



"Hope Is Born" (1 Peter 1:3)

I. INTRO

- A. Advent means *arrival* and it is typically the four weeks preceding Christmas Day. We are here to anticipate, celebrate, and remember that God became a person.
1. The essence of Advent is that the Creator of the universe, the eternal God, condescended to enter the human condition as a baby. The Creator of the universe put on humanity.
 2. Another aspect of our anticipation is for Jesus to come again. When Jesus came the first time He established the KOG God on the earth and when He comes again He will consummate the KOG and His kingdom will last forever.
 3. The KOG is seen and perceived, only through the eyes of faith. The eyes of our hearts need to be awakened and enlivened for us to see and to become citizens of this kingdom. It is something that we cannot do with our own intellect or willpower. (It must be awakened in us.)
- B. The watchword for us at KHC this Advent Season is HOPE.
1. We are saying that our supreme hope and longing was born in humble circumstances in the town of Bethlehem more than 2,000 years ago.
 2. Before I came up the video correctly asserted that light is born out of the darkness. (FYI, There was a 400-year period of silence between the end of the OT, Malachi, and the first Advent.) A light dawned and HOPE WAS BORN.
- C. I'd like to focus in on the word HOPE for the next several minutes. Please turn to 1 Peter 1. I will read one verse and then make a few, hopefully enlightening, comments and then we will close our time with two more songs of worship and adoration and then for those of you that can stay for a few minutes there will be some light refreshments available in our reception area and Harbor Room.
- D. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."* --1 Peter 1:3

II. BODY

- A. The key words in this verse, for our purpose today, are the words *“living hope.”* Before we look more closely at the key words let’s consider the bookends on both sides of the *“living hope.”* We’ll ask the question, What galvanizes (or supports) this *“living hope”*? Two things...
1. The first bookend we see in the verse is God’s *“great mercy”* (*“according to His great mercy...”*). A good way to understand the meaning of mercy is to see how it relates to grace:
 - a. Mercy is not getting what we deserve. It’s punishment withheld.
 - b. Grace is getting what we don’t deserve. It’s God’s unmerited favor.
 2. The second bookend in v. 3 that makes a *“living hope”* possible is *“the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*
 - a. The goal of all Christian mission is that every person on the planet has a reasonable opportunity to grapple thoughtfully with the question of whether or not Jesus is alive or dead.
 - b. There is enough historical evidence to know that Jesus DID live and Jesus DID die an excruciating death. The real question is, Was He resurrected?
 - c. The 20th century scholar and theologian C. S. Lewis addresses this question in his book *Mere Christianity* where he points out that Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic (sincere but deluded), or He was telling the truth.
 - d. If the resurrection is true it changes everything.
 3. What this verse is saying is that God’s mercy paves the way for a *“living hope”* and the resurrection secures it.
- B. With this in mind let’s consider what it means to have a *“living hope.”*
- C. Three points:
1. The word *“hope”* is much stronger in the Bible than it is in our contemporary society.
 - a. The word hope in our contemporary culture is primarily used as a **verb** and conveys uncertainty or wishful thinking: *“I’m not sure – but I hope...”*
 - b. On the other hand a biblical hope is almost the opposite of how it’s used in our contemporary culture. In the Bible this concept of hope is most often used as a **noun** (not a verb) – as it is here in 1 Peter 1:3.

- c. Here is a biblical definition for HOPE: **A life-shaping certainty about your future.** That's why Peter calls it a "*living hope.*"
2. Here's what I believe we need to hear today: Every person on the planet is a hope-based creature. What does that mean?
 - a. Wherever our hope for the future lies, it drives how we live in the present.
 - b. If one worker is paid \$50, and another is paid \$1m for the same job. Their hope critically affects their present patience, demeanor -- and hope. We are ALL hope based creatures.
3. Hope and suffering are vitally connected. The Christians that Peter is writing to are undergoing some severe persecution and suffering (v. 6) – much like Christians in the Middle East (and Africa) today.
 - a. Most cultures—unlike our own—expect suffering as inevitable and see it as a means of strengthening and enriching us.
 - b. Here in the U.S. we are committed to the "unalienable rights" of the pursuit of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."¹ The concept of "inevitable suffering" is quite foreign to most Americans – even Christians.
 - c. The Christian view of hope and suffering being vitally connected is that we have greater room for sorrow and grief because we have obtained this "*living hope.*"
 - 1) We can think you this "*living hope*" as a **residential hope**. It is alive and residing in the soul of the Christian – no matter what our circumstances.
 - 2) Another way to consider a living and active hope is to view it like a **furnace**. When the cold realities of life, like a cold wind, bring a chill to our bones – the residential furnace of hope kicks in – and meets the coldness of our circumstance with the warmth of a "*living hope.*"
 - d. Because we have this "*living hope*" our inevitable disappointments and suffering can teach us, refine us, strengthen us, and enrich us."

¹ A well-known phrase in the United States Declaration of Independence.

- D. "As long as matters [seem] really hopeful, hope is mere flattery or platitude; it is only when everything is hopeless that hope begins to be a strength." --G.K. Chesterton²
- E. I beg of you today, put your faith and your hope in something that will never fail. Through faith in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, your heart will obtain a "living hope."

III. CONCLUSION

A. I will close my time with a parable.

The King and the Maiden (there are a few different versions...)

Danish philosopher and theologian Søren Kierkegaard told a story of a peasant maiden who worked in a king's palace. As she went about her duties the king fell secretly in love with her.

He knew such a love was hopeless, for he was of noble birth and she was a commoner. She would have been terrified even to speak to him, or let their eyes meet, much less hope for a romantic relationship with a king; but he loved her deeply and pondered how to win her love.

He was the king, so of course he could command that she become his wife and she'd have to obey—but would she really love him if he did that? He had enormous wealth, so he could lure her with expensive gifts, things she could never afford—but would she love him for himself or for his money? He concluded that she must love him freely and for himself or not at all.

Anything less or anything else wouldn't be true love. So the king did the only thing he could think of to win her hand. He disguised himself and took a job in his own palace as a servant. Only after winning her true love did he reveal who he was, and as the story goes, they lived happily ever after.

- B. Christmas celebrates God's coming to Earth as a baby to incarnate (or personify) love. To imagine a love so great that God would empty Himself so that we might fall in love is staggering. God became a man – He hid His glory in the weakness of flesh.
- C. God dwelt among us, revealing God's glory, filled with grace, truth, and a "living hope."

² An English writer, poet, philosopher, literary critic, humorist, and Christian apologist. Quoted in *All the King's Horses: Finding Purpose and Hope in Brokenness and Impossibility* by Barry Milazzo, Creation House 2015: 49.

- D. Jesus was born, lived, walked, and talked as one of us to show us the love of God.
This is the message, the marvel, and the meaning of Christmas.