Christmas Meeting

Program



**WELCOME**

**SING**: Joy to the World

1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come; 2. Joy to the world! the Saviour reigns;  
Let earth receive her King; Let men their songs employ;  
Let every heart prepare him room, While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains  
And heaven and nature sing, Repeat the sounding joy,  
And heaven and nature sing, Repeat the sounding joy,  
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing. Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3. He rules the world with truth and grace,  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of His righteousness,  
And wonders of His love,  
And wonders of His love,  
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

**PRAYER**

**READING**: 1 Peter 1:1-21

**SING**: O little town of Bethlehem

1. O little town of Bethlehem, 2. For Christ is born of Mary  
How still we see thee lie! And, gathered all above  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep While mortals sleep, the angels keep  
The silent stars go by; Their watch of wond'ring love.  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth O morning stars, together  
The everlasting Light. Proclaim the holy birth,  
The hopes and fears of all the years And praises sing to God the King,  
Are met in thee tonight. And peace to all on earth!

3. How silently, how silently 4. O holy Child of Bethlehem,  
The wondrous gift is giv'n! Descend to us, we pray;  
So God imparts to human hearts Cast out our sin and enter in,  
The blessings of his heav'n. Be born in us today.  
No ear may hear his coming, We hear the Christmas angels  
But in this world of sin, The great glad tidings tell;  
Where meek souls will receive him, still O come to us, abide with us,   
The dear Christ enters in. Our Lord Immanuel!

**PAPER**: CHRIST THE MESSIAH – OUR TRUE HOPE AT CHRISTMAS

**CHRIST THE MESSIAH – OUR TRUE HOPE AT CHRISTMAS**

Tonight I want to talk about hope. As you can see from the program I picked this as the theme for tonight, Christ the Messiah is our true hope at Christmas.

I apologise for talking about the virus. But it has been a strange year. A hard year.

Compared to the rest of the world we have experienced so little here. When you read what is happening overseas, and many of us have family there, loss of life, loss of jobs, civil unrest, rioting, lockdowns – it’s disturbing and very hard.

But even for us here, we have had a lot of uncertainty. A lot of fear. A lot of separation. A lot of our freedoms were taken away – things we took for granted, simple things like going to church twice, like visiting loved ones whenever we want, like travel.

And we wonder – when are things ever going to get back to normal. Maybe we even think that … when things are back to normal we can relax again. Then we can enjoy our lives again. We can make plans, knowing they are going to happen. We’ll be in control again.

It's more than that though, isn’t it! We have so much more going on in our life. Struggles, sickness, family problems, anxiety. All sorts of things that cause us to have to look outside of ourselves and find something, somewhere to put our hope in.

For many of us, and for many people in the world, things can seem like they have fallen apart. There is nothing you can depend on because things keep changing. We don’t have the power to control our future or the future of our loved ones. And so our hearts can fear, our hearts can doubt, our hearts can be discouraged, our hearts can be tired.

When you feel like this you look for something to hope for. Everyone needs hope to keep them going. And so as I was thinking about Christmas and what to talk about tonight what I really noticed was the contrast between the hope of the world and the hope of the Christian.

Here is an example. Here are some news headlines: I was googling a UK news site, just for a few minutes to get this:

*Ministers – government ministers - are looking at how to relax coronavirus restrictions so families can celebrate Christmas together.*

*How will students go home for Christmas?*

This is from the ABC … *More flights planned to get Australians home for Christmas.*

Here’s my personal favourite – *Travel rules changed for Christmas turkey workers* – this article was about allowing workers in under special relaxed conditions to ensure there is enough turkey available for Christmas dinners because … Industry is determined to deliver Christmas to households across the nation so they can have a fantastic Christmas.

Then there’s this one: *NI Executive aiming to “protect” Christmas period, saying “people need hope”.*

What is it that people are hoping for at Christmas? Have you noticed how much people were counting on the borders being open for Christmas? How the federal government was trying to get a commitment from all state leaders to open the borders so that people can be together for Christmas? It has become a goal within itself – if we can achieve that our lives will be good. We will be happy. That’s our focus. That is our hope for a better future. “Let’s make it possible for people to be together at Christmas … for families for be together.” So it seems like … “if we can just be together for Christmas … then we’ll be happy. Then we have something to hope for.” But it’s a sad sort of hope, don’t you think? It’s not a hope that will change your life. Maybe one day will be good. But what about after that? If it’s not Christ you hope in, then one day will not change a thing for you.

Recently in church we listened to a sermon on 1 Thessalonians 4 - we heard that the Christians in Thessalonica were afraid and discouraged because they did not know the truth about what happened to believers after death, and because they had the wrong idea, they had no hope. So one thing we learned from the text was that **the teaching of the word of God is what we need in our lives of faith**. We can have doubts or discouragement or fear, but the antidote to that is the **truth** of God’s word. People all over this world, they look for hope in all sorts of places, but the hope of this world can never satisfy.

True hope can only be found in Jesus Christ. And that's what the truth of God's word points us to. Only when you know the truth can you be set free. Without it you will never find peace or strength or comfort.  And those who are ignorant of the Lord and his ways can have in the end no real stability, no real encouragement of any value.

So that’s why I picked this theme for tonight – our certain hope at Christmas is Christ. We know that we have true hope because we do not set our hope on people, or on things, or on “Christmas”, but our hope is set on Christ.

So now we are in the time of Advent and we look forward to celebrating Christmas. So for a Christian the question is: how do we view Christmas in a way that is meaningful when life is not always easy or straightforward. When it doesn’t turn out the way we planned, and when actually we’re not feeling very joyful and the future looks quite frightening and uncertain. Or quite sad?

What does Christmas really mean for us … and how does it give us hope for the future?

First of all, what is hope. It’s good to define this. Hope is a wish for something good. It’s expectation … joyful expectation. You are waiting for something better, that will make your life or your circumstances better. It could be something small. Waiting for a loved one to arrive … I hope she comes soon. It could be something quite big … I hope this operation is a success. It is a wish, it’s a desire, but we don’t know if it is going to happen.

That’s the kind of hope most people have. For many today, when they look forward to Christmas they hope … that they can have family around. That they can have more than two people visit. That the borders are open. That they have money to buy Christmas presents.

Often, the strength of hope or … the power that it has to affect your mood … is the strength of the person’s desire – so it all really depends on you. But in the Bible hope is something far greater. It is the confident expectation of what God has promised and the strength of this hope is in His faithfulness. Biblical hope, it not only desires something good for the future – it expects it to happen. And it not only expects it happen – it is confident that it will happen. There is a moral certainty that the good we expect and desire will be done.”

What I mean with moral certainty is this: Moral certainty rests on someone’s character. It is rooted in the commitment of the will of someone. You can be certain that something is going to happen because you know the character of the one it depends on.

So when we talk about Biblical hope we are talking about certainty that rests on the character of God. We know him. We know his character. We know that he never says anything without following through. We know that he has never done anything to make us distrust him. God’s will and purpose are not fickle or changeable. They are like iron, not like chalk.

Biblical hope, therefore, is not wishful thinking. It is a strong confidence. If God gives a promise for the future, we can be certain that it will happen.[[1]](#endnote-1)

Hope is all about what we long for, something that is promised to us, that will come. It’s looking forward to something that is coming. The promise of good things to come.

And when you look at the Bible you can see how it is a dominant theme. In fact, the whole of the Old Testament is a book of hope. A constant looking forward to the Messiah.

Already in Genesis God came to sinful man with a message of hope. Adam and Eve were in a state of shame and despair, not daring to face God, with no hope at all, but in amazing grace God came to them with a promise that the serpent would be crushed by the seed of the woman. The promise of the Messiah. And through the Old Testament the coming of the Messiah is continually promised. We see through the books of Moses, Judges, Kings and prophets a gradual revelation of the coming of the one who would redeem Israel. There is constant expectation of salvation to come. Think of the longings expressed in the Psalms. Think about Simeon and Anna in the temple, waiting for the Messiah. And God fulfilled this hope. The Messiah did come.

However, what we also learn from the Old Testament is that the hopes of Israel ebbed and flowed. At times they waited with great expectancy, but at other times their hopes seemed to be dashed on the rocks of reality.[[2]](#endnote-2) The birth of Cain and Abel brought great hope that God would fulfil his promise, but the murder of Abel by his brother would have brought great horror. How could the seed of the woman save mankind when the righteous son was dead and the other was a killer? Adam and Eve learned in a very hard way that mankind could place no hope in themselves, and even their hope in God was challenged. But when God gave them another son, Seth, we see God’s grace in providing hope again. Seth was the means of God fulfilling his promise.

All through the Old Testament we see times of great faith, when Israel hoped in the Lord and trusted him to provide for their future. But also many times when the present reality of suffering and hardship made God’s promises seem so unreal and so far away.

And we’re not much different are we? God’s promises are very rich for us too, we have a certain hope, and yet the reality of our lives cause us sometimes to lose hope.

But look at what God does for his people in the Old Testament. He comes to them with so much grace, so much patience, time and again with his message of hope.

Look at these:

A very very small sample of the huge number of promises given by God in the OT, many many times the Messiah is promised

Numbers 24:16-19

Deuteronomy 18:15

2 Samuel 7:11b-16

Psalm 2

Psalm 22

Psalm 110

Isaiah 7, 9, 11, 53

Ezekiel 34

Daniel 7:13-14

Zechariah 9

Malachi 3

We see in this the faithfulness of God, he sees the waning hopes of the people, and he continues to give revelation after revelation about the coming of his Son, to keep alive the hopes of his people. The message therefore of the Old Testament is not that the coming of the Messiah depended on the perfect hope of the people. No, it is that God is faithful! When he gave the hope for the people, he is the one who made all things come true.

And so this is our comfort – we may lose hope, but that does not make the promises any less certain. Biblical hope is certain expectation, yes, but the future is ours not because we hope without wavering, but because God is faithful.

One of the most well known passages in the Old Testament is Jeremiah 29:10-14

*For thus says the Lord: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place.****11****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.****12****Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.****13****And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.****14****I will be found by you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.*

These are words spoken by the Lord through the prophet Jeremiah – written to the exiles who had been taken away to Babylon, who thought that they were abandoned by God, who had no hope for the future. But God is telling the exiles that their scattering is not an accident. God has plans for them, plans that include even what seems chaotic and random. More than that, this exile will not be permanent because of God’s faithfulness to his promise to Abraham, that from his seed would come the Messiah, the Lord Jesus.

God gave this message of hope to his people then, and it is a message of hope for us, too. God has a plan for us in Christ that is for our well-being. We can count on it. When we celebrate Christmas we do not look at our present circumstances for our hope. We look to the word of God, to his covenant faithfulness. Our plans may evaporate. Our dreams may be crushed. But God who sent his Son into this world is the one who links our eternal future with Christ. That’s a future for our welfare, not for evil, a future of hope, not despair.[[3]](#endnote-3)

SING: Come, thou long expected Jesus - The song captures how centuries of waiting, longing, and weeping find ultimate resolution in Christ: “Israel’s strength and consolation / Hope of all the earth thou art / Dear desire of every nation / Joy of every longing heart.”

I picked the reading tonight from 1 Peter 1 – really, I could have picked from hundreds of Bible passages – as you can see I’m having trouble keeping this short so

I’m not going to analyse it in great detail. But notice how the word hope keeps coming up in this passage:

verse 3:

*The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead…*

Peter talks about a living hope. Because before God comes into our lives we are dead. Before God regenerates sinners they are totally without any true and well-grounded hope of a better life than this, even though they may think they have hope.[[4]](#endnote-4)

It is God who changes sinners, who regenerates them, who makes them alive. And if God gives us a new life and new nature, then with that we also receive grace from him that keeps our hearts focussed on the expectation of everything he has promised. Vs 5 says, *you are kept by the power of God.* That’s a certain hope for us. Even though in our weakness we fall, we fail, we lose hope, we lose sight of God’s promises, yet God guarantees that our future is secure. God works for us and God works in us! Because God has made us alive, this living hope transforms us. It is not just something for the future. It is something that reaches into our present life. It affects the way we live, it affects the way we think.

This, by the way, is the connection between hope and faith. Hope is confident expectation of something that is to come, and faith claims this promise as if it is already ours, as if it is already our present reality.

Vs 13 *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*

Peter has been talking about great truths of salvation and now he gives us a practical application: “Look ahead, and expect great things. Live in the future. Project your thoughts beyond the time you are in, after all, it’s fleeting, and look ahead into the time which will never die.

Now look at verse 20 and 21

*He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that* ***your faith and hope are in God****.*

Peter here goes back to before the beginning of time and tells us that Jesus was foreknown before the earth. This means that God was aware of Adam and Eve sinning before they did it. God planned for our salvation before time began. It was not some backup plan of God to send Jesus. God was not surprised when Adam and Eve sinned. He did not send Jesus as a plan B. This was always God’s plan. So we can have hope during times that are hard because our hope and faith are in this God.

That’s why Christmas gives us hope and confidence. Christmas is a reminder that God does what he says. Jesus came as our Saviour because God told us he would – he planned the events of thousands of years to make it happen, because he planned it even before Creation. We can find our hope in the Son of God, the Messiah who was promised.

Remember, our hope is certain because it rests on God’s character, his trustworthiness, his sovereignty, his holiness, his goodness. When we really know God as he reveals himself in the Bible, when we know that God from the beginning had a plan to send his Son, and that all of Scripture points to his coming, and that this Saviour came according to promise – then we know we have a trustworthy God that will carry us safely into the future.

What is our hope for the future?

Revelation 21:1-5

*Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”*

*Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.”*

John’s vision guarantees us that there is no possibility whatsoever that Jesus will not redeem a people from every single race, tribe, and people group. And there is no possibility whatsoever that Jesus will not make a new heaven and new earth out of the first creation, so tragically broken by sin and death. The God that called Abraham to count stars, sand, and dust will make good on His promise to create and bless a covenant family from allfamilies! The God who gave Isaiah a vision of lambs lying down with wolves, and kings bringing their splendour into a New Jerusalem, and a perfect world of justice, peace, and the unbroken worship of God forever — He did not lie! He will deliver! The God who sent his Son as a baby into this world gives us certain hope for the future. Christ the Messiah came as promised, and now we can confidently await his second coming. The more we meditate on John’s vision, the more we are consumed with hope that the new heaven and earth will be more glorious than anything we can imagine. That puts our lives today in perspective. That gives us the motivation to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness. We who experience the tear-wiping hand of God in our lives are called to extend it to the lost.[[5]](#endnote-5)

Christmas for us is not about worshipping the baby in the manger. When we look at how Jesus was worshipped in the gospels the focus of the wise men, the disciples, was on what He would do. When we worship Christ we worship the Christ who came to suffer and to forgive and the Christ who came to judge and to rule.[[6]](#endnote-6) We worship Christ who has won something for us that can never be lost. Peace with God. Full reconciliation. A certain future with God.

For this reason, during the Advent season that comes each year, we should eagerly await the second advent of Christ as we celebrate the first advent of Christ.[[7]](#endnote-7)

We are living in the time of anticipation where we hope for Christ’s second coming.

How long will it take for God’s promised blessings to be completely fulfilled? No one knows because God has His own calendar, which He reveals to no one. Only when Christ comes again will we know that God’s promises have attained their intended fullness. Until then we witness and wait patiently with confident hope.[[8]](#endnote-8)

Is this easy? No, often it’s not. While we live in a broken world we will have tears. We will have struggles. We will even have times where we lose hope. But our strength is not in the strength of the hope we have. It does not depend on the strength of our faith. Our strength is in our Saviour who, as Hebrews 12:2 tells us, “for the joy that was set before Him (that’s hope) endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Christmas is not just about a baby. It’s about the baby who was the Son of the most high God, who came to walk the path of sorrows that God set out for him. He walked this path for us, to restore us to God. And so we place our hope and faith in Jesus who promises that he will keep us faithful to the end.

Like Jeremiah, when things are difficult we can say: “my soul is downcast within me, yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope…..

Vs 20b-26

*My soul still remembers  
And sinks within me.  
This I recall to my mind,  
Therefore I have hope.*

*Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed,  
Because His compassions fail not.*

*They are new every morning;  
Great is Your faithfulness.*

*“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul,  
“Therefore I hope in Him!”*

*The Lord is good to those who wait for Him,  
To the soul who seeks Him.*

*It is good that one should hope and wait quietly  
For the salvation of the Lord.*

God said that His mercies are new every morning, a daily gift of hope. A fresh provision of grace to a desperate world. Each morning the darkness gives way to a burst of light, and we know that we are headed to a land where there is no night, where God is our light.[[9]](#endnote-9)

The world’s idea of Christmas doesn’t go beyond a vague idea of the solace of family or feasting. But if this is your hope Christmas will come and go and you will limp from one crisis to another without ever having true peace.

We cannot put our hope in a vaccine. Or our freedoms. Or the government, or our family, our friends, our possessions. Not even in a life that is back to normal, whatever that means. None of these things can give us true and lasting hope, none of these can transform our lives and give us true meaning and comfort. No, although our circumstances may not change, when Christ is our hope, then our hearts may have rest in him, and we have confidence for the future. We will still face sickness, death, suffering, in different kinds of ways, we may still have separation from others, but we will never be separated from Jesus.

Our hope is in him, our Emmanuel. God with us. In Jesus, who is coming again.

**SING**: Come, thou long expected Jesus (during paper)

1. Come, Thou long expected Jesus 1. Born Thy people to deliver,  
Born to set Thy people free; Born a child and yet a King,  
From our fears and sins release us, Born to reign in us forever,  
Let us find our rest in Thee. Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.  
Israel's strength and consolation, By Thine own eternal Spirit  
Hope of all the earth Thou art; Rule in all our hearts alone;  
Dear desire of every nation, By Thine all sufficient merit,  
Joy of every longing heart. Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

**PRAYER**

**SINGING**: O come, O come, Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel O come, thou Day-Spring, from on high  
And ransom captive Israel And comfort us by drawing nigh  
That mourns in lonely exile here Disperse the gloomy clouds of night  
Until the Son of God appear And death's dark shadows put to flight

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel Shall come to thee, O Israel

**COFFEE AND DESSERTS**

**DISCUSSION GROUPS**

**SING**: Hymn 71:1,2

1. The hope of faith shall not deceive us; 2. That hope must soften all our sorrow.  
the Saviour’s words are true and sure. Come, fellow pilgrims, heads then high;  
Our friends on earth may fail and leave us, for those who bide salvation’s morrow  
but Jesus’ faithfulness endures. the hills are level, seas are dry.  
Who limits his dominion ever? O blessedness above all measure,  
He rules creation from on high; O joy when once all grief is banned.  
all that his love and grace endeavour There is our heart, there is our treasure,

shall him his power not deny. When we are in the Promised Land.

**CLOSING PRAYER**

**SING**: Hark the Herald Angels Sing

Hark! the herald angels sing,   
"Glory to the new-born King!   
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,   
God and sinners reconciled."   
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,   
Join the triumph of the skies;   
With th' angelic host proclaim,   
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."   
Hark! the herald angels sing,   
"Glory to the new-born King!

Christ, by highest heaven adored:   
Christ, the everlasting Lord;   
Late in time behold him come,   
Offspring of the favoured one.   
Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see;   
Hail, th'incarnate Deity:   
Pleased, as man, with men to dwell,   
Jesus, our Emmanuel!   
Hark! the herald angels sing,   
"Glory to the new-born King!

Hail! the heaven-born   
Prince of peace!   
Hail! the Son of Righteousness!   
Light and life to all he brings,   
Risen with healing in his wings   
Mild he lays his glory by,   
Born that man no more may die:   
Born to raise the son of earth,   
Born to give them second birth.   
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the new-born King !"

NOTES:

A lesson from 1 Thessalonians 5 – the teaching of the word of God is what we need in our lives of faith.

Hope – a wish for something good. Joyful expectation.

Biblical hope – the confident expectation of what God has promised

Numbers 24:16-19

Deuteronomy 18:15

2 Samuel 7:11b-16

Psalm 2

Psalm 22

Psalm 110

Isaiah 7, 9, 11, 53

Ezekiel 34

Daniel 7:13-14

Zechariah 9

Malachi 3

Jeremiah 29:10-14

*For thus says the Lord: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place.****11****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.****12****Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.****13****And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.****14****I will be found by you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.*

Our hope is certain because it rests on God’s character, his trustworthiness, his sovereignty, his holiness, his goodness.

Revelation 1:1-5

*Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”*

*Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.”*

Lamentations 3: 20b-26

*My soul still remembers and sinks within me.  
This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope.*

*Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed,  
Because His compassions fail not.*

*They are new every morning;  
Great is Your faithfulness.*

*“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul,  
“Therefore I hope in Him!”*

*The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him.*

*It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Instead of putting our hope in Jesus, often we create idols for ourself to hope in – things like security, comfort, convenience. What are some other idols? How do they take away our hope in God?

2. Lamentations 3:24-26 talks about quietly waiting for the Lord. Does this mean our hope is something passive? Should we sit and wait or go and do something?

3. Daniel 3 – The courage to face the impossible that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had sprang from a hope coming from a firm conviction based upon their experience of who God is (Psalm 71). How do we explain that kind of courage – even in the face of death? Do we have that same hope/courage? (Hebrews 10:23). How can we show that same hope?

4. Hopelessness may arise from many reasons but one is just not knowing the truth. How true is this for us? Can you see a correlation between the depth of your personal relationship with God and your hope in him?

5. Advent means waiting. OT waited for the Messiah. We wait for Christ’s second coming. People who need visual confirmation (I’ll believe it when I see it” may struggle with holding onto hope. People who live for instant gratification may also struggle hoping. Good “hoping” mechanisms include a dreaded word – WAITING. But is waiting so bad?

6. If you are in instant gratification person, what can you pray for or what practices can you put into your life that bring you into healthy waiting? If you are a “see it to believe it person,” what practices or truths will help you to hope in a settled future? What insights can you glean from Abraham’s life recounted in (Romans 4:13-25)?

7. Peter believed Jesus was the Messiah. He was the one to say it out loud for all to hear (Matthew 6:15- 17). But when it came down to what the Messiah had to do, to die on the cross for sinful man, Peter’s hope died. He deserted. He cursed. He wept. He went back to his fishing. If we lose hope like Peter is this the end for us? Read Luke 22:32

8. What role does faith have in maintaining hope?

9. How do you live out the hope of the gospel in life? (Colossians 1:23)

10. What helps us as we go through trials? What is our attitude when we go through trials? Consider Romans 8:18-25, Micah 7:7

1. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/what-is-hope> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. (<https://bible.org/article/anticipation-israels-messiah> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/jeremiah-2911-apply/> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. *1&2 Peter* by Alexander Nisbet [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/former-things/ [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. <https://bible.org/article/anticipation-israels-messiah> [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/awaiting-his-return/ [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/fullness-time/ [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. <https://andreasanborn.com/2020/11/10/its-always-morning-somewhere/>

   Christine Schoof, Albany, 2020 [↑](#endnote-ref-9)