

Sermon - 7 December 2025

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Preacher: Ife Ojetayo

[0:00] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Please be seated. O Word of God incarnate, O wisdom from an eye, O truth unchanged, unchanging, O light of a dark sky.

These beloved words from the hymn we just sang a moment ago, beautifully capture the theme of this Sunday, the second Sunday in Advent, traditionally known as Bible Sunday.

Now this designation comes from Thomas Cramer's colleague, Archbishop Thomas Cramer's colleague. It's a prayer crafted to express the church's deep conviction that Holy Scriptures is God's chosen instrument to prepare us for the coming of Christ.

That the Bible that you have before you is God's chosen instrument to prepare you for the coming of your Lord.

Cramer took his inspiration directly from my epistle read this morning from Romans 15 verse 4.

Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction. That through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope.

[1:43] Scripture is not merely an ancient book. Not even a sacred relic. It's not that. It is the living Word of God through which He comforts and strengthens and warns and instructs and gives hope to His people as we await the coming of our Lord.

And as the hymn reminds us, Scripture is the light of our dark sky. The lantern by which the footsteps of God's people have been guided for thousands of years.

This is why the Reformers insisted on the doctrine of sola scriptura. Scripture, that just means Scripture alone. Scripture alone is the final authority for faith and life.

And why Article 6 of our 39 Articles of Religion boldly declares, by the way, the Article of Religion, if you have heard Anglicans reference that, is one of our formularies, the guidelines of our church, our doctrinal confession of faith, as you were.

And so Article 6 of the 39 Articles of Religion says this, Only Scripture containeth all things, all things necessary to salvation.

[3:03] This morning then, we place ourselves under the authority of the Word of God, asking what it would teach us as we continue our Advent journey.

As you know, this journey is a journey of preparation, a journey of expectation, repentance, and hope. And I want to show you that from these readings that to prepare for the coming of Christ, whether in Bethlehem, in our hearts, or at the last day, at the second coming, to prepare for the coming of the Lord, we need the Scriptures.

We need them because they anchor us in God's unchanging truth amid a world of confusion and instability. We need them because they show us the faithfulness of God in every generation.

And we need them because they reveal the hope that is ours in Christ Jesus. A hope that shines brightest when the world is darkest. There is no truer and trustworthy thing we can cling to.

There is no truer and trustworthy thing that we can cling to than God's Word written. So, Advent, as I said earlier, is the season of preparation.

[4:27] And Scripture is God's primary means of preparing His people. The primary instrument that He's given us. And as seen in the words of Archbishop Cramer's collect, which says, Blessed Lord, who has caused all all these Scriptures to be written for our learning.

By the way, I will ask you to open your bulletin to that page where we had that first collect. Because at the end of this sermon, we will pray that prayer again together. So be prepared. So as seen in the words of Archbishop Cramer, when he says, Blessed Lord, who has caused all all these Scriptures to be written for our learning.

Notice the language. Caused to be written. The Bible is not the product of human religions. Human religious imagination.

It is God's deliberate, purposeful gift to His people. That's what the Bible is. The Scripture is of human hands. Written by human hands. Written by prophets and apostles.

And only men of old. And yet, this same Scripture is fully divine. Written as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

[5 : 38] St. Peter reminds us. And because Scripture is God's appointed means and His appointed word, It is not merely to be heard occasionally.

Once in a while. If you are a believer in Jesus, you must feast regularly on His word. As the college says, Scripture is meant to be heard, read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested.

It must get into us. Into our minds. Our memories. Our prayers. Our imagination. Only then will it transform us.

Only then will it prepare us. And why do we need preparation? Why do we need preparation?

Because quite simply, we cannot navigate this world on our own.

We live in a world bent and twisted by sin. Every generation imagines that their time is uniquely confusing.

[6 : 51] Uniquely unstable. Uniquely chaotic. But human rebellion against God has always produced the same fruit. The fruit of confusion.

Alienation. From God and from one another. The fruit of fear. And decay. In word, word, death. So without Scriptures, we are like travelers in a moonless night.

Without a lamp. Imagine that. Yes, the path exists. The path is there. Yes, the destination exists.

But without Scripture, we cannot find our way.

And so God, in His mercy, has given us His word. And He's given us His word. Not to burden us. But to bless us.

Not to enslave us. But to free us. Not to confuse us. But to illumine our hearts and our eyes. The Bible is profitable. The Bible is profitable.

[7 : 56] Paul tells Timothy, All of Scripture is breathed out by God. And profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.

That the man of God may be complete. Equipped for every good work. Not abstractly. Not abstractly. But practically. All of Scripture is profitable for you in practical ways.

In other words, Paul wants us to know that the Bible teaches us what is true. Do you want to know what is true? Open your Bible. Read God's word.

The Bible corrects our errors. The Bible rebukes our sins. The Bible trains us in righteousness.

And the Bible equips us for every good work. And so if we rely on our own wisdom. What would happen? We would lose our way. We would lose our way.

[9 : 03] If we rely on the culture's wisdom. What would happen? We would lose our souls. But if we rely on the scriptures.

God himself. God himself. Will guide our steps. St. Paul says that the scriptures were written.

To what end? They were written so that we might have hope. The Bible is from cover to cover.

From cover to cover. It's a book of hope.

And Paul shows us that this hope is not generic or sentimental. It is grounded in God's dealings with his people throughout history.

Using this outline, which is not original to me. Let us then consider what Paul has to say to us about this hope. Let us consider actually four dimensions of this biblical hope.

[10 : 00] The first one is that the Old Testament book is a book of hope. For whatever were written, Paul says, in former days. He's talking about the Old Testament. What was written in those former days?

It was scriptures of Israel. The Old Testament. And their very object. As an old preacher once put it. Was to kindle hope. The books of the Old Testament were meant to kindle hope.

In the hearts of the people of God. How? How did they do that? Because every part of the Old Testament points forward to something greater. The covenants point to a new and better covenant written on our hearts.

The sacrifices of the Old Testament point to a final sufficient sacrifice. That truly takes away the sin of the world. The prophets. As they spoke God's word.

Spoke. And pointed to a Messiah. Who will bring justice, peace and renewed creation on the earth. Who will restore all that is broken. The stories of the saints of the Old Testament.

[11:08] Stories of Abraham. And Moses. And David. And Ruth. And Esther. All bear witness to a God who keeps his promises. The Old Testament is the spiritual memory of God's people.

Not just for the Israelites. You are God's people. So it is your book as well. It is the spiritual memory of God's people. It tells the story of men and women who trusted in the God of hope.

And were not confounded. And that is why we still read it. Not as a relic. We read it as a living testimony.

That God is faithful. That God keeps his promises. Secondly, the book. The Bible is a book of hope for the Jews.

Christ came, Paul says. Christ came as a servant of the circumcision. To confirm the promises made to the patriarchs. So in other words.

[12:11] Jesus. Jesus is the yes. To every promise that God made. To Abraham. To Isaac. And to Jacob. Jesus is the prophet.

Greater than Moses. He is the priest. Greater than Haran. He is the king. Greater than David. He is the wisdom. That is greater than Solomon. And Israel longed for this Messiah.

And Christ came. To show. That their hope. The hope. Their hope was not misplaced. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment.

Of their scriptures. As he himself attested to. Third. The Bible is a book of hope. Not just for the Jews.

But as Paul says. It's a book of hope. For the Gentiles. God's promise. God's promise was never for Israel alone. Scattered throughout the Old Testament.

[13:12] Are glorious promises. I don't mind her helping me to preach. So. Don't mind her either. So God's promises were never for Israel alone.

It's not just for the Jews. Alone. Scattered throughout the Old Testament. Even in the Old Testament. Are glorious promises. That the nations. The Gentiles. Would also be brought into God's family.

Isaiah foretells. That the nations. Will come to the light of Israel's God. The Psalms. Declared. That the Gentiles. Will praise the Lord. The prophets.

Speak of a day. When God's salvation. Will reach to the ends of the earth. God's salvation. And so Paul says. That the Gentiles. Might glorify God.

For his mercy. This is staggering. The scriptures. This is staggering truth. In reality. The scriptures. Anticipated.

[14:11] Not only Israel's hope. But the hope of the whole world. Christ came. Not only to confirm promises to Abraham. And his descendants.

But Christ came to fulfill God's promise. To Adam. That through the seed of the woman.

Redemption will come to all people. And all nations.

So yes. The Old Testament is a book for us. A book of hope. For every nation. And tribe. And tongue. This is why we translate it.

Into every language. So people can read of God's hope. And God's word. Of life. And they may trust in the Lord. Who has come to them. To save. So what does this mean for us?

Fourthly. The book of hope. Is for us today. It is a book for us today. What does this mean for us? It means that the scriptures still speak. That's what it means. It means that.

[15:12] The Bible still comforts. It still strengthens. And still gives hope. Think of the progression that Paul gives in the Roman epistle. Paul says to us.

The Bible is for endurance. And it's also for encouragement and comfort. Endurance leads to encouragement or comfort. And that leads to what?

Hope. And then leads to joy and peace in believing. This is the pilgrim's progress of the Christian life. As we meditate on God's word.

As we meditate on it. Our patient endurance does what? It grows. And as endurance grows. Encouragement and comfort comes.

And as we are comforted by God's word. Hope arises. And as hope rises. Joy and peace settles in our hearts.

[16:18] This is how scripture prepares us. For the advent of Christ. Scripture calibrates our eyes on the promises of God. Which are sure and certain.

Scripture reminds us that nothing in this tumultuous world can dislodge God's promises. That nothing in this tumultuous world can dislodge us who belong to Jesus. Now let us turn to the gospel reading from Luke 21. It's remarkable because Jesus describes to us in these verses that we read. A world in turmoil.

Jesus says there will be signs in sun and moon and on the earth distress of nations and perplexity. Those are very alarming words.

From the mouth of our Lord. People fainting with fear. And foreboding of what is coming on the world. This is a picture of a world shaking on the judgment.

[17:27] We live in that world. When we look around. We see the signs. The signs of that world all around us.

We see moral confusion. Like nothing we have ever seen before. We see rebellion against the created order. We see hostility to God and his people.

We see widespread anxiety. And fear and despair. And it may feel. And I'm sure it does feel to many of us. As though society is spraying at the seams.

But Jesus tells his disciples something astonishing. Jesus says when these things take place. What are we to do? Strengthen up.

Raise your heads. Because your redemption is drawing near. And so. While the world trembles.

[18:29] While the world trembles. The church is called to hope. While the nations faint with fear. The saints are called to lift up their heads.

Anticipating the coming of the son of man. With power and great glory. Why? It's because the same events that feel like the unraveling of the world.

These same events. In the hands of God. Are the birth pangs. Of his final redemption. This is how God always works.

Judgment and salvation. Occur side by side. For example. The flood. What did the flood do? It destroyed the world.

It destroyed the wicked. But it also. The same flood. Saved Noah. And his family. At the Passover. Egyptian firstborns.

[19:27] Were struck down. But under this same act of judgment. Israel's sons. And Israel. As a whole. Were spared. All of Israel.

Were spared. And look at the greatest. Symbol of judgment. The cross. At the cross. Sin was condemned.

But sinners were also rescued. Judgment and salvation. Always occur side by side. This is the way of God. So too.

Then. At the end of the age. As we see all these signs of judgment. All around us. These events. That are the signs of God's judgment. On the world. As it terrifies.

Those who have unbelieving hearts. For us. We believe. They are the signs. That Jesus. Is near. And it may seem.

[20:26] It may seem. Sort of brutal. As you see it. And you may be given into fear as well. Because there is a lot to be afraid of. The world is fraying at its edges.

At the seams. Things are turned upside down. But here's the hope. This is why scripture is a book of hope. Because it reminds us. That even as this is happening. The Lord is near.

This is why we need scripture. Because the world gives us no explanation. For it's turmoil. The world gives only fear. But scripture teaches us.

How to interpret the times. Without scripture. The world is chaos. With scripture. The world. Is God's theater.

What do I mean by that? All of. History. Is moving towards. Its appointed end. In Christ. So let us return to Romans 15.

[21:25] What St. Paul has to say to us. Look what Paul does. After grounding everything in scripture. Paul gives us this exhortation. Paul writes.

May the God of endurance. And encouragement. The God of endurance. The God of the Bible. The God of encouragement.

May he grant you. That is us. The church. May he grant you. To live in harmony. With one another. Therefore. As you do that.

As you live. As you are encouraged. As you have hope. Therefore. Welcome one another. As Christ has welcomed you. For the glory of God.

So what does scripture produce. In us. It produces a community. Shaped by Christ. Jesus humbled himself.

[22 : 21] Born of a virgin. Laid in a manger. Raised in poverty. Crucified in weakness. This is the one. Who welcomes us. He has welcomed us.

Into his family. And if Christ has welcomed us. Then what are we called to do? We are called to welcome one another. Consider what Paul.

Was asking the Roman church to do. He was asking Jews and Gentiles. Two groups. Divided by centuries of culture. Diet. Dress.

Custom. Prejudice. He is asking these two. Differing groups. To live together in unity. And this was humanly impossible.

What Paul is asking is humanly impossible. Only the gospel can make it happen. Only the gospel can make this.

[23 : 21] That I see before me happen. Only the gospel binds us. As brothers and sisters. Under the banner of Christ. And makes us a family. In Christ.

Jew and Gentile. Are grafted into the same hull of tree. In Christ. We become one family. In Christ. We bear one another's weakness. Forgive one another's faults. Encourage one another. In holiness. And this unity. That Paul.

St. Paul is reminding us of. And Christ has called us into. This unity. Is not optional. It isn't. It is our calling.

Paul doesn't say. Pretend to be united. He says. Be who you are. In Christ. A divided world.

[24 : 17] Needs to see a united church. A fearful world. Needs to see. A hopeful church. This is why it's important.

For us to return. To God's word. And be guided by it. Otherwise. Otherwise. We will be like the world. Given in. To disunity. And war. And at each other's throat.

Otherwise. We will be fearful. Like the world around us. But because we have God's word. It's a lamp. To our feet. A light. In the darkness. The world can see us.

Full of hope. Even in the midst of fear. They can see us united. Even as the word phrase. When the world sees the harmony of God's people.

It sees a living witness. To the grace of God. And so Paul ends with his benediction. And he says to us. He's saying to us.

[25 : 17] He's praying. He's praying for us. May the God of hope. Fill you with all joy. And peace. In believing. So that by the power of the Holy Spirit.

You may abound. In what? In hope. This letter was written to believers in Rome. Less than 10 years before the persecution under Emperor Nero.

Many of them. Who heard these words of St. Paul. Would later be martyred. They would be torn apart by wild beasts.

Others of them would be burned alive as human churches. Both Peter and Paul. Apostles. Themselves. Would die. In that persecution.

And yet God said. To them. To St. Paul. Abound. In hope. What? Abound.

[26 : 22] In hope. Not survive. Not manage. Not hang in there. But abound. Abound.

How? How are we to do that? How are we to do that? How? By clinging to God's word. That's how. By remembering that the night is far gone. And the day is at hand. By fixing our eyes on the present trial. Not on the present trial.

Sorry. By not fixing our eyes on the present trial. And the present tribulations. And the present troubles. But fixing our eyes on the eternal weight of glory. That is coming.

That is ours. Already in Christ Jesus. That's how they did it. That's how we are called to do it. So it is for us. We may face opposition. Some of you already face pressures in the workplace.

[27 : 22] At your jobs. Some of you face hostility from your family. Some face ridicule. For all into God's truth. In the world that rejects it. But God's word tells us.

The judge stands at the door. The king is coming. The promises of God are sure. The hope of the gospel cannot fail.

Cannot fail. And those who trust in the Lord. Will never be put to shame. So as we journey through Advent.

Awaiting the coming of Christ. God places into our hands. The same tool that he gave Israel. The same tool that he gave the apostles. The same tool that the early church.

