

Hope

December 17, 2023

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ online ministry. This week's message begins our Advent series. It focuses on Hope. Thank you to Dave, Ed, Gloria, Barb, and Don for being part of the video. The scripture reading is Jeremiah 29, 11-14. Happy birthday this week to Geoff and to Earl, and happy anniversary to Jan and Geoff.

Welcome, Announcements, Prayer

Welcome. I'd like to invite you to come in and have a seat. We are thankful. Lynn and I have been away for a couple of Sundays, and we're glad to be back with you all. Celebrations. We have two birthdays this week, Brian and Chris. And congratulations for the safe arrival of Braxton, Martin's daughter, Ashley. So, Martin is a grandfather. Is that correct? If you have suggestions regarding the 2024 budget, please speak to Adam or Amy or one of the elders. Mark your calendar, Christmas Eve, 7 p.m. Our Candlelight Christmas Eve service will be here, and you can speak to Adam for more details on that also. I think that's all the announcements and events. We want to remember Pam and Care and Jo, and there may be others who are ailing or unable to be with us that we need to include in our prayers. Let's go to God at this time.

Father, we thank you for the privilege of worship and the privilege of prayer. We thank you for your son, Jesus, for his example. We pray, Father, that we may also incorporate our lives with his and be an example of love, of your love to others. We pray for the ongoing care of Pam and Care and Jo. We thank you for outreach, for being allowed to respond to needs in our community. Continue to open our eyes to the opportunities to serve as we express ourselves in our worship this morning and as we go from this building, be with us. In Christ's name, amen.

Communion

The topic this morning is hope, as Ed already said. Our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. We who are here around this table are assured of this hope through our faith, and so we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Hope does not disappoint us because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit he gave us. You see, just at the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. We were still sinners when Christ died for us and reconciled us to God.

If for this life only we have hope, we are to be pitied more than all men. But God made us stand firm in Christ. He set his seal of ownership on us by putting his spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. And so, we have hope in Christ who died for our sins. We have hope in God who gave us this plan of salvation with a way back to himself. We have hope in the Holy Spirit who lives in us, giving us comfort and the assurance of eternal life. We have hope in this salvation which made us pure in his sight. Let us remember, on the night Jesus was betrayed, he took bread. He broke it and he gave thanks, and he said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way after supper, he took the cup and he said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me."

Let us pray. Thank you, Jesus, for the body you gave as a sacrifice for our sins. And thank you for your life blood that cleansed us from all unrighteousness to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Reading

Jeremiah 29:11-14

Our reading this morning is from Jeremiah 29, verses 11 to 14. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you. "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

Sermon

Good morning, everyone. Thank you so very much for being with us today in this Christmas season. And what I'd like to do for this month is talk about the themes of Advent, hope, peace, joy, and love. And the word "advent" has various meanings to it, but particularly at Christmas time, it is the coming of the Messiah, Jesus. And the Old Testament speaks of the Messiah who would be coming in a powerful way. And if you've ever had the experience of listening to Handel's Messiah, you can just sit back and close your eyes and just listen to the power of the music. And the music really just describing the Messiah who was coming into our life. And I've been somewhat repenting this past week because it's not just at Christmas time that we think of Advent, that we think of hope and peace and joy and love. That should mark us in a powerful way all throughout the year.

So, I just want to spend a little bit of time today talking about the word "hope." The word "advent" itself means the coming, specifically the becoming of the Messiah of Jesus. And the Old Testament speaks of the Messiah who would be coming through all this. And just listen to these scriptures today. I'm not going to be having too many extemporaneous comments. I just want to let the Bible speak for us. Lift up your heads, O you gates. Be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of Glory may come in. Here's the comment. Open up our hearts. Allow the King of Glory to come in. Not just for a couple of minutes. Think of God living in us. And Christmas is a time when we can experience this. So, lift up your heads, O you gates. Be lifted up, ancient doors, that the King of Glory may come in. Who is the King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty. The Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O you gates. Lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of Glory may come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord Almighty. He is the King of Glory.

Now as I've said, when we put the music of Handel's Messiah with the words of Scripture, it is truly profound. You can sometimes picture, picture Christ being born in the manger. You can go there in your minds. And for our children today, I came across this cute poem, I think Barb shared it with me. And it really is kind of cute. One tiny baby. See him in the hay? Two smiling people hear Mary say, "We are very happy with this little one. His name is Jesus, God's only Son." Three fuzzy donkeys have rested there. Four nosy puppies may have sniffed the air. Five sleepy cows may have wandered wide. Their quiet stable heard the baby's cry. Six bully lambs may have watched to see seven strong shepherds falling on their knees. This must be Jesus, the happy shepherds say. Many angels told us he was born

today. Eight cooing doves perched overhead. Also see the baby in his manger bed. Nine busy spiders spinning webs with care. Pay no attention to Jesus sleeping there. But then ten noisy roosters when the night is done seem to crow together. God has sent us his son.

And in the psalm, it talks about the word hope. Many times, hope. Hope is not always an easy word to explain. It's a feeling as well than the explanation. So, in Psalm 25, no one whose hope is in the Lord will ever be put to shame. God knows our faith and our faith in God. It's communing together. And so, no one whose hope is in the Lord will be ever put to shame. Sometimes we want to spend time with the Lord in a powerful way. Maybe we don't do this very often, but just go off by yourself sometime and picture the Lord who is beside you. And he always is. What did he say? I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. I am always with you. And sometimes it's just precious to get off by yourself and see God in your mind standing beside you and have a conversation with him. You think God would hear us? Of course. But we sometimes forget. And at this season it's kind of a reminder that we can just truly hang on to the hope that is in the Lord because it will never be put to shame, the psalmist says. And then in Psalm 33, it says, but the eyes of the Lord are on those who revere him, on those whose hope is in him, this unending love. And then in verse 20, we wait in hope for the Lord. He is our help. He is our shield. In him our hearts rejoice. We trust in his holy name because his name is the Lord, and the Lord is the Lord. It's not just his name, it's himself. May your unending love rest upon us, O Lord, even as we put our hope in him. Have you ever stopped to think about this? God puts hope in our hearts, and we put hope in God.

It's precious what we have every minute of the day. God living in us. And there's rejoicing in that Psalm 119. May those who revere you rejoice when they see me, for I have put my hope in you. All of it. I put all of it in you. And then in the Proverbs, chapter 23, always be zealous in respecting the Lord because there is a future hope for you and your hope will not be cut off. So sometimes maybe because of life circumstances, we've backed away. We've just kind of gone off for a while by ourselves and not even really thought about the Lord. In fact, I was kind of thinking about that this week as I'm writing out this sermon and thinking, Donny, these are okay words, but why don't you do it more often? Why don't you put your hope in him every second of the day? The love relationship that's there because love and hope go hand in hand. And then the Apostle Paul speaks these powerful words that are very similar to what we need today. Listen to these words. Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be devoted to each other in brotherly love. Honor one another above ourselves. Never be lacking in zeal but keep your spiritual fervor serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope. Be patient in affliction. Be faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Bringing it together this morning in our Bible class, we talked about that about people welcoming people who've never been welcomed before. People will come from the east and the west and the north and the south and they will take their places at the feast of the kingdom of God. It's not just hyperbole. It's the welcoming of God into our lives. And so in Romans 15:4, for everything that was written in the past was written to teach us that through the endurance and the encouragement of scriptures, we might have what hope. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him so that you may overflow in hope by the power of God's Holy Spirit. Always remembering God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are with us. And our brothers and sisters are with us. All together, people throughout the world, people we've never met, people we've never seen will come together. And one day we'll see our loved ones again. The promise of God. You see, at Christmas time, it's not just his birth. It's what this means. It's he, God himself living inside of us forever and forever. He

knew us before we were born. He knows us now. He knows us on the other side. We will be together someday.

So, in Colossians 1, God has chosen to make known to the Gentiles, that's us, the glorious riches of his hope, the mystery which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. And so, when Paul is writing to Timothy to teach the church, he says this. This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. And for all of this, we labor and strive that we may put our hope in the living God who is savior of all people, especially those of us who believe. Hope and belief together. Hope is part of our faith. Hope is part of our future. And then in 1 Timothy 6, Paul encourages Timothy to be a good preacher by reminding all to command those who are wealthy in this present world not to be arrogant and not to put their hope in wealth, but to put their hope in God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. I was thinking about that this week. Simple things. Going to the grocery store, picking up some food and driving home, not even thinking about it until I did think about it and think, why are we so blessed? How is that possible that we, many of us, maybe all of us, can eat? Not just food, but spiritual food. The combination of the physical and the spiritual. How we think, how we live, the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and control that God helps us with every day, never alone, not even once. So, the encouragement is that we put our hope in God who richly provides us. In other words, that Jesus is the fountain of our life and the center of our lives.

So, in the book of Titus, a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, which blows my mind. And at his appointed season, he brought his word, Jesus, to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God, our Savior. Paul says this to Timothy, that if Timothy wants to be a good preacher, remember all of this. Love, peace, and so forth, especially hope. So then he says, let us hold unswervingly to the hope that we profess. And do we profess our hope? And how do we profess our hope? We have faith. We have hope in God because God hopes in us. So let us unswervingly with hope profess for he who promised us faithful. And let us consider how we can spur one another on to good works.

And so, in this brief message today, rather brief, I want to wrap it up with the conclusion of Advent. Advent means specifically the coming, the coming of the Messiah. The hope is the integral part of all of this. Some of us have really enjoyed the writings of N.T. Wright. He has a unique approach to all of this regarding hope. I have to read N.T. Wright over and over again so I can really understand him. He's so intellectual beyond me. But here's what he says. He said, *hope is what you get when you suddenly realize that a different worldview is possible. A worldview in which the greedy, the powerful, and the unscrupulous do not have the last word. The same worldview shift that is demanded by the resurrection of Jesus is the shift that will enable us to transform the world. Hope is the fulfilling of our faith.* This can be seen so well in the Christmas season. And I hope for all of us that this year, coming around Christmas time, that we really experience this wonderful hope that God has for all of us and is giving us and is encouraging us so that we can encourage others as we go through this Christmas season. Remembering those who are in need and helping them, praying for them, talking with them, helping in every way. Remembering that God said, I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. I am always with you. So right up until Christmas time, just before Christmas time, there's a baby that's going to be born. And then he's going to become a toddler. And then he's going to become a teen. And then he's being an adult who changes the world because his name is God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, all of us, all of them saying to us, Merry Christmas. Amen.

Closing

I'd like to thank Don for his encouragement and his message and the importance of hope and for Gloria, Barb, Ed, and for you for the privilege of your time being spent with us this morning. I find this sometimes an awkward time for me. I'd like to try and put together some thoughts. I have to write them down, one, or I'll forget them. And then I don't want a second sermon because I think Don has handled it very well, completely. And to add to it seems a little bit of a redundancy. I'm going to try and float through a few thoughts. And then we will close.

Okay, we live in a broken, unjust world. We're at the point today where perhaps more people than ever are recognizing the urgent threats that seem to be everywhere around us and globally and locally. And I could list them, but so could you. We have all been exposed to the news. So, we are aware of all of the problems in the world. They're right there on your phone, on your television. They're everywhere. So, we have these reports, constant reports of bad things, of doom, of crises. And I don't wish to minimize the impact of any of them.

However, we're fueling an epidemic of anxiety. People everywhere are on edge because they don't have hope. It looks like disaster will overtake us. It impedes our ability to look at our individual challenges because we seem powerless and the situations around us seem hopeless. But I believe that Christ boldly breaks through this narrative of doom and gloom. And as Donna said, the power of Christ. That's the hinge on which hope stands. It seems to be easy to be overtaken by all of this negative. And it affects the discussions we have of our future. But Christ takes over and we have hope, not fear. And this is our most powerful tool for tackling our crises, any crisis.

We all struggle, and we all have experienced the collateral damage of despair. Young people who cannot, honestly, they believe they have no future. People just giving up because they're constantly bombarded with this hopelessness. We need to put Christ in the picture. Christ Jesus is not called the savior for no reason. He provides the best argument for the place of hope in our lives. A celebration to turn toward the love of God for solutions in the face of any earthly crisis. That's my rant.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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