

Advent 1 2022 Hope - MVLC

Advent 1 - Hope Candle Focus text: Jeremiah 10:11

'I know the plans I have in mind for you, declares the Lord; they are plans for peace, not disaster, to give you a future filled with hope'

Readings: Jeremiah 29:10-14; Romans 8:18-25; Matthew 12:9-21

Back in the day there was a joke among teenagers?

What is the definition of Hope?

It's a pregnant teenage girl rubbing her belly with vanishing cream.

I wonder did Mary ever hope it would all go away – unmarried – engaged to Joseph and his family.

Surely she was worried sick.

It says, when she found out - she was “greatly troubled” – she “Pondered” the Greek word here is Tarrasso – it’s the word for churning, grinding, like meat in grinder – Mary’s stomach is grinding away with worry.

But it says the angel spoke to her and comforted her – basically the angel told her not to worry your carrying the saviour of the world. (Would that comfort you?)

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign...forever.” Luke 1:32,33 (Would that comfort you?)

The angel told her:

1. she was pregnant and was to give birth to the saviour of the world.
2. that her auntie Elizabeth, who was barren, was also to have a baby.
3. and that nothing is impossible with God.

After Mary was “greatly troubled”, she said ***“I am the Lord’s servant, may it be done to me as you have said”***.

She went from fear to hope because it was hope from God.

It was completely unimaginable – but it was from God – it carried weight.

In God there’s hope.

In Advent we wait for the sure hope that Jesus will return.

We confess it every week: *He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father almighty, from thence he will come to judge the living and the dead.*

I'm not sure where "Thence" is but we know Jesus is coming from "thence" to here to judge the living and the dead.

Do we really hope Jesus will come to judge the living and the dead?

Hope is for something sure – are you sure of your judgement?

I believe for most of us judgement is a scary thing – because we think we have our case well prepared – all the alibi's covered – all the witnesses to our crimes either silenced, or moved on, or dead.

But in the back of our mind what are we thinking? What if he or she turns up in the witness stand?

What if God does know our every thought?

Hope is for something sure – are you sure of your judgement?

Let me put you at ease – let me tell you how it works.

Isaiah tells us (Isa 11):

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;

from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

This is God's way of saying: From David's line a Son, Jesus, will be born who will judge and rule forever.

This Judgement is what we worry about -

But God's court room is the unimaginable.

You know how it normally works – the judge looks and listens to all the evidence.

He or She is very interested in what the witnesses have seen and what they have heard so that He or She can make a good and proper judgment based on facts.

The whole case depends on what the judge hears and sees.

But God's court room is the unimaginable.

It says that the Spirit of the Lord will rest on this judge —

the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,

the Spirit of counsel and of might,

the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—

Righteousness will be his belt

and faithfulness the sash around his waist

**He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
and He will not judge by what he hears with his ears;**

He will judge by his righteousness which will cover each and every believer in the dock.

There is the sure hope.

That he will come again and we will be judged by what Jesus himself has done for us.

This is Advent.

We tend to think Advent is preparing for Christmas.

It's not really.

All the Christmas stuff is meant to remind us that he came once as promised – so then he will come again as promised.

Advent is the season to hope in the sure promises of God

I remember a devotion written by Dietrich Bonhoeffer – a Lutheran Pastor locked up during the war – he was involved in a plot to kill Hitler.

Many describe him as another Luther – especially when you see how much he wrote in such a short time.

From prison he wrote:

“A prison cell like this reminds me of Advent - One waits, one hopes, and one does this or that— but the door is locked and can only be opened from the outside.”

He's describing the tension we have as Christians.

We are saved but we are locked up in this world and we are waiting for the Salvation to happen.

We have already been saved, and yet our salvation is still to come.

It's almost unimaginable.

It's a bit like Bill and Melinda Gates and their 3 kids.

One day the kids will receive \$33 Billion dollars each.

What do they do in the meantime?

They're Billionaires – but not yet.

We're saved – absolutely sure – a promise of God – Jesus died for us to make it rock solid – but here we waiting – with strokes, and illnesses, and home invasions, and car crashes.

Mary knows better than anyone what it means to wait for Christ to come.

She's pregnant with the Saviour.

She waits for him to come – but before he's even born she knows deep inside that God's promise have already been fulfilled.

Mary watches her boy grow up – She watches him begin his ministry - She watches him suffer and die on a cross – She is relieved at his resurrection – Even at Pentecost she waits for all that has been done for salvation to happen to her and to all people.

I like what Bonhoeffer said.

“A prison cell is like Advent - one waits, one hopes, and one does this or that— but the door is locked and can only be opened from the outside.”

I think he wants us to know how imprisoned we are in this world of trouble so that we long for the day the door is unlocked from the outside.

That's Advent.

God incarnate, in the flesh is coming to unlock the door for you and me

I've been to Bonhoeffers cells – in Buchenwald – & Flussenburg.

This is Bavaria – this is some of the most beautiful country in Germany - mountains, forest, villages – farms. But the concentration camps; You have to see it to believe it – you have to see it on your own in your own time and space. I think everyone should do it – on your own. You cannot imagine the misery and death. The crematorium factories give some kind of indication of what went on.

This is where Bonhoeffer spent his last days. Flussenburg was is his time of Advent – waiting for the inheritance he already has.

This is where he encourages and loves his fiancé Maria.

This is where he teaches – though his writings.

The best sermon ever written on marriage was written in the cell at Flussenburg to his sister.

This is where he prayers and supports others during their last days on earth.

The morning of his hanging – **the war was over there was no need for it to ever happen.**

He says publically: I believe, and in believing I receive Christ; I have everything. I live before God.

“This is for me the end, the beginning of life.”

We focus on the Western Christmas – presents giving sharing - remembering the past.

For now I bring you Advent the sure future – so that we can live in the present with Joy.

I ask you – let’s imagine you’re one of the Gates children.

You’re going to inherit 33 Billion dollars one day – whether you like it or not.

How do you live today?

You could easily end up an arrogant – so and so?

You could end up a loving and giving person.

You could end up a struggler in life – bullied like Bill gates, an outcaste – how are you going to live?

You’re still going to be a billionaire but how will you live?

Will you seek out help and support?

Will you allow others to help you?

How will you live in Murray Bridge today – 2022.

These are the questions of Advent – but we can only begin to wrestle with them knowing the sure hope that Jesus will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Jerimiah reminds us of Advent long before Jesus was born:

'I know the plans I have in mind for you, declares the Lord; they are plans for peace, not disaster, to give you a future filled with hope'

Father help us to see the fullness of your plan for us. To judge us right for heaven, to have us live a life of thanks and praise. To have us look forward to Jesus return. Amen