

## ADVENT - HOPE

Pastor Alex Kranjec

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This morning we begin our five part series on Advent with Hope. (*By the way, grab some blank paper in front of you or open up a new document on your tablet, lots of good stuff today! You can also find a bunch of Advent resources on the Calvary App.*)

So what's Advent all about? Is it a new term, a more holy word, for Christmas? I get it Alex, our culture has some kind of a war on Christmas, and we are trying to reclaim it by using a different word.

So, it's not a new word for Christmas. As a matter of fact, Christians have been celebrating advent quite a long time. Throughout the centuries, Christians have marked time by tracing the life of Christ. The Christian year, or calendar, begins with Advent, the four weeks leading up to Christmas day.

December 25-January 5 mark the 12 days of Christmas, and no it's not just a song about your true love and turtle doves, which by the way dates back to 1780, crazy... After Christmas we have Epiphany which celebrates Jesus as king and the Son of God, often connected to His baptism. Then a season of lent begins on Ash Wednesday as we humble ourselves in repentance as we remember Jesus lowering himself and journeying toward the cross. Then of course is Holy Week, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Easter season lasts for 7 weeks as we celebrate the Resurrection. Lent was only 6 weeks. Here we see how the feast always outlasts the fast. Finally the Easter season ends on Pentecost Sunday as we remember the Spirit being poured out and the birth of the Church.

It was all about orienting our lives, our very calendar, around the life of Christ - celebrating, remembering, and reliving the story of the Gospel.

**Advent means - “coming,” or “arrival.”** The focus of this time of year for Christians is meant to be the celebration of the birth of Jesus in His First Advent, and the anticipation of the return of Jesus, in His Second Advent. We find ourselves living between two arrivals, looking back in one sense, and looking forward in another.

The ancient church often used the word, “Maranatha” which can be translated as “come, our Lord,” or “our Lord has come!” This paradox of a word locates us between memory and hope, past and future! It was a declaration that our Lord has come and today we live in the benefits of that, but we still have a hope that

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he will come again to finish what he started. Look around at our world, we need everything that Jesus accomplished in his life, death, and resurrection to come into fullness. Come Lord Jesus! **”Christ has come! Christ is risen! Christ will come again! \*say that with me...**

The question today is, how do we live in the in-between? Between hope that has come, and the fullness of the hope still to come? Before we talk about what hope is, let's first mention what hope is not.

1. **Hope is not progress.** It's not some secularized version of hope that says we just need more progress - become more educated, attain more wealth, advance democracy, develop better technology - then the world will get better. In a lot of ways this is the religion of Apple Computers. One theologian talking about Apple put it this way, "It is a religion of hope in a hopeless world...hope that your ordinary and mortal life can be elegant and meaningful, even if it will soon be dated, dusty, and discarded like a 2001 iPod." I don't have anything necessarily against these things, but a quick study of history and you'll see that progress has never been fully enough - it always leaves us short.
2. **Hope is not uncertainty.** Alex, of course hope isn't uncertainty. But think about this for a moment. John Piper points out that ordinarily when we express hope, we are expressing uncertainty. Think about these examples:
  1. If Anna says, "I hope daddy picks me up early" she doesn't have any certainty that daddy will pick her up early, she only desires that I do.
  2. "Our hope is that Stan will arrive safely on Sunday mornings" means we don't know if he will or not, but that is our desire.
  3. Or, "A good wind gust is the only hope this Eagles kicker makes this field goal" means a good wind gust would bring us our desired goal, but we can't be sure that it will.
3. **Hope is not escape.** Whether it's through some form of material or drug induced escape, or simply a religious perspective that says "we're all getting out of here one day so who cares." Yes, us Christians believe we are getting out of here, and the world will get worse, but is that the best hope we can offer?

What then is true, biblical hope?

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1. John Piper defines hope as, **a confident expectation and desire for something good in the future**. In a sense, hope is about the future. Hope not only desires something good for the future, it expects it. Christian hope is when God has promised something is going to happen and you put your trust in that promise. It is a confidence that something will come to pass because God has promised.

### 1 Peter 1:13, NLT

Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world.

2. **Slide #5 Hope is rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ - the future promises and the past faithfulness of God**. How do we have confidence in the future promises? We root our hope in the past faithfulness of God, in the story of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:32, NLT

*Since* he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else?

That says, *since*, say that with me, *since*, he did not spare his own Son... won't he also give us everything else? The hope of the second part is rooted in the "gave him up for us all" part. Our hope is always rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ. **Hope reminds us we are part of a bigger story**. The narrative of the gospel is the back story to hope.

This morning I want to briefly share with you the highlights of that story that led up to the first Advent, and then look briefly at the hope we have for the future advent.

If the narrative of the gospel is the foundation of our hope, my question for you this morning is, is this your story? What narrative do you connect your life to? We all connect ourselves to stories - our family story, career path, or to hobbies and interests that drive and define us. For us Christians, that overarching story, **Slide**

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### **#6 the common thread that connects and defines our lives, is the gospel - the story of redemption!**

Here's a quote from the *Jesus Storybook Bible* introduction, which is a great resource for families, even for adults!

*JSB - "The Bible isn't a book of rules, or a book of heroes. The Bible is most of all a Story. It's an adventure story about a young Hero who comes from a far country to win back his lost treasure. It's a love story about a brave Prince who leaves his palace, his throne- everything - to rescue the one he loves. It's like the most wonderful of fairy tales that has come true in real life!*

*You see, the best thing about this Story is - it's true. There are lots of stories in the Bible, but all the stories are telling one Big Story. The story of how God loves his children and comes to rescue them.*

*It takes the whole Bible to tell this story. And at the center of the Story, there is a baby. Every story in the Bible whispers his name. He is like the missing piece in a puzzle - the piece that makes all other pieces fit together, and suddenly you can see a beautiful picture..."*

So the whole Christian narrative, or world view, hinges on the story of Advent, the story of Messiah's arrival, and the future hope of his return. This is why it's so important this story be told. Not just once a year from a pulpit. But by attaching our lives to this story, we become part of it and it becomes our "big story." Our children, friends, family, and co-workers witness the story alive within us. There's something powerful when we connect and define our lives through a bigger story, especially the Christian gospel.

You see, the Bible as a story reaches it's culmination in the incarnation, when the "Word became flesh." And therefore this event must be the central interpretive principle of the Bible. It must be the lens in which we read the entire bible through. This is what we call **Slide #7 reading the Bible "Christocentrically" - reading the stories of the Bible realizing that Jesus is at the center of them all!**

We rarely hear the whole story. The writer of Hebrews outlined the whole story of faith in Hebrews 11, Stephen shared the story in Acts 7, and even Jesus

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unpacked the Scriptures, how they pointed to Him, on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24).

So, this morning let's briefly recount the story leading up to the incarnation. I am just going to hit the highlights. If you want a more in depth look refer to the message from last year.

### **Genesis 1:1-2, NLT**

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void (*literally an empty wasteland*), and the darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Then God creates night and day, the sky, land, plants, trees, vegetation, the sun, moon and stars, seasons, sea creatures, birds, livestock, and everything in between. And, he looked at everything and said that "it was good." Then on the sixth day, verses 26-27, NLT:

Then God said, "let us us make man in our image, after our likeness..."

The crown of God's handiwork is human life - it was the final pinnacle act of creation! It was the only aspect of creation where God says "let us make" rather than "let there be." There was partnership within the Godhead (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) from the very beginning. Continuing in **Genesis 2:15-18, NLT**:

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Then the lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

Think about this for a moment men, God makes the man and puts him in a beautiful environment with honorable work - what more could a guy ask for? Yet God announces that's not good. He was concerned that man was alone. Isn't that fascinating. God created human life to have fellowship with him, but also to be a social entity - building relationships with other human beings. Woman was

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created, not to serve man, but to partner together in achieving their divine purpose.

These early chapters of Genesis are crucial to the story! They define the entire Biblical worldview and answer four important questions of life:

1. **Who are we? - We belong to God.** We were made to be like him - a creature so lovely that God himself made us to bear his image!
2. **Where are we? - We were meant to live with God in God's Garden - his presence.** That garden of paradise was specifically designed for Adam and Eve! We were made to be his royal representatives (his sons and daughters) to rule the earth in his place. And we were to do that in partnership and harmony with other human beings.

Our story continues in Genesis 3. It was initially declared good, but we don't have to look far in our world today to see something went wrong. You see, God had an adversary, Satan. Satan had once been the most beautiful angel, but he didn't want to be just an angel - he wanted to be God. He grew proud and evil and full of hate, and God had to send him out of heaven. Satan was seething with anger and looking for a way to hurt God. He wanted to stop God's plan...

So in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve disobey God and eat from the tree in believing that they would be like God. They joined the rebellion and gave Satan lordship over their lives. Thus sin enters the world.

3. **What's the problem? - evil entered into our midst and we lost God's presence.** A few consequences:
  - They fall from the Kingdom of God.
  - Physical, spiritual, and eternal death is now experienced
  - Birth is painful
  - Life is hard
  - All creation begins to groan! All of creation is now set out of order because the image bearers, the ones made to reflect the glory of God, have come to the side of the evil one.
  - Not only is humanity at odds with God, but we are at odds with each other.

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Then God cursed the serpent and said, **Genesis 3:15, ESV:**

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

4. Therein we see the answer to the final question - **What is the solution? - God is on mission to destroy evil and restore our relationship with Him.** Through the descendants of Eve a promised redeemer would come! This is the first mention of hope, that one day a child of Eve would strike a mortal blow against the serpent. This prophecy in Genesis 3:15 changes everything!

**The rest of the Bible is the story of how God fulfills this mission. It's a tracing of the seed of Eve - the coming seed that will crush the enemy. It's a story of hope!**

The story continues - Cain murders Abel and the line continues through Seth. Sin increases, God brings the flood and the promise continues through Noah. A covenant is established with Abraham - The promise God gave to Adam and Eve would be fulfilled in God's chosen people, through the family of Abraham. Joseph shows us how Jewish people end up enslaved in Egypt. Moses delivers Israel from oppression in Egypt, Passover is established, and Israelites discover that the creator of everything becomes the redeemer of His people. Following the Exodus God takes his people to Mt. Sinai to encounter Him and receive a covenant to live by. They were to be carriers of the promise and examples of God's leadership. They were to help prepare the way for the future messiah.

The prophets would come to advocate for the covenant and remind people of God's ways. Eventually the people wanted a king so they could be like every other nation, which ushers in King Saul. David would be the next king, a man after God's own heart, another picture of messiah. God would then establish another promise, the future redeemer would come from the house of David. After David, the story highlights the kings of Israel and Judah, and eventually God's people reject the covenant and go into exile. The exile itself was picture of the original fall. The temple, which had been built to represent the Garden of Eden, had been destroyed. The glory cloud, or God's presence, was removed. And the people scattered just like Adam and Eve had been exiled from the Garden.

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From there we see the prophets begin to prophesy about restoration and the coming Messiah. Consider our Advent reading from **Isaiah 9:6-7, NLT**:

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us.  
The government will rest on his shoulders.  
And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

His government and its peace will never end.  
He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David  
for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's  
Armies will make this happen!

Isaiah 7, and 11; Jeremiah 33; Ezekiel 40-48; Daniel 2 and 7; Zachariah 7, and  
so on... They longed for the fulfillment of God's promises, return from exile, and  
the fulfillment of God's Kingdom.

The temple does get rebuilt, people return from exile, but things still aren't right.  
Restoration is only partially fulfilled and the Presence of God did not return. It's  
during this time of disappointment and longing that Jesus came. We'll focus more  
in future weeks on his actual coming.

But, in his death, through his blood, he removes our guilt, dies for our sins, and  
crushes the head of the serpent! God displays how far he will go to save you and  
**! We are loved by God and He has had a plan all along to save and redeem  
us!**

"For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that  
we could be made right with God through Christ." **2 Corinthians 5:21 NLT**

We were made right with God through the blood of Jesus so that we can worship  
the living God! Our purpose has been restored!

Then to secure our victory Jesus rises from the dead and conquered death.  
Today, right now, in a resurrected human body He sits on the throne at the right  
hand of God the Father and pours out the very Spirit that fills him up to those  
who believe! The New Testament continues to document the story - the Book of  
Acts shows that the Kingdom of God is with men!

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We remember His first coming, hearing the words of the prophets (2 Peter 1:19), and from there we look forward to the future promises of God, until Jesus returns. We eagerly wait, not sitting on our hands, but working and looking expectantly towards Jesus' second coming, living like we really believe he's coming back.

### Mark 13:32-37, ESV:

33 Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. 34 It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. 35 Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— 36 lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. 37 And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

There's still work to be done. We are the carriers of “Emmanuel,” of God with us! We are partakers of the blessing and just like the Israelites, **the church is to be carriers of the hope of Christ and examples of his leadership to our dark world!** We are to help prepare our world for the second advent of Christ. We are part of God's redemption plan - we have a mission!

Romans 16:20 tells us, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet!” He could have done it a long time ago - but God wants to crush Satan through us, through you and me! He picked a fight with the woman back in the garden and God wants to bring restoration through her seed, through Jesus, through the church! Ultimately Jesus will return. He'll remove every tear, there will be no more death, or sorrow, or crying or pain. Every false kingdom will be brought down and those things will be gone forever. Now that's hope you can count on!

Billy Graham said it well:

"Our world is filled with fear, hate, lust, greed, war, and utter despair. Surely the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is the only hope of replacing these depressing features with trust, love, universal peace, and prosperity."

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What's your hope built on this morning? Remember, hope is a confident expectation and desire for something good in the future. It's rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ - the future promises and the past faithfulness of God.

Is your hope rooted in human progress this morning? Maybe you just need to get the next promotion, buy a better house, eat a better diet, or upgrade your technology? Trust me, the next iPhone isn't the answer for your hope!

Or do you simply "*hope*" all of this stuff is true, but really you're uncertain about it? As I was praying this morning, I just felt in my spirit such confidence, as if the Holy Spirit was saying, "**Its True!**" I just got the sense many of us are living "hoping" it's true. This morning the Holy Spirit wants to give great confidence! The early church was so confident in the messiah, his first coming and that he would come again...they were willing to die for it.

Assemblies of God Pastor and professor, Dr. Gordon Fee:

Because of the Spirit, the church is an eschatological people, who live the life of the future in the present as they await the consummation.

The Holy Spirit is the one who empowers us with such confidence to live today in Hope!

I think of one of the last lines of the hymn *Great Is Thy Faithfulness*:

Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow...

You see, hope for tomorrow and strength for today go hand in hand. Hope, rooted in the bigger story of the gospel, hope that's connected to the past faithfulness and future promises of God, that's hope that gives strength to live today. There is no other hope church!

In this season of Advent, as we remember the bigger story - a story of two arrivals, Life in the in-between isn't always easy. We don't like waiting. I fear many of us have connected our lives to shallow and temporary sources of hope. We've bought in to the narratives of our day. Today there's an ancient story - one that spans millennia, nations, languages, and denominations. It's a story of how a

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baby changed the world and demonstrated there's a God who would go to any cost to save and redeem His people. A story of a God who's coming back to complete what He started and calls each of us to join the mission.

One theologian reminds us, "we don't participate in the story...we participate in God himself."