

Advent Reading: Hope (2018)

Good morning. This is the first Sunday of Advent. Advent is the season traditionally set aside by the Christian church to reflect on the significance of Christmas. The Latin word for “coming” or “arriving” is Advent. So, Advent is a time for both celebration - Christ has come! – and anticipation – Christ will come again!

This Sunday we will light the first of four smaller candles - a candle symbolizing our hope as Christians.

The scripture reading is from the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 1, verses 5-17.

“⁵ In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶ And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. ⁷ But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. ⁸ Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, ⁹ according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. ¹¹ And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. ¹³ But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. ¹⁴ And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. ¹⁶ And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, ¹⁷ and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

The first coming of Christ was the consummation of many hopes. God’s people were waiting for centuries in hope that He would come, save, free, and restore His presence among them. In our passage this morning, Zechariah was in hope praying in the Temple when an Angel told him that he and his barren wife Elizabeth would have a son. This son would go before God Himself to prepare His people for His arriving. God was going to visit His people.

Advent – He came. Emmanuel - God With Us. Jesus has come to save, free, and restore.

Today, we still wait in hope. Our hope is not wishful thinking or optimism. As Christians, we wait in confident expectation that God Himself will bring about the future He has promised that we cannot yet see. Our hope is in Him. We anticipate God will come into our personal places of hurt and heal; our places of brokenness and restore; our places of emptiness and fill; and our places of slavery and free. But above all our personal hopes, we rest in confident expectation that Jesus will come again and renew all things in heaven and earth. At His coming our faith will be sight and our hope will be fully realized.

May the light of this candle enlighten the eyes of your heart so you can experience the hope that you have been given through Jesus.

<LIGHT CANDLE>