m doing, what we’re doing in that moment, is we are saying that the way I’m acting, the way I’m conducting myself, is better than Jesus in this moment. That is a hopeless way to live.

Are we focusing on this Living Hope in such a way that it is helping us to fight against fear and anxiety? Are we keeping this Living Hope in view when that anxious feeling comes on, that fearful feeling, when our emotions start lying to us? Are we running to Jesus, our Living Hope, or do we allow those emotions to lie to us and tell us to be fearful, tell us to be anxious? See, in those moments, we have to run to our Living Hope. Like Paul says in Philippians 4:6-7, he says,

Be anxious for nothing, but by prayer and supplication let your request be known to God, and the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

See, we need our hearts and minds guarded by this Living Hope. If not, we will start believing those lies, we will start believing in what our flesh is doing and trying to combat the work of the Spirit in our life. We have to run from that and be anxious for nothing.

Are we living day by day with this Living Hope at the center of our lives? Really, today, as we’ve walked in here, to gather with this community of believers, are we living with this hope in view that Jesus died for me so that I no longer have to live life in my own terms, but I live life now through this Living Hope and He directs my path? Is it this full assurance in Christ and His finished work that leads our hearts and minds daily? I’m continually thankful that the Lord reminds us of our need for His presence and His work in and through our lives. Let us daily fight to keep our hearts and minds on Him.

I’m going to finish our time tonight by reading a portion of that song that we are getting ready to sing again, and I want us to really, like we started tonight, examine our hearts and say, “Jesus, am I living with this hope, with you in view continually? Am I walking into Christmas Day, have I walked through this season of Advent, with you, my Living Hope, in view in every scenario of my life? Or are there things we need to confess today and get right with the Lord?

He says,

How great the chasm that lay between us

How high the mountain I could not climb

In desperation, I turned to heaven

And spoke your name into the night

Then through the darkness

Your lovingkindness

Tore through the shadows of my soul

The work is finished, the end is written

Jesus Christ, my living hope

Pray with me.

Lord, I pray that tonight that you would direct our hearts and our minds toward your Son, Jesus, our Living Hope. Father, I know that tonight that we have people visiting – we have people who have been attending Red Oak for months – who don’t know you. They are not living their lives with this Living Hope in view. They continue to seek to do life on their own terms, which leads them to continually feel empty and void. They continue to look for relationships, or a job, or different circumstances to bring them happiness, but Father, I pray that tonight they would stop pursuing other things and that they would fall on their faces before a holy and righteous God and see how much you love them, and see that you truly are our only Hope. Father, I pray that you would help us believers, that we would continually confess our need for your help and your direction. So, Father, I pray that as we sing these songs that we would sing in worship to you, and that we would continue day-by-day to evaluate if we’re living for you and only for you. I pray these things in Jesus’ name, Amen.

1. Adapted from *Treasuring God in our Traditions*, by Noël Piper. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)