

The King Is Among Us – Hope Has Arrived

12/3/17 – Pastor Randy

Hebrews 2:14-18 (NLT)

Since the children have flesh and blood, **he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.**

During this month we are going to focus on the meaning and significance of the incarnation of Christ. Specifically, I will be talking about the hope, joy, peace and love of God that find their fullest expression in God’s greatest gift to us; the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The incarnation is the arrival of hope. When the curtain closed over the Old Testament, all hope seemed lost. “The final vision of the Hebrew Bible is of a scattered and dispirited people, exiled from the temple and God’s presence.” (J. Ryan Lister in *The Presence of God* pg. 249)

But the incarnation, the birth of Jesus, fulfilled the prophetic hope that the Messiah would come and God’s presence would once again dwell among His people through His appointed King. That OT hope was expressed by Isaiah when he prophesied that a virgin would conceive and bear a child and he would be “God with us”.

What is the incarnation?

The incarnation is the term Christians use to refer to the fact that God the Son, without surrendering His divine nature, took on a human nature, being conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit. In the first chapter of John’s Gospel he communicated the incarnation of God with these words:

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” (John 1:1-3)

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:14)

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The incarnation is a mystery. How God could assume a human nature is beyond human comprehension, but then again, God is beyond human comprehension! We don't like unsolved mysteries and so many people have sought to solve the apparent problem of this mystery by denying or negating the reality of either the divine or human nature of Jesus.

Let me begin by stressing this: The incarnation is not a mystery to be solved, but to be believed. The mystery of the incarnation is not a problem but a profound revelation. C.S. Lewis called it the "grand miracle" and J.I. Packer described the incarnation as the doctrine where "the profoundest and most unfathomable depths of the Christian revelation lie.

Why is belief in the incarnation vital to the Christian faith?

The second chapter of Hebrews provides a summary statement on the matter.

BRING TEXT BACK UP ON SCREENS

The first reason given for God the Son sharing in our humanity is so he could free us from the power of the Devil and the power of death. If you are wondering how Jesus' death can possibly be the means of overcoming death, you are going to have to come back the next few weeks as I continue with this series.

The second reason given as to why Jesus needed to be made fully human like us was so that he might fulfill the role of the High Priest, making atonement for our sins so that the penalty for our sin might be removed and we could receive mercy and forgiveness and be reconciled to God.

We will look at how Jesus accomplished that next week.

The Good news for today is that the incarnation signaled the arrival of God's king, God's Kingdom and the accompanying benefits. The benefit of forgiveness and justification, leading to the blessing of reconciliation with God. The benefit of redemption from the powers of evil and death, leading to the blessing of being a part of God's new creation.

With the arrival of Jesus on the scene, hope had arrived. Ever since the disobedience of Adam and Eve all of humanity has been affected and corrupted by sin, but Jesus has come to perform a work that qualifies him to

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be the head of a new redeemed humanity that bears the image of God and experiences the glory of God dwelling forever in the presence of God. I will explain more about this in the coming messages but for now, let me just say that the scriptures declare that it is faith in the person and work of Jesus that incorporates us into this new recreated humanity of which Jesus is the head.

What God has done to redeem broken and rebellious humanity from our sin and captivity to Satan and to reconcile us to Himself so that we could enjoy all the benefits that belong to children of God, He has done through the incarnation-crucifixion-resurrection. I speak of the incarnation-crucifixion-resurrection as a singular event because they are inseparable.

Through the incarnation, God became one of us, identifying with us in order to reconcile us to Him. He became one of us so we could become one with Him. Jesus has identified with us in our humanity so that he could incorporate us into his likeness to be children in his family. Here is how Paul described the purpose of the incarnation in his letter to the Christians at Galatia:

But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father." Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir. – Galatians 4:4-7

The incarnation-crucifixion-resurrection is the grandest bridge ever built, at the highest cost ever paid, spanning the greatest chasm ever known, motivated by the most extravagant love ever displayed.

In verse 18 the author of Hebrews adds one additional word of encouragement. He tells us that the incarnation of God, the fact that Jesus was fully human in every way, has practical significance for us. It means that he is "able to help" us when we are being tempted.

This idea is repeated and expanded upon in chapter 4:14-16:

So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of

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God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most. – Hebrews 4:14-16

Verse 14 reminds us that Jesus is our High Priest who is also King. He bears the royal title, Son of God, and we are invited to come to his throne. The word “boldly” can also be translated as confidently. In Him we have a sure hope or confidence.

Hope for the believer is not wishing, it is not a dream for that which is a remote possibility to come to pass. Rather, the Christian’s hope is a confidence that God will fulfill His promises. Our hope always has Jesus as its object. We don’t hope for something as much as we hope in someone!

“Let us come boldly to the throne” should not be interpreted as an invitation to go to God for help only when we are in dire need. The present tense indicates that this is the perpetual posture of the Christian. We should “come boldly to the throne” continually, consistently, constantly, daily, hourly, always, all the time, and at all times.

The most important focus in this passage is on the basis of our hope to find help for our needs. King Jesus is willing and able to help us because he understands us because he has become one of us identifying with us. He knows full well what it is like to experience temptation and trials which pressure you to lose faith, disobey God, and sin. He faced them and overcame them for you so that you can overcome them in Him.

Not only was the incarnation an essential and necessary part of God’s plan of redemption, it is also valuable to our sanctification. It is **because** Jesus was human and experienced temptation and trials as great, and even greater, than any of us have that qualifies and equips Him to strengthen us when we are tempted and tried. We can come to him on his throne; that signifies his ability and power to give us whatever strength we need. We are also coming to a gracious God, a sympathizing God; that speaks to his willingness to

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provide the strength we need.

What is so encouraging about the reality of the incarnation, the fact of Jesus real humanity, is that he has experienced what we experience. This is astounding...and so encouraging! Jesus was tempted to be jealous, to be bitter, to gossip, to lust, to lash out in anger, to engage in self-promotion, to abuse his power, to lie, **and to quit... on people and His Father.**

BUT...HE....NEVER....YIELDED!! As difficult as it is for us to grasp, Jesus really was tempted and tried in every way as we are – and actually in ways most of us will never be – but he always overcame. He not only relates to our experiences, but as the author of Hebrews tells us, He has empathy with us and offers mercy to us. I pray that during this Christmas season, as you reflect on the meaning of the incarnation, you will be encouraged and inspired by a renewed sense of Jesus' empathy and grace in your life.

The King has come. Hope has arrived! Let me say it again!

The incarnation-crucifixion-resurrection is the grandest bridge ever built, at the highest cost ever paid, spanning the greatest chasm ever known, motivated by the most extravagant love ever displayed.

The King has come! Hope has arrived! What is your need today?

What do you need hope for today? Reconciliation? Justice? Forgiveness?

Healing? God's presence? Deliverance? Come to Jesus.

Come to the King, enthroned above the universe in all power - He is able to help you be who he has created you to be!

Come to your sympathetic, merciful Savior who wants to help you be who God has created you to be! He understands your trials and temptations and there is hope of help because he has arrived to help!

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