

## 20191201 Jeremiah 29:11 ADVENT 1 - HOPE

### ADVENT 1 - HOPE

Advent is a time of renewal, expectation, and hope. "Advent" means "arrival" or "coming," and it is the time each year that we as individuals and as a church family pause to reexamine core tenets of our faith, and to reaffirm personally what Jesus did for each of us in coming to earth and dying on the cross for our sins.

The practice of celebrating the four weeks leading up to Christmas is one of the oldest traditions practiced by Christians. It is first mentioned as occurring around 300 AD by church leaders at the Council of Sargossa. This is not a meaningless tradition. It is a disciplined exercise to focus on five attitudes that are part of living the abundant life that Jesus promises us. (John 10:10).

Over the next four Sundays (and Wednesdays), and on Christmas Eve, we will focus on five attributes that are available to all believers. We will look inside and out at: **hope, faith, joy, peace, and love.** Today we'll be looking at hope. How do we lose it? How do we get it back?

I encourage you to recommit yourself during this season to Jesus. Listen to the Holy Spirit over this time and ask Him to teach you perhaps what is missing in your understanding of these five attributes. This is the faith, hope, and love that the Apostle Paul talked about (1 Cor 13:13). When you grasp these and understand them and receive them, you will experience a joy that will bubble out of your soul like streams of living water (John 7:38). And, you will experience real peace in your life.

We will study these Christian virtues (as they are known) in a little different order than stated by Paul in 1 Corinthians. Each week we will light a candle in our wreath, and we will ask the Holy Spirit to do a spiritual check up in our hearts and ask God to realign us with His desire for our lives. There will be four Sundays prior to Christmas and we will light them each week and focus on a specific virtue that we need to practice in our lives, and then each week I'll give you some practical steps to make those spiritual goals a reality.

The **first candle** symbolizes **hope** and is sometimes called the "**Prophet's Candle.**" The prophets of the Old Testament foresaw the coming of the Messiah (The Anointed One). He would set things right among men. The Christian faith is one of hope not of hopelessness. Today we will be reminded of just how important a "good hope" is.

The **second candle** represents **faith** and is sometimes called "**Bethlehem's Candle.**" Micah had foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, which is also the birthplace of King David.

The **third candle** symbolizes **joy** and is called the "**Shepherd's Candle.**" When the shepherd's heard the angels' announcement, they were filled with joy. This Savior was humble and was

born in a stable. He was God's Anointed One and in Him and through Him the world would never be the same.

The **fourth candle** represents **peace** and is called the "**Angel's Candle.**" The angels announced that Jesus came to bring peace--He came to bring people close to God and to each other again.

The (optional) **fifth candle** represents **love** and is called "**Christ's candle.**" It is placed in the middle and is lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

There is a battle for your minds. Jesus wants you to have an abundant life, but Satan seeks to steal, kill, and destroy. When we are submitted to the Holy Spirit, these five Christian attributes can and will be present in our lives as believers. But too often the hope is replaced by hopelessness. The faith that we should have is replaced by doubt and fear. The joy is replaced by depression and gloominess., The peace is replaced by conflict and turmoil. And lastly the love is replaced by indifference or worse yet by hate. This is the opposite of what God desires for us. The world, the flesh, and the devil block what God desires for His children.

Galatians 5:22 tells us that living a life controlled by the Holy Spirit has good positive fruit. That fruit includes these attributes that we're talking about over this season. *"For the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, meekness, self-control"*. When the Holy Spirit is no longer in control, the virtues go right out the emotional window. It is when we are not being controlled and governed by the Spirit that we see the opposite manifested in our lives. When the flesh is in control we live a joyless, loveless, conflicted, impatient, harsh, negative, manipulative life. Today we're going to look at hope. It's sort of hard to define hope. In a nutshell, hope is a "positive expectation that God is in control of your life and that He is working things out for your good."

When there is no hope in your life, you just have a sense of dread about everything. You ask yourself, "What's the use?" "What's the meaning in all of this?" Someone without hope just asks, "What am I living for? Why am I here? What is my purpose?" They wonder about the meaning of their life, their job, their marriage, their children, They're just living from day to day with a sense of just existing with no plan or purpose. They're just desperately trying to get through the day. It is just survival. The excitement and positive anticipation of life are gone.

Let me ask you a question, and I want you to be truthful with me. Do you ever feel despair? What exactly is despair? Despair is a total loss of hope. Have you ever felt desperate? When you're desperate, you're in a situation so bad you don't know how to deal with it. And being desperate leads to desperation. When you're in desperation you do crazy or rash things because you've lost all hope.

For me it is easiest to understand hope and the lack thereof, by looking at the Latin word for hope. It is "spero", and so "desespero" is the opposite of that. Do you see the word "desperate" in that? A person that is hopeful has good expectations. They expect something good is going to happen instead of thinking something bad is going to happen. You might understand hope better by coupling it with the idea of "expectation". In Spanish we use the same verb to mean both

"hope" and "wait" (esperar). **So having hope is a good place to be. When we are hopeful we're living positively, expecting and waiting on God to do good things in our lives.**

### **THERE ARE FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS ABOUT HOPE IN SCRIPTURE**

1) **God has a hope and a future for you.** - There are many promises of hope in scripture. The prophet Jeremiah gave Israel hope when they were being taken into captivity. He reminded them, " Realize that God intends good for you! *"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."*<sup>c</sup>Jeremiah 29:11.

2) **Jesus is the anchor in your life that gives you hope.** He is the anchor that is there for us when we find ourselves in the storms of life. We may be tossed to and fro by our emotions, our finances, our health, or our circumstances, but we have an anchor that can and does bring security to our lives. *"<sup>19</sup> We have this hope as an anchor for our lives. It is safe and sure, and goes through the curtain of the heavenly temple into the inner sanctuary. <sup>20</sup> On our behalf Jesus has gone in there before us and has become a high priest forever, in the priestly order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 6:19 GNT).*

3) **You can pray directly to God who gives you hope.** He sympathizes with you. He knows your weaknesses. He promises you grace and help when you are in need. In ancient times, in the Old Testament, believers had to approach God through a veil. We can actually approach God without a veil. (2 Corinthians 3) We do not need a priest to present our heartfelt needs to the Lord. The writer of Hebrews declares this truth in saying,

*"<sup>14</sup> Let us, then, hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we have a great High Priest who has gone into the very presence of God—Jesus, the Son of God. <sup>15</sup> Our High Priest is not one who cannot feel sympathy for our weaknesses. On the contrary, we have a High Priest who was tempted in every way that we are, but did not sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us have confidence, then, and approach God's throne, where there is grace. There we will receive mercy and find grace to help us just when we need it." (Hebrews 4:14-16 GNT)*

You know, just knowing Biblical truth doesn't always help get you out of your funk. I've told you that we learn from explanation, experience, and example. The three truths above are a biblical explanation of why we can have hope. Let's look at some examples now in the word of how to get out of hopelessness when you find yourself there.

### **WHEN YOU'RE IN THE HOPELESS PIT HOW CAN YOU GET OUT?**

*<sup>2</sup> He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. (Psalm 40:2 NKJV)*

1) **First, take a deep breath, and be thankful** first that you have life and breath. There is a saying in Latin, that goes ***Dum spiro spero.*** "While I am breathing I am hoping." Sometimes, you just need to start at the most basic point. You're alive and that's reason enough to get a foot

hold back in reality. Get quiet. Breathe, and say, "Thank you Lord that I'm still here and that you must have a plan for me." Rejoice that you are still alive. Sometimes you might not even be grateful that you're still alive, but force yourself to be grateful for something. Spiritual results follow gratitude.

2) **Talk to yourself about the truths found in God's Word!** Psalm 42:1-5 reads, "*As a deer longs for a stream of cool water, so I long for you, O God. <sup>2</sup> I thirst for you, the living God. When can I go and worship in your presence? <sup>3</sup> Day and night I cry, and tears are my only food; all the time my enemies ask me, "Where is your God?" <sup>4</sup> My heart breaks when I remember the past, when I went with the crowds to the house of God and led them as they walked along, a happy crowd, singing and shouting praise to God. <sup>5</sup> Why am I so sad? Why am I so troubled? I will put my hope in God, and once again I will praise him, my Savior and my God.*"

David's heart was being broken because his life had seemed to take such a terrible turn for the worse. He said, "Oh God I am SO THIRSTY FOR YOU. God, my heart is broken when I remember the sweeter times of being in Your presence." He then tells himself what to do. He says, "Why am I so sad? Why am I so troubled?" I will PUT MY HOPE IN GOD, AND ONCE AGAIN I WILL PRAISE HIM, MY SAVIOR AND MY GOD." My dad used to say, "Sometimes you need to just talk to yourself. Say "SELF DO THIS OR DO THAT!"

Another time, David had been overrun by his enemies and all of his people had lost confidence in him. He was in complete despair. Scripture tells us that, "David encouraged himself in the Lord." (1 Samuel 30:6) One way we can encourage ourselves in the Lord is to recite or pray scriptures to ourselves. Learn and claim the promises of God.

3) **Claim the promises of God that give you hope.** When my mother was in the last three months of her life, she went through several medical procedures that required total sedation. My sister said that even when mother was under anesthesia, and was totally unconscious, she saw mom's lips moving. She put her ear next to mother's lips and heard her saying, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He restoreth my soul." Scripture oozed from my mother's soul. Do you meditate enough on God's word to have it ooze from your soul in your time of distress and need?

There are many scriptures you can pray, but these are some of my favorites:

a **You will not go forward in your own strength, but in the strength of the Lord.** <sup>14</sup> *But I will hope continually, and will praise You yet more and more.* <sup>15</sup> *My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness and Your salvation all the day, for I do not know their limits.* <sup>16</sup> *I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD; I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only.* (Psalm 71) Start confessing the truths of the Lord and the goodness of the Lord. Notice that you will go forth not in your own strength, but rather in the strength of the Lord.

b. **God is not done with you yet!** The Lord is going to continue a good work in you! "*Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" Philippians 1:6. He started the good work in you and

He is not done with you. You are a work-in-progress. You are NOT the finished complete holy version of yourself that He intends for you. Stay at it! Don't lose hope!

4) **Take corrective action.** Get back into sync with what God desires for you. Remember when we studied the Parable of the Sower? Jesus explicitly gave reasons why we often become unproductive. Remember one of the reasons that we lose hope is that we feel unproductive. He was speaking about believers. He said, *"<sup>18</sup> Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, <sup>19</sup> and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. (Mark 4:18 NKJV).*

The cares of the world can destroy your hope. You can get so wrapped up in what's going on in Washington and the world that you will lose all hope for the future. The cares of the world also involve all the things that our emotions long for. They are simply the "worries of life". They can become so distracting that we lose hope. Life is just difficult. It will probably never be easier, so we must learn to be hopeful regardless of the difficulties. Lastly, Jesus says that the endless pursuit of acquiring more and more can wear you out. It can cause you to lose hope. You can't acquire enough to feel totally secure. Your HOPE must be in the Lord and not in what you can make yourself feel secure in. Lastly, the "desire for other things" can make you hopeless. Why is that? Because the acquisition of that "one thing more" never satisfies totally. It satisfies for a moment and then the moment passes.

Has your heart fallen among the thorns? Have you heard the Word, and received it and now has worry and hopelessness displaced it? Let's go back to the basics of the Word today, and my prayer is that everyone listening will have their hope restored. Pray with me, "Lord Jesus, I confess that sometimes I am hopeless, and yet you have told me in Your Word to "hope". I confess, that something has displaced the blessed hope that you put in me when I came to know you. I confess that I have let the worries of this life and perhaps the deceitfulness of wealth displace wonderful hope. Lord, teach me the difference between taking care of my possessions and being owned by my possessions. Teach me the difference between being concerned with my health with being worried sick by my health. Teach me the difference between being content in all circumstances and being manipulated and managed by my circumstances. Restore to my heart today my hope in you. Restore to my soul today, the hope for a good future. In Jesus Name I pray, Amen."

When people go through great difficulties they often ask me, "Pastor, why is this happening to me? Why am I in despair with no hope. Often they are going through very difficult things that just have to do with life in a broken world. Even as my mother lingered and lay dying for week after week, I asked Him, "God, why are you doing this?" Then I talked to myself about the things of God. I told myself, "Lord, I choose to believe that you are good." "I choose to believe that you are sovereign, and that You are working all things together for good for those who love You and for those who are called according to Your purposes. Lord you know that mother, my sisters, and I love you and we are called to your purposes. Thy will be done." (Romans 8:28)

Let us pray.

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