

The Hope of Advent – 1 John 5:11-12

Introduction: Today begins the Advent season. Advent means “*The Coming*.” As it applies to Christianity, “*The Coming*” refers to the first coming of Christ to the earth. Each Sunday from now until Christmas, we’ll be lighting the advent candles which are symbolic of various elements and truths of the Christmas season. And in the next few messages, we’re going to be looking at what advent means. Jesus’ first coming to the earth was an exclamation of hope. It was an opportunity to exercise faith. It was an opportunity to experience great joy and peace. And it was an expression of God’s great love of mankind.

This morning, we’ll see that Jesus came to give us hope for a better life – a new life. And that is what the first Sunday of Advent is about – Hope.

The Apostle John describes the essence of what the Hope of God means for this Advent season when he wrote, “*God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life*” (1 John 5:11-12 NIV). Let me try to illustrate what this means with a story I read recently.

Years ago, there was a wealthy man who, with his young son, shared a passion for art collecting. Together they traveled around the world, adding the finest works of art to their collection. Eventually, the son became an experienced art collector. But the day came when the young man left to serve his country in war. But after only a few months, the father received a telegram that his son had been killed while carrying a fellow soldier to a medic.

On Christmas morning a visitor came to the door of the old man’s home. He opened the door, and was greeted by a soldier with a package in his hand. He introduced himself and said, “*I was a friend of your son. I was the one he was rescuing when he died. May I come in? I have something to show you.*”

He said, “*Your son told me about your love of art, and well, I’m an artist, and I want you to have this.*” The old man unwrapped the package to reveal a portrait of his son. It wasn’t a masterpiece, but did seem to capture his personality. It immediately became the old man’s favorite.

Eventually, the old man died. According to the man’s will, all of the art works would be auctioned off.

On the day of the auction, art collectors from around the world gathered to bid on some of the old man’s treasured art. The auction began with a painting that was not on any museum’s list. It was the painting of the man’s son. The auctioneer asked, “*Who will open the bidding with \$100?*” From the back of the room someone called out, “*Who cares about that painting? Let’s go on to the important paintings.*” Others echoed in agreement. But the auctioneer replied, “*No, we have to sell this one first. Now, who will take the son?*” Finally, a friend of the old man spoke. “*I knew the boy, so I’d like to have it. I will bid the \$100.*”

“*I have a bid for \$100,*” called the auctioneer. “*Will anyone go higher?*” After a long silence, the auctioneer said, “*Going once. Going twice. Sold.*”

As soon as the gavel fell, someone shouted, “*Good, now we can get on with it!*” But the auctioneer

abruptly announced the auction was over. Someone spoke up and asked, “*What do you mean it’s over? We didn’t come here for a picture of some old guy’s son. What about all of these paintings? There are millions of dollars worth of art here! What’s going on?*” The auctioneer replied, “*It’s simple. The Father’s will said, whoever takes the son... gets it all.*”

That is the essence of the story of Christmas: Whoever takes the Son gets it all. It is as John said, “...*He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life*” (1 John 5:11-12 NIV). The one who has the Son has it all. But exactly what is included in the “*all?*”

I want to point out several things about the Hope of Advent. What promises are held in the coming of Jesus? First, the Hope of Advent carries the promise of a new life in Christ because:

1. We Know What God Is Like (Col. 1:15-16)

The Apostle Paul wrote in Col. 1:15-16 (NIV), “*He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.*”

The coming of Christ gave us a living picture of who God is. Christ’s coming put a face on God. This is what we mean by the incarnation — God came to earth in a human body. He came to live among us that we might know what He is like. He came to teach us. He came to die for us that we might be forgiven. He rose from the dead to help us know that we too can live again. And He promised that He will return so that we can have eternal hope.

Imagine what the world would be like if God, in the person of Jesus Christ, had never come to earth. Our way of dating history would be completely different, since all of history is divided into before Christ (BC) and after Christ (AD). Many hospitals would not exist, because they were begun by Christian organizations that had hearts of compassions. There would be no YMCA. There would not be churches on every corner of Gordon County. We would only have half a Bible, and it wouldn’t mean anything because its prophecies about the Messiah wouldn’t have come true. We would not have heard of the love of a personal God. God would never have come and we would have no hope of His returning again to the earth. And there would be no Christmas — no gifts or carols or nativities. The world without Jesus would be like winter without Christmas which is apparently exactly what our government would like to accomplish.

Without Jesus, Mary Magdalene would have died in her sin. Peter, James and John would have just been anonymous fishermen. The thief on the cross would be in hell. Paul would never have been more than a legalistic Pharisee.

But because Jesus did come as God in the flesh, we can sing about Emmanuel at Christmas. He was with us 2000 years ago, and He is with us in this present moment to show us what God is like. We have a God who cared enough to come. In Jesus Christ, every sinner, every outcast, and everyone who is lonely has a friend who shows them real love and compassion. In Jesus Christ, we have someone who taught us that our value to God was more important than what anyone else thought about us.

You may have seen “*The Antique Road Show*” on television. Often someone comes who has paid a few dollars for an item at a garage sale asking for an evaluation of its worth. Then comes the look of surprise and shock when they learn the item is worth several thousand dollars.

That is how God looks at us. What others may see as a worthless piece of junk, God places a very high value on them. We know that because we see it in the life of Jesus over and over again as He ministered to the sinful, the sick, the poor, and the weak. Those were the ones He pulled out of the trash and transformed into a treasure. If Jesus had not come we wouldn’t have known that about God.

And because Christ showed us what God was like, we want to be like Him. We have been transformed by His grace and renewed by His love. We extend grace to others because it has been so wonderfully extended to us. We forgive because we have been forgiven. We give because He gave to us. We live because He has given us eternal life. Because Jesus came, we know what God is like – love in action. Secondly, the Hope of Advent promises new life because it means:

2. Our Sins Can Be Forgiven (John 3:16-17)

Think about this: What it would be like if Jesus had not come and you could not be forgiven for your sin. What would that be like to know that your guilt would never be relieved, and condemnation would always be hanging over your head? Well, we don’t have to think about that because Jesus did come, and He offers forgiveness to those who will receive His wonderful gift of grace. We can know the freedom that forgiveness brings. We can forgive ourselves and others because we have experienced the liberating forgiveness that Jesus Christ came to give us.

But if Jesus had never come, we would have only commandments to follow that we could never keep. We wouldn’t have these great words that give us hope: “*For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him*” (John 3:16-17 NIV). That means that the adulterous woman would never have heard the words: “*Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin*” (John 8:11 NIV). If Jesus had never come, we’d all be missing a Savior. There would be no forgiveness and the words, “*grace*” and “*mercy*” wouldn’t be in our vocabulary. Instead, we’d talk about people getting what they deserved.

1 John 3:1 (NIV) says, “*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!*” We can become children of God by believing in Jesus Christ as God’s Son and asking for His forgiveness. And it’s God’s forgiveness in Christ that brings about a transformation in our lives. **2 Cor. 3:18 (NIV)** says, “*And we...are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*”

Christ came to not only clean our hearts, but to change our hearts. We are being transformed into His character more and more each day. Because He lives within us, we are becoming like Him. His Holy Spirit is

working in us to produce His image. All of this is for one grand purpose — The Hope of Advent promises a new life in Christ, because it means:

3. We Have the Hope of Heaven (1 Cor. 15:19)

The glories of Heaven were made possible by Jesus. Think about what would you say at the funeral of a loved one if Jesus had not come and there was no hope of heaven. There would be no hope beyond the grave. You couldn't talk about heaven, or any reason to hope for eternal life with God — only ceasing to exist. **1 Cor. 15:19 (NIV)** says, *“If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.”*

If Jesus Christ had not come, there would be no hope for an end of evil and sorrow. There would be no hope for a resurrection or an eternal life in heaven. There would be nothing to anticipate but the closing of the casket lid and the coldness of the grave. But because Jesus came, all that has changed. Because He came and because He lives, we can joyfully anticipate of what is to come.

Conclusion: In his book *“Dare to Believe,”* Dan Baumann illustrates what it is like to know that something is yours even though you have to wait for it. He says that when he was young he did a lot of snooping at Christmas time, trying to figure out what was in the wrapped packages which his Mom hid.

One year he discovered a package with his name on it that he knew was a set of golf clubs. He says, *“When Mom wasn't around, I would go and feel the package, shake it, and pretend that I was on the golf course. The point is, I was already enjoying the pleasures of a future event.”* It was his, but it wouldn't be handed over to him until Christmas morning. Then he would see with his eyes what before he had only seen with his heart.

Christmas means that Christ has given us the gift of heaven. At this point it is still wrapped. But it has our name on it. We know what awaits us. It's ours. We would never have received the gift if it were not for Christmas. But we wait for the day when we will enjoy the gift of heaven in all of its unwrapped wonder.

Because Jesus came, we know what God is like. We experience forgiveness for our sins and the transformation of our hearts and minds. We have received the promise of heaven and eternal life. When you get the Son, you get all that and more. What better gifts could we ask for this Christmas?