

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

www.ffbic.org

SERMON: *Hope*

SERIES: *Advent 2021: Hope, Peace, Joy, Love*

SCRIPTURES: *Psalm 130:5-7; 1 Peter 1:3; Romans 15:13*

SPEAKER: *Shaun Kipe*

DATE: *2021 - 11 - 28*

**Credit to The Bible Project (Advent Word Series); John Ortberg;*

Well good morning and welcome to Five Forks Church this morning. This morning is a special Sunday in the life of the church as was mentioned earlier, this morning is the beginning of the Advent season (**Christmas Series Title Slide**).

Advent is a tradition that dates back many years. Some believe dating as far back as the 4th century. And, of course, the forms and traditions of Advent have changed over the years. Calendars, lighting candles etc. But in its most simplistic understanding Advent comes from a Latin word meaning, “**coming**” or “**arrival**”. It is that time of year when we remember Christ’s arrival as a child and anticipate His coming again.

And there are 4 specific words that are associated with the advent season: **HOPE, PEACE, JOY and LOVE**. And so over the next 4 weeks, as we prepare for Christmas, we’ll be looking at the significance of each of these words.

We want to get an understanding of each word, by looking at how they are used in Scripture. And then we’ll finish up each message by looking at how we can be “agents” of these advent character traits. Agents of hope, agents of peace and so on.

I also want to encourage you, one of our primary sources for this series is going to be the Bible Project. (**LINK TO BIBLE PROJECT VIDEOS**) We’ve talked on multiple

occasions about the great videos they have available. Next year, in fact, we'll be promoting a discipleship program that is based on the Bible Project resources. And so for this series I will be drawing heavily from their series of videos on the "advent words." If you want to dig a little deeper go check out their videos.

This morning let's talk a little bit about HOPE.

I. Understanding Hope:

Now in it's most basic understanding, hope is simply **"anticipating a future that is better than the present."**

And that's a good place to start. There is something encouraging about imagining a future, better than the present. But that is an insufficient or incomplete definition of Christian hope. This definition can give the impression that hope is basically **"wishful thinking"** or optimism.

Which doesn't give us very much confidence or security, in a world that is so often unpredictable and chaotic. Christian hope goes beyond wishful thinking and includes a few other important elements.

There three primary words in Scripture translated as hope. Two, OT Hebrew words and one NT Greek word. Let's look at these words...

A. Two Hebrew words:

In the OT, which was written in Hebrew, there are two words used for hope. The first is **Yakhal**. Everybody say that with me. And yakhal means **To wait for...**

For example, in the OT story about Noah and the ark. You remember this story? There is a massive flood, Noah builds a huge boat to protect his family. When you

get to the end of the flood, we are told in Genesis 8, multiple times that, **“Noah waited...to exit the Ark.”** The Hebrew word used there is this word yakhal.

Hope has this sense of “waiting”. The thing that you want, that you are looking forward to, has not yet arrived so you wait. Children over the next three weeks will be experiencing this concept...waiting for Christmas morning and to open their Christmas gifts. That is yakhal.

The other Hebrew word for hope is the word...

Qaval. Which is similar but adds the sense of **anticipation...**

Waiting with anticipation.

Scholars at the Bible Project describe it as “a rope is pulled tight, creating tension...and you have that excited feeling of “oooh is it gonna break, when’s it gonna break.” Or if you’ve watch someone take a needle and start to poke a balloon. You have that “when’s it gonna pop.” Or if your gonna take your dog for a walk. And you get out the leash.

Or have you seen some of these videos of parents who put candy in front of their toddlers and then tell them they’re gonna leave the room, don’t eat the candy until I come back. Can you picture that scenario?

There’s this moment when dad/mom walk out and the kid is just there staring at the candy and you have this sense of anticipated excited waiting...how long until the kid finally gives in?

(POSSIBLE)Here’s an example...<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=et0p4-OTf3A>

3:56 – 4:46

That is the sense behind the Hebrew word Qaval.

Hope is about waiting with anticipation or expectation...

It's an appropriate place to begin Advent...because that's the heart of advent... hopeful waiting... But there's a little bit more to this Christian hope.

What are we waiting for? What you will find, is that almost always in Scripture, it is **waiting for God.** (BIBLE PROJECT)

In the book of Psalms for example, these words, Yakal and Qaval, appear over 40 times and almost always people are waiting for God.

Psalm 130:5-7 - I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. ⁶I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, ⁷ Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.

What makes Biblical hope unique is that it is based on a person. And this is why Biblical hope is not the same thing as wishful thinking. Wishful thinking is conjuring up a positive feeling about how circumstances might turn out better or work out in your favor. Hope is not the same thing as optimism. Optimism is choosing to see in any situation how circumstances could work out for the best.

There was a popular movie a number of years ago, back when I was in High school. Became one of the most quoted movies of all time. And I'm sure none of you have ever seen that movie. Movie was called Dumb and Dumber.

There's a popular scene, where the main character played by actor, Jim Carey has fallen in love with a beautiful woman, that we might call "way out of his league." He

is the epitome of an underachieving, goofy-looking nerd and she's a high-class, elegant woman.

But in his optimism and wishful thinking...he decides to ask her out. He says, "What are the chances you'd go on a date with me?" To which the woman responds, "Ohh, about one in a million."

Of course, we know "one in a million" is a metaphor for "no chance, ain't happenin' Ever. Keep dreamin. No way."

But Jim Carey's character replies with what has become an iconic line of wishful thinking...he says, **"So you're sayin' there's a chance!"** (one in a million...you're saying there a chance.)

That iconic line illustrates perfectly "wishful thinking". Jim Carey's character's "hope" is based on delusion, chance circumstances working out in his favor!

By contrast, hope in the Bible is not based on delusion, wishful thinking or chance circumstances working out for the best. Time and time again, Biblical hope, is based on God. And this makes all the difference.

You see we humans have this tendency to mis-place our hope. We have this tendency to place our hope in so many things in our world, that let us down, that are not certain, that can't be relied upon.

We tend to place hope in our circumstances, which don't always work in our favor. We place hope in our wealth. We put our hope in our health. We put our hope in our activities or dreams. A lot of people have placed hope in our government.

That's not Christian hope. Early church had this same problem, listen to how Paul instructs Timothy.

1 Timothy 6:17 - ¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

The reason we have confidence in placing our hope in God, is because of **God's faithfulness**. God is reliable, you can trust him. Christian hope has a sense of certainty.

What did the Psalmist say? **...put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love** (He's not gonna let you down) **and with him is full redemption.**

Hope is based on trust in God's character! **God's past faithfulness, motivates hope for the future. You look forward by looking backward.** (BIBLE PROJECT)

Let me illustrate this for you...

(PIC OF FALL TREES) Do you notice the leaves changing color? The last few weeks, looking over the mountains around us...the reds and yellows and oranges as the weather gets colder...beautiful. And you can count on it, can't you? Every year, it's gonna happen. Leaves are gonna change color and fall, you can count on it. It's not wishful thinking. But then winter around here can get long, can't it? Cold days. Snow. Wind. The Ground freezes. You can't be outside. Cooped up. And usually around end of February or early March some time, everyone is getting ancy, want to get back outside!

And if you're like me, **(PIC OF SPRING FLOWERS)** you actually begin to think about Spring before it arrives. In fact, it's so common to think about spring before it arrive, we have a phrase for this..."spring fever." Imagining...warm days, garden, green grass...and flowers blooming. In the middle of winter, you begin to hope for spring. That's much more similar to Christian hope...because...it's certain hope. I know/you

know spring will come. It has every year for hundreds and thousands of years. And it will come this year. You can count on it. Every April those little shoots begin to appear. That's an image of Christian hope. It's certain, reliable, trustworthy.

Hope is based on trust in God's character! **God's past faithfulness, motivates hope for the future. You look forward by looking backward.** (BIBLE PROJECT)

The central story of hope in Judaism was the Exodus. 400 years, in helpless despair and bondage in Egypt, Israel cries out for help...The Exodus is the story of God rescuing Israel. He walks them through the sea on dry ground, he marches them across the barren desert providing manna and quail for food and water from the rock. Israel told this story week after week. It was memorized, passed on to the children, one generation to the next.

God has come through in the past, He promises He will do it again. You can count on it. It's a steadfast, reliable hope!

So, in understanding Christian HOPE...we have "anticipated waiting that things can get better, which is based on God, not chance circumstances, because God is faithful." Let me add one more, final element to Biblical hope. And to do that, let's turn to the NT.

B. NT Greek word

In the New Testament, the Greek word for hope is the word...**Elpis**.

And again, elpis carries much of the same meaning as the OT words. Waiting in anticipation for God to faithfully act on our behalf.

But maybe adds just one more important element. In the New Testament this hope is associated with Jesus...

1 Peter 1:3 - ³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...

Hope is found or fulfilled in Jesus. And notice this, this Christian hope, is based on One who died and came back to life. You can count on it.

And that makes Christian hope far more than wishful thinking. Christian hope is bold, powerful, transformative. **Christian hope says, that real change is possible...**in your life, in our world.

Things can be different. People and communities can be reborn and transformed, changed, redeemed. The one making this promise, has overcome death itself.

We live in a world where sometimes, I think we wonder if real change is even possible or if it's just wishful thinking.

There is a temptation you've been facing (greed, gluttony, lust, anger) and it keeps coming back, can you really change or do you just become resigned to the fact that this is who you are? There is a bad habit that has become a normal and yet destructive part of your life (binging on social media, unhealthy eating habit, work-a-holism, losing your temper)...is there any hope for change or do you become resigned to the fact that this is just who you are?

On a larger scale, not just our individual lives but in our communities....Injustice (racial, social, economic) is all around us, is there any hope for change? Protests, animosity, anger...become the mode of operation in our businesses and politics? Families that are broken. Relationships falling apart. Is this it? Is this as good as it gets for our world? Is there any hope that things will be better/different...

Christian hope says yes. **Christian hope says, that real change is possible.**

Whatever it is that this life has brought you so far, Jesus offers living hope...new life.

Boy, what a message. Don't you think we live in a world that could use that kind of hope? Hope that believes real change is possible...not just wishful thinking.

Now here's the important part. Think about it...you are part of a community that believes in a profound, life-changing, world transforming kind of hope. You/we have something to offer our world. So let's talk about being...

II. Agents of Hope

And I'm using this word agent, because it has a very specific meaning. In the scientific world, this word **agent** means, "*any power capable of producing an effect.*" In other words, the hope we have in Jesus and offered by Jesus, is a power capable of producing an effect!

It's kind of like salt. Salt is an agent of flavor...it effects and enhances flavor. Did you ever French fries without salt or popcorn without salt? No flavor.

As a follower of Jesus, you and I, we are called to be agents of hope in in our world. We are to effect and enhance our world with HOPE. Jesus said to his followers, "you are the salt of the earth..."

In fact, not just agents of hope, but agents of all of the advent themes: PEACE, JOY, LOVE. We are to produce an advent effect in our world. Great passage in Romans 15, where Paul talks about this concept...

Romans 15:13 – ¹³ 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.

I love this word, **overflow** because I think it's just such a descriptive word. Have you seen a little kid filling up a glass of milk (**PIC OF KID FILLING UP GLASS WITH MILK**)? As a parent filling up the glass is normally your duty, so the milk doesn't spill everywhere. You don't to make a mess. But at a certain age, kids want to help. "I want to do it. I want to pour the milk in the glass."

Sometimes I wonder if it's cause kids think parents are stingy. If I poured the milk, I'd only fill it half full. But my child knows, if they pour, they can fill it to the whole way to the top.

And so, as a good parent, you acquiesce. And then you watch in anticipation, knowing there's just no way they'll be able to control the pour.

But can you picture this scene, much to your surprise/delight (**PICK OF FULL GLASS OF MILK**), wow, your child stopped pouring just in time and the milk crowns the top of the glass...pew it didn't spill...and just as you praise your child for the great pour job, they proudly grab that glass and as soon as they move milk just sloshes everywhere! It overflows...it could not be contained.

Paul is saying, the Church is to be a community that overflows and sloshes hope all over the world.

God says, when he looks around at our world, "I need a group of people who are so filled with hope, my kind of hope, firm hope, trust-worthy hope...that it overflows, sloshes everywhere. That it spills over into communities, and families...my church must have that kind of hope.

So let me just suggest a few practical ways that we can be agents of hope...

- **Share the Christmas story with someone this year.**

The Hebrews waited several hundred years, in expectation for the Messiah to come. And one of the ways they maintained their hope in the Messiah was by telling the story of the Exodus over and over again of God's faithfulness and his promise to send the Anointed one.

Part of the way we share hope at Christmas is to use this as an opportunity to share the story of Christmas with our family, friends, co-workers. Share the story of Christmas. Reliable hope, life change is possible if you give your life to the baby in the manger.

Or, very similar, we have Christmas Eve services coming up in just a few weeks, is there someone in your world, who needs to know there's more to this life than living and dying and trying to make it through another day. Invite them to come and hear the story of Jesus. You could be the beginning of someone meeting Jesus and experiencing true, reliable, trustworthy hope for the first time in their lives!

- **Listen to someone...**

One of the most powerful ways to effect hope in some else is to listen as they share their story about life, challenges, pain, brokenness. And you don't need to try and fix it. Just listen and ask questions. Part of the reason many of us aren't good at being agents of hope is that we don't have time to really listen to others share about their own hurts and pain.

That you would take time to ask and listen, to give someone your focused attention...that instills hope!

- **Do good deeds for someone...**

I read from 1 Timothy 6:17 just a little bit ago

17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

Now look at what follows...

18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

It's amazing how helping someone in despair can instill hope in the person being helped and the person doing the helping. Last Sunday evening (**PIC OF MEAL PACKING EVENT**) many of you came out to Five Forks church and we packed 50,000 bags of food to help feed people who are hungry.

Can you imagine the hope we'll be sharing, when that bag of food, ends up in the hands of a hungry person? When their belly starts to feel full.

Without hope...you put your head down, grind through life, struggle to find meaning, purpose, suffer through pain.

Hope changes that. Not just wishful thinking hope. Not "opioid of the people" kind of hope. But hope that is based in a person. Jesus. The kind of person who resurrected from the dead. The kind of person who heals disease and sets wrong, right. Who wipes away tears. Hope like that changes how you live your days on earth!

This Christmas at Five Forks, let's celebrate how Jesus came to bring HOPE to our world and let's be agents of that hope to our world.