

Hopeful Waiting

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[0:00] As I said earlier, this is the beginning of a new church year.! If you're not familiar with liturgical traditions,! you might not be familiar that the church actually has a rhythm in the year.

But as you can note, the colors have changed. And that happens. So this is the season of Advent that we're in. And Advent, as you might know, means coming.

But it also has come to signify a time of waiting as well. A longing for the coming of the Lord Himself. So it is the beginning. Advent is the beginning of the year.

But in the characteristic upside-down nature of God's kingdom, we in the church celebrate the beginning of the year by entering into a time of somber waiting upon the Lord.

The beginning of the church year is not a time of celebration and adulation and party like normal New Year's are.

[1:17] We celebrate, you know, the festivities that happen in New Year's Eve into New Year. All cultures have it. You know, Chinese New Year. There's a celebration that comes to that as well and feasting and stuff.

The church new year is a time of somber period of waiting. And it is appropriate that it should be so. Because the beauty of the church year as the Christian church has received it is that life is cyclical. The cyclical passing of seasons and years is not ultimately about us. We are not at the center of the story. God is.

It is Him who weaves the time and seasons and brings about His decree in the world. And the church year reminds us of that.

As the liturgical colors change, this reality should mark us as who we are as members of Christ's body, of the church.

[2:23] More than any other. This reality should mark who we are. That the story, that we are part of the story. We're intimately part of the story. But ultimately the story is, we're not at the center of the story.

Christ is. And so we should observe and celebrate and wait and long for the person who the story is about. Even in this season.

I think especially in this season of Advent, as we wait with remembrance, we also wait with longing. These two words, remembrance and longing, are essential aspects of the Christian.

We remember God's promises and His wondrous works in bringing them to fulfillment over the years in Scripture. And we also cling even more to His words as we wait for the consummation of the great salvation that He began in us.

The wait for the believer can be painful. Our text this morning makes it clear that we wait in the midst of a world that is passing away, that is dying and is burning up.

[3:41] Yet, we are called to wait. This hopeful waiting in the midst of turmoil and distress is a large sort of motif of the Christian life.

Once we're in Christ, we are called to wait upon the promises of God. To cling. It's an active waiting. It's a hopeful waiting. But it's still a waiting nonetheless.

Because as we said earlier, the story is not about us. We're not at the center ultimately of the story. And we're not even the main actor in the story. God Himself is the main actor.

So we wait upon Him to do the work, to complete the work that He started. Christ's own prophecy regarding His second coming is given to us in the Luke passage that we read this morning.

But notice that even the Zechariah passage that we read talks about the day of the Lord. A day is coming for the Lord. And it tells, it's a really stark, gruesome description of the day of the Lord as it comes.

[4:52] But it ends even in that passage with the promise of God, right? He Himself will come to fight the battle.

To win the victory. And He Himself will be King over His kingdom. And it will be a reign of tranquility and peace and righteousness.

That's what we're waiting for, by the way. If you're wondering, what is the wait? It is a hopeful wait. That's what we are hoping for. And specifically in our passage in Luke this morning, we are thinking of the advent or the coming of the Son of Man.

Specifically, a second coming, right? It's a bit curious that as we are remembering in this Advent season, its first coming, we are also to look and to be mindful and to long for its second coming. That's the significance of the seasons of the church here as well. And so look in verse 25 of Luke 21. If you have your Bible, it's Luke 21.

[6:06] If you don't have a Bible, it should be in the pew. And it's on page 1047 of your pew Bible, I believe. Page 1047.

And Jesus Himself is giving these instructions regarding prophecy, really, about His coming. And it's part of His larger, all of chapter 21, it's part of the larger Olivet Discourse.

It's right before the, it's during the Passion Week. He's about to go to the cross. It's probably the Wednesday of the week He will go and become as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

It's the Wednesday of He's there on the Mount of Olives. And He's teaching. And He's speaking to the people. And here, it's in this context that He gives these instructions. All of chapter 21 is actually, is subsuming in this discourse that He's given.

But we're just going to talk about verse 25 to 33. And He says to them, There will be signs in sun and moon and stars. And on the earth, distress of nations, in perplexity, because of the roaring of the sea and the waves.

[7:25] Right there, we see how terrible the circumstances accompanying a second coming will be. Right? He says, The people will faint with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world.

For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. If you read that, and there's a bit of, you recognize how terrible those words are.

But it is the Lord, mind you, saying this, telling us of this. So we see how terrible the circumstances accompany this coming will be. It's not as we wait for the Lord's coming, as we see the world around us.

You know, one of the languages of the world is of redemption, of making things new. Right? We are to work as Christians, to make all things new.

And I think that is true, because as the people of God, we are to imitate our Father. Right? And our lives, we are actually citizens of God's kingdom.

[8:40] Not citizens of, primarily, we're citizens of the kingdom of God first. First and foremost. Before our citizenship, our national citizenship is secondary.

It might be hard for you to hear, but that is the reality of who we are in Christ. Your citizenship as the people of God, in the kingdom of God where Jesus reigns, is primary.

And as you walk around, as you live your life, you should see yourself as citizens of the kingdom of God first and foremost.

And as citizens of the kingdom of God, you carry the essence and the values of the king whom you serve. And so, if you are, by the Holy Spirit, living faithfully as citizens of the kingdom of God, there should be, you should be, in your sphere, seeking renewal.

Seeking healing. Seeking to mend that which is broken. Seeking to be like your father and your king. Seeking to be like your father and your king. Seeking to be like your father and your king. But there's a distinction there. The distinction is that we, and this is an important distinction, we shouldn't think that our works is what's going to bring the redemption of the world.

[9:58] Again, I think that might be even hard to hear. And I think oftentimes in the church we say that, right? You know, we speak of if our faithfulness and our works and our righteousness and our good works will heal that which is broken and bring the redemption of the world.

That's not what the Bible talks about. The Bible talks about the world continuing in destruction and failure and turmoil. And it does talk about a redemption that is coming.

This is our hope. But we are not the one bringing that about. It is Christ himself. He's the one that started the work of redemption. He will finish the work of redemption. We wait for his work. We participate in that work as faithful citizens of the kingdom. But we wait for him to accomplish and to fulfill. In fact, he is working in us to do that work of redemption.

But it is the primary actor, not us. So, as we see the terrible circumstances accompanying the second advent of Christ, we might be thinking, well, it might be natural for us maybe to think, well, where is the hope?

[11:14] Where is the kingdom? Why are the righteous being forsaken? Why are the righteous being trampled upon and the wicked prospering?

Why is there turmoil all around us? Well, we can take comfort in the words of our Lord that this is as it should be. This is ushering in the ultimate redemption that Christ himself would bring.

So, first, we observe the terrible circumstance accompanying the second coming of Christ.

Secondly, we also see, I want us to see there, the complete security of Christians.

Even in the midst of that turmoil. I want us to see the complete security of those who are in Christ Jesus. And even as we see the signs in the sun and moon and stars and the earth in distress, nations in perplexity, the roaring of the seas and the waves, tsunamis and earthquakes, people fainting with fear, foreboding of what is coming in the world.

But even as we're in the midst of that, there is a complete security that should be ours as true Christians as we long for the second coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

[12:37] The servant, this is what Bishop Ryle says. He says, the servant of God should often look forward to Christ's second coming, second advent, he puts it.

He should always look forward to it. He will find, as he looks forward, as he thinks about it, he will find that the thought of that day is as a cordial to sustain him under all trials and persecutions of this present life.

As we think about Christ's second coming, it should be as a cordial, that might be a, that might be a, sort of like a dream that revives, that's what a cordial is, right?

It gives you, you know, a good, you know, spirit that gives you, you know, sort of strength and warms your heart. The thought of Christ's second coming, that is, it should be like that.

And it should sustain us under all trials and persecutions of this present life. Because we know that the circumstances of today, of tomorrow, of our present circumstances, is not the final story.

[13:54] We know that those charlatans that, in the world, that are pretending to be God, that are pretending to write stories, the kings of the earth, they are just mere players.

The one who is writing the story is still at work. And he's using all of those things. And we long for his coming. And because we're in Christ, we know that all these turmoil that is coming, it's ultimately for our redemption.

It's ultimately going to be the consummation of what Christ has begun in you and I, the salvation of our souls. That he will complete the work of salvation in us.

As the author of Hebrews says, Yet a little while, and he shall come, and will not tarry. We wait for his coming.

We wait for him to come and bring us home with him. As the author of Isaiah also says, This is the promise of what would happen.

[15:02] For those who are in Christ at his second me, He will swallow death forever. And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces. And the reproach of his people, the reproach of his people, you and I are his people.

Our reproach will be taken away from all the earth. For the Lord has spoken it. So, as we wait, we wait with complete security.

What's the basis of our security? It's the promise of God. It is the promise of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And I think one of the other things that we ought to think of in this season of Advent as we wait, is how we ought to be watching.

Alertness. Watching the signs of the times. In the prospect of his second coming. Now, The signs preceding our Lord's second coming, As we said already, It's not going to be universal peace.

It's going to be, The signs will be war. And confusion. And turmoil. But we wait for the signs. Now, There's also a distinction here. As we wait for the signs, We don't want to be as those who are reading tea leaves.

[16:27] Right? There are, We, There are Christians like that. And I think, And I think, It's a mistake to do that. Every single sign of the times, We try to parse it.

To mean, You know, This, Oh, This is, Okay, This is what happened in Israel. This means this. And then, What Russia is doing now. And, We, We, What does God say about his second coming? Did he say he was going to tell us? When? What time? No. He promised he will come. He's given us signs. The signs are not so that we can read tea leaves and be anxious.

The signs that he has promised is so that we can rest. In his promises. The distinction is there.

There's a, There's a way in which we can wait anxiously.

And then try to, Sort of be, Marchinate. And create the circumstances by which he will come. It's not up to us. It's not our story.

[17:33] But we wait though, As we see the signs around us. We wait with hope and longing. Do you long for this, For the coming of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Do you desire it?

Do you pray, Come Lord Jesus? Is that the kind of longing and posture of our hearts as the people of God? It ought to be. And I think it will be when our eyes are fixed on him.

That's when it happens. That's when we long for it. But, We don't, And we wouldn't long for him, When our eyes and our hearts are fixed, On the circumstances around us, In the world.

And I know that it's, There's a, It's really hard. There is a lot going on around us. There's a lot of noise around us. I don't mean for us to, To sort of be, Live in a bubble as Christians.

That's not what I'm talking about. We, We know what to, We should be aware of, Of the affairs of our world, Of our country, Of our society. We should even seek, Again, To participate in the work of, As Christ ambassadors.

[18:43] In bringing solace and peace wherever we can, As people of God. But, We do that, Not in, With anxiousness, With anxiety.

We do that, Resting, In God's promises. We do that, When we fixed our eyes, On him who was promised, Knowing that he will accomplish, That which he promised.

Think about, Think about the first advent, Of our Lord and Savior. His birth, In Bethlehem. Think about the promises of God, Years and centuries, Before.

That had promised, That that will happen. Think about the faithful sins, Of the Old Testament, That held on to that promise, And those, Who didn't.

What, By what means, Were they able to hold on to the promises? Because they fixed their eyes, On the Lord, Who made the promise. The same thing, The same way, That we ought to work, As the people of God, As God's covenant people.

[19:52] We fixed our eyes, On the one who was promised. God, Our Lord Jesus Christ, As he says this, He gives a parable, Right? So as we watch for the signs, He gives a parable, To sort of, To show us, How we should work.

In verse 29, He says, He told them a parable. He says, Look at the fig tree, And all the trees, Not just the fig tree, All the trees, Look at it. As soon as they come out in leaf, You see for yourselves, And know, That summer is already near.

So also, When you see these things, Taking place, You know, That the kingdom of God is near. So these signs, Are, As the way we see the leaves changing, Right?

The leaves are falling in the fall, Coming into winter, And in the spring, The leaves will, Start to appear on the leaves again, On the trees again. And we know, Those are indicators for us, Of the changing of the seasons.

In the same manner, The signs of the times, Should tell us, Of the coming. Of our God. Of our Lord and Savior and King.

[21:05] Now, How certain is it, That our Lord's predictions, About the second coming, Will be fulfilled? This is why Jesus says in verse 32, Truly I say to you, This generation will not pass away, Until all, All, Has taken place.

What is the all there? All that, All that, Jesus is prophesying, Will take place. Heaven and earth, Will pass away, But my words, Will not pass away.

Again, What is the basis, Of our certainty? It is, The God, Who made the promise. The basis of our certainty, The basis of our security, The basis of our comfort, Is in the God, Who's promised, And we will fulfill it.

So the challenge for us, Brothers and sisters, In the world, Now, Is to fix our eyes, Again, On the Lord. We're, I find it curious, That this time, This season, Of Advent, When we are called to wait, As

the people of God, It's also one of the most, Troubling, And busiest, Seasons, Of the year, Of secular, Of our world in general, Right?

What are the things, That we're longing for, And waiting for? I think, I think of the moment, Of the season of Advent, Of Christmas, As it is, We're waiting, Right? The Advent, Is to lead us to Christmas, And, And, And as we commemorate, And we celebrate, The birth of our Lord, And Savior Jesus Christ.

[22 : 56] As a kid, I waited, For Christmas, Right? There was a longing, For Christmas, That I had. I waited, And it happened to be, That my birthday was, Also around the time of Christmas, So, There was an eagerness, A more intense waiting for me, You know, For this season.

But what was I waiting for? I was waiting for, Obviously, As a kid, The presents that will come, The gifts that will come, The festivities, And the food, And the new clothes, That's natural, And that's good, Our children are waiting, My kids are already making lists, And all of those things, For Christmas, Our oldest, Went downstairs, A few days ago, And he was just sitting there, Of his own volition, Writing a list, To Santa, For what he wanted, For Christmas, So, There's a waiting, That's natural, The rest of the world, Is waiting as well, Right?

Even in this season, But look at the way, The world waits, Look at it in contrast, The way we are to wait, As the people of God, There's a business, That is futile, In the waiting of the world, Look at the business, That's 10, Right after Christmas, After Thanksgiving, Right?

Even right before, Now, It used to be, After Thanksgiving, That all the Christmas stuff, Comes out, It's now before, But look at it, It's the Thanksgiving, And then Black Friday, And then the busyness, Of these next weeks, Before Christmas, Scurrying up and down, To get gifts, Being stressed, Being consumed, By anxiety, As people of God's kingdom, As citizens of the king, Our waiting, And even our time, In this season, Should be markedly different, Than the world around us, I want to encourage you, Brothers and sisters, As you wait, Yes, Buy gifts for your kids, Enjoy the festivities of Christmas, Do all of those things, But primarily, Look to your Lord, And Savior Jesus Christ, Long for him, Wait upon him, He is coming again,

And as we wait, We wait actively, We wait expectantly, We wait, Like the five virgins, With their lamps, And their oil, Attending, Waiting for the bridegroom, To come, We do not lose sight, We do not forget, That he promised, That he will come, We do not turn aside, On the way, To other things, We wait expectantly, May God, Father, Son, And Holy Spirit, Help us, And empower us, To wait, Longingly for him, Let us pray, Lord, We thank you, For your mercy, And goodness to us, In coming, Into the world, At your first advent, To save, Us, From our wretchedness, To be the lamb, That will be slain, To take away, The sins of the world, I thank you, Lord, That you promise, That what,

[26 : 16] That which you started, At your first advent, You will come, To consummate, And to fulfill, And to complete, At your second coming, And even as we see, The signs around us, In the world, Of turmoil, And angst, And war, And disease, And famine, And all of the things, That tends, The signs of your second coming, Help us, Lord, Not to lose sight, Not to lose hope, Not to lose sight of you, Our king, Even in the midst, Of this turmoil, And busyness, For us to fix our eyes on you, We pray, In the name of our Lord, And Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.