

Advent Week 1 2018

Remember what Ben said earlier: The celebration of Advent is a season of remembrance and reflection when we consider the promises of God that were fulfilled at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But my friends, it's also a season of patient waiting and hopeful expectation as we reflect upon the blessed assurance of the appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

- Remember the English word “**Advent**” is derived from the Latin word: “**adventus**” which means “**coming**.”
- As Ben said, the traditional focus for the first Sunday in Advent is HOPE.

Now, for those of you who may be a little uncomfortable whenever the word tradition is used in a Church Context, let me REPHRASE our celebration of Advent for you in a way that may help to ease some of your apprehension.

- This morning we are going to begin a four-week study of the Prophetic Scripture surrounding the first and second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Does that sound better?)

When We use the word “Hope” in a Biblical context, we are Not speaking of wishful thinking or the crossing of fingers. Rather Biblical Hope is a confident expectation that is based upon the clear promises of God in Scripture. The writer of Hebrews alludes to this confidence when he uses the phrase, “**The full assurance of Hope**.”

- You see, Biblical Hope is Not Blind Faith, rather it is trusting in and resting on the unchanging Word of God. The Apostle Paul tells us that Hope comes to us through the “**Encouragement of the Scriptures**.”

Romans 15:4 **For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.**

- This morning it is my prayer that God would strengthen our hope as we study the 25th chapter of the book of Isaiah together.

Begin w/ a little background on the book: In the land of Judah Good King Uzziah reigned for 52 years (*2 Chronicles 26*) And the Lord blessed Judah with an extended season of peace and prosperity, and He enabled Uzziah to expand and strengthen the nation.

- However, by the end of Uzziah's reign there were storm clouds gathering in the north and God inspired the Prophet Isaiah to confront His people in their sin and lead them through the difficult years that were about to begin.
- IN the time of Isaiah's ministry God raised up the Assyrian Nation to be His arm of discipline against the rebellious people of Israel.

- During Isaiah's lifetime The 10 Northern Tribes of Israel were uprooted and taken captive by the Assyria hordes. BUT by the grace of God, through the intercession of Hezekiah the Southern Tribes of Judah and Benjamin were miraculously preserved.
- Isaiah's prophecy powerfully confronted the people in their sin, calling them to repent and trust in God to deliver them.
- His words of HOPE transcend time and point the people of God to the Messiah, whom he calls, "Immanuel." His heritage would be from the house of David, He would be born of a virgin; The Prophet calls him Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. This is the one on whose shoulders every government would finally rest.
- So vast and sweeping is the vision of Isaiah's prophecy that he foretells both the first and second advent of Christ.
- Before we consider the hope of His coming in Chapter 25, we need to understand the gloomy darkness of Chapter 24.
- It is with sobering and fear filled words that Isaiah describes the Judgment of God as it falls upon a Christ rejecting world at the end of the age.

Isaiah 24: 19 **The earth is utterly broken, the earth is split apart, the earth is violently shaken.** 20 **The earth staggers like a drunken man; it sways like a hut; its transgression lies heavy upon it, and it falls, and will not rise again.**

- The global devastation that is described in Isaiah's prophecy points us to that Great Day of the Lord. When Christ comes to judge the living and the dead.
- Finally in Chapter 25 a brilliant LIGHT breaks through the dark clouds as the Lord Jesus comes to establish his Kingdom.

This morning we will consider the hope of Christ's coming in the first 9 verses of 25

- Hope in God's Sovereign Decree
- Hope in God's Marvelous Deeds
- Hope for the Final Day

Isaiah 25:1 **O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you; I will praise your name, for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure.**

- The graphic image of final judgment that was described by Isaiah in the previous chapter has become the Catalyst for His praise here in Ch 25.
- You see, when God moves in judgment, His acts of righteousness and justice are met with songs of praise and adoration from both men and angels.
- In the Coming of Christ all of the promises of God are finally realized. The long awaited kingdom has come. The oppression and injustice of the wicked is finally over and the reign of righteousness begins.

All throughout human history the corruption of sin and the oppression of the wicked has weighed heavy upon God's people and yet they wait in HOPE for God's strong arm of deliverance.

Frequently in the Psalms, the Saints of Old are heard crying out to God for justice: In Psalm 13 David laments, "How Long, O Lord!"

Psalm 13: 2 How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? 3 Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, 4 lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him," lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.

- Friends throughout my life, whenever trials and affliction come knocking at my door I run to the Psalms. I will often USE David's words in my own prayers to express my deep sorrow and my sad impatience as I wait for the Lord.
- I use David's words because His cries always seem to end in HOPE. He never gets lost in the sorrow; instead, he lifts his eyes to the hills, because he knows where his help comes from.
- In verse 5 David remembers the steadfast love of the Lord and his mind is transformed, his attitude is adjusted and his cries of despair are turned to words of praise.

5 But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

- When I consider the revelation of God and begin to contemplate the multitude of his great and precious promises, I am moved from grumbling to gratitude.
- Back in Isaiah, after observing the fierce but righteous judgment of God the Prophet declares:

Isaiah 25:1B I will praise your name, for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure.

- My friends, God has decreed a day when HIS King will rule the nations, His plans and his promises are faithful and sure. In Psalm 2 David sees that day from afar and records the decree of God for our encouragement.

Psalm 2: 6 "As for me, I have set MY King on Zion, my holy hill." 7 I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

- In chapter 24-25 Isaiah is witnessing the fulfillment of God's promises in a vision that is played out before him and he rejoices with great Joy.

And So My Friends when the world around us becomes chaotic and the judgment of God is looming on the horizon, Our Hope Rests in the sovereign decrees of God that were ordained before the foundation of the World.

Our hope does not lie in the wisdom and power of man but in God alone. On that great day HE will perform wondrous works and marvelous deeds that He has revealed to us by the mouth of the Prophets.

2. Hope in God's Marvelous Deeds

Isaiah 25:2 **For you have made the city a heap, the fortified city a ruin; the foreigners' palace is a city no more; it will never be rebuilt.**

- This city that is made a heap is described in Isaiah 24:10 as that **“Wasted City.”** Which is a reference to the corrupt kingdoms of men. Throughout the Bible this corrupt city goes by the name Babylon.
- The foundation of this city is found in Genesis 11 where the people joined together under the direction of Nimrod to build a city with a tower that would reach up to the heavens. This was an effort to exalt man above God.
- The END of that wasted city is described for us in Revelation 16 – 18 where God moves in judgment to destroy it.

Revelation 16: 19 **The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath.**

Revelation 18:21 **Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more;**

- Even today, men foolishly seek to exalt themselves above God desiring to build a tower of pride and self identification. Marching in the streets in open rebellion against God, our Creator and His established roles in Gender and Marriage.
- Through Science and Technology we seek to be self-sufficient... AND
- Like those who rebelled against God and sought to make a name for themselves in Babylon, we have opened ourselves up to The Righteous Judgment of God.
- Moving on, Isaiah shows us that even in Judgment there is Grace. In verses 3-5 the Lord faithfully Preserves the Poor and needy, He is a refuge from the storms of oppression and persecution for his elect.

3 **Therefore strong peoples will glorify you; cities of ruthless nations will fear you.**

4 **For you have been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat; for the breath of the ruthless is like a storm against a wall, 5 like heat in a dry place. You subdue the noise of the foreigners; as heat by the shade of a cloud, so the song of the ruthless is put down.**

When God redeemed his people from slavery in Egypt, he led them through the desert protecting them from the scorching heat through the pillar of cloud that accompanied them.

- And throughout their journey, he was a shelter from the storm and a stronghold in their times of distress.
- When the enemy raged against them like a storm, HE became to them a wall of protection, securing their safety.

In the same way at the end of the age, when the wrath of God is visited upon the children of men in the season of tribulation God will provide a shelter from the storm.

Revelation 7:13 Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" 14 I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. 16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. 17 For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

- Almighty God, the Sovereign Ruler over all of creation has decreed a day of judgment for the wicked AND a day of deliverance for His Elect.
- As we saw in Verse 1, This will be a day of praise for His wonderful deeds, a day to exalt Him FOR His sovereign plan.
- We see his mighty deeds, We hear his many promises and We live in the Hope of His glorious appearing.

Isaiah 25:1B I will praise your name, for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure.

- On that Great Day, the precious Children of God will leave behind the famine of this fallen world and enter into a feast of rich food.
- We have rejoiced in the hope of his sovereign plan and we have recounted his marvelous deeds now in Vs. 6 we glory in the hope in His Second Coming.

3. Hope for the Final Day

Isaiah 25:6 On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

- Take note of the contrast that is laid out for us by the Prophet Isaiah. IT is truly striking.
- The Lord who is a Stronghold to the poor, a Shelter in the Storm and a Shade from the heat will deliver His people from affliction and bring them to His banquet table. And what a lavish banquet it is! Greater than food network!

This table is set with the finest wines, the most luxurious (Lit. *the Fattest*) foods. No celebration could ever compare to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Revelation 19: 6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; 8 it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure" for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. 9 And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

- The Joy of this celebration will be unprecedented. In your wildest imagination you could not begin to fathom the blessing that Christ will bestow on His Bride "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him" 1 Cor 2:9
- One of the things that will be celebrated on that Great Day is this: The Curse that came upon all of mankind in the Garden will finally be lifted and Death will be destroyed!

7 And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. 8 He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.

- NO longer will man earn his living by the sweat of his brow until he returns to the dust of the earth.
- Verse 8 tells us DEATH is the covering, it is the shadow that robs the joy of man by taking our friends, stealing our children, cutting us off from our family.
- Many of our families have been shaken over the past year by the death of a loved one. There are times when we are overwhelmed with sadness and we find ourselves weeping over a simple word that is spoken or picture is viewed.
- The Apostle John describes the same event in Revelation 21:

Revelation 21: 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

FINALLY, Isaiah describes the CRY of God's People on that Day when the Lord returns in all of his Glory to gather His Bride to Himself.

- It is the Advent Cry, the declaration of God's people at the coming of their King.

Isaiah 25:9 It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

- There is no mistaking, THIS IS OUR YHWH, (covenant keeping God) We have waited for Him!
- The Great Day for which ALL of Creation Groans has finally come! The One who called us to Himself, And Redeemed us by His own Blood has NOW glorified us in His presence. HE is our God and WE are his people!
- All of our hopes have been finally realized, the Promise of God is fulfilled, The Bridegroom has come, LET the celebration begin!

Waiting on God is an ongoing refrain in the life of faith. It is an expression of our heart's desire: "O Lord, we wait for you; your name and remembrance are the desire of our soul" (Isaiah 26:8).

It is an echo of the unparalleled power and grace of God, "who acts for those who wait for him" (Isaiah 64:4).

- With all those centuries of waiting for the Messiah, described in the O.T. you might think the waiting would have been completed once Jesus had come. But now in this present age, we continue to wait IN hopeful expectancy because the one who came promised to come again.

Paul described our waiting this way: We "groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Romans 8:23),

He said We "wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:7);

The church is that community which has "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven" (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10),

Knowing that when he appears, he will come "to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" (Hebrews 9:28).

NOW as we prepare our hearts to partake of the Lord's Table this morning we remember the words of the Apostle Paul who said:

1 Corinthians 11: 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

- My friends, it is in light of that glorious day when we will gather around the table of the Lord at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb that we gather around the table of the Lord this morning.
- ONE day the table will be filled with the finest of wines and the richest of foods BUT today we partake of the simple elements of juice and bread.
- These foods are reflective of Christ's first Advent in which He humbled himself and put on flesh and blood in order to give himself as a ransom for many.

Titus 2: 11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,
12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,

13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

- IN his first Advent, Jesus Christ put on flesh and dwelt among us. Being born of a Virgin he lived a sinless life of perfect obedience to the Father thus securing for all who believe a right standing before God.
- Through His death, he ransomed souls for God from the slave market of sin and through His resurrection He destroyed death forever.
- He ascended into heaven from there He will come to judge the living and the dead.
- As we reflect on His Advent, I would ask: HAVE YOU received the pardon for sin that comes through faith in Christ Alone?
- If you will repent of your sin and believe on the Lord Jesus you will be saved.

For those who believe the Lord has established an ordinance in the Lord's Supper that we would remember His precious sacrifice, keeping the full expression of his love in front of our eyes until we see him Face to Face.