



HOPE

ADVENT | Week 1

Hope is a word we hear often during Christmas or the Advent season. It is important to make sure that our understanding of this powerful word is correct because the New Testament idea of hope is very different from the way the world thinks about hope.

We might hear someone say, “Will the Cowboys win the championship this year?” And someone will respond, “I don’t know, I hope so!” Someone might stop and ask, “Do you think it will snow on Christmas Day?” And often the reply will be, “I’m not sure, but I hope so.” Hope is commonly thought of as a desire for some future event or circumstance that we cannot be certain will come to pass. But that is not the way the New Testament speaks about hope.

Titus 1:2 “...in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began.”

Hebrews 3:6 “...but Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.”

Hebrews 6:11 “...And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end...”

We have a fully assured hope because it based on a God who never lies. We have a fully assured hope because it is based on the faithfulness of God’s Son, not ours. We have a fully assured hope because of the countless saints that have gone before us.

Can True Happiness Be Found?

“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.”

John 1:6-9 (ESV)

What would bring you true lasting happiness?

This has been a question that people have been searching to answer since the beginning of time. Take a moment and think about your answer. Perhaps it would be more money in the bank, or a better relationship, or your children to be more obedient. If you have ever stayed at a Motel 6 or heard one of the commercials, you are familiar with the name Tom Bodett, the man famous for the phrase, “We will leave the light on for you.” When Tom Bodett thought about the question of happiness, he said that everyone needs three things: someone to love, something to do, and something to hope for.

That is a pretty good list until the person you love does not love you back, you cannot find something to do, and the thing you hope for never comes to pass. So can true happiness be found?

In John 1:6-9 we are introduced to a man named John. John was often referred to as John the Messenger or John the Baptist. God had a unique plan for John’s life, and like many of us, probably nothing he would have selected for himself. John

was chosen by God to carry out a particular mission. This mission was to bring a message of hope that pointed to one specific person: Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

John's purpose and mission from God was to bear witness or proclaim that a light, the true light, had finally come to the world. John was not the light but was to testify or share the truth that the light had finally arrived. This Light came to give light to everyone. But, for 400 years, the light of God had remained hidden from the world when God remained silent.

“... a message of hope that pointed to one specific person: Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

Three hundred years before God's silence, He had promised that a faithful and trusted ruler would be sent. This promise was proclaimed by the prophet Micah: “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days” (Mic. 5:2). But in the days of John, 700 years had passed since that promise, so it is easy to imagine that many people began to lose hope and had even given up.

Then one day a strange man who wore clothing made of camel's hair and ate bugs for breakfast began telling all those who would listen that God was faithful to His promise. A trusted and faithful Ruler had finally arrived, and this Ruler was coming to bring them light. This light is what we celebrate and commemorate during Advent, the coming of the promised Light.

Tom Bodett was right when he said that happiness can only be found if we have something to hope in. But it is not the amount of hope that we have that matters. What matters is *what* we are hoping in. If our hope is found in our financial security, that hope can be easily lost. If our hope is found in whether our children excel in school or sports, that hope can be easily shattered. If our hope is found in what others think of us, that hope can easily crumble. If our hope is placed in anything or anyone other than Jesus Christ, happiness will always evade us.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, there are so many things and people that I have placed my hope in. I confess that I have chased after happiness in many ways. Help me to believe the truth that true happiness can only be found in the true light that You sent into the world. Shine Your light on the areas of my life where I need to hope more in You. Thank You, Lord, for sending the true Light that can give me light. Without this Light I would be completely hopeless. In Jesus name, Amen.

Further Reflection | Individual Study Questions

1. How is the biblical meaning of hope different than what you usually think?
2. Where in your life do you find yourself losing hope?
3. What promise of God can you use to fight against where you are losing hope?

Further Reflection | Family Study Questions

1. What would bring you more happiness right now?
2. How could that happiness then be lost or taken away?
3. What is the only thing we can look to for happiness that can never be taken away from us?
4. How can we as a family celebrate the One that came into the world as the true Light?

Notes:

Year: _____

Year: _____

Year: _____

