

SERMON NOTES Sunday 4th December 2022

sunnysidechurch

Bible passage: Matthew 3.1-12 and Romans 15:4-13

Introduction- We are now in the season of Advent. Advent is about preparing to celebrate Christ's birth, but also preparing for the time when he will come again. There is a lot of preparation that goes into Christmas. Shopping for presents, for all the food and if you make a Christmas cake there is months of preparation going into that.

Preparation is important. Any prominent athlete, musician or entrepreneur can vouch that much of their time and effort is dedicated to constantly preparing for their big event. **Are we prepared?** I don't mean for Christmas, for the 25th December. Are we ready to meet with Jesus this Christmas, and beyond? Are we ready to have our lives transformed by him? Are we ready to hear what he has to say to us this season?

I wonder how much Christmas Day preparation we do that is all about presents and food and Christmas cake. Are we preparing to meet with Jesus? Or are we preparing the turkey?

Spiritual preparation is important. In Joy to the World, we sing: *Let earth receive her King. Let every heart prepare him room.* What does making room for Jesus look like in our lives? It could look like making time and space to reflect, to repent, to read scripture or acknowledging what Christmas is actually about.

We are preparing for something real. Something that has come and something that is present and something that will come again. And this is why we need **hope**. We have to hope for this. Isaiah and Romans both speak of hope. Our God is the God of hope. The idea of hope in the Bible, though, is a little bit different than where our mind tends to drift at the word "hope." Biblical hope isn't hoping for better circumstances: it's waiting for God Himself to show up, right in the middle of all that stuff. It's the tension of living through the mess while holding onto the expectation that God can somehow come into it. The hope that Jesus brings doesn't require you to see any light at the end of the tunnel. It doesn't require you to imagine a real situation where things could possibly improve. The kind of hope we celebrate in Advent is about the arrival of Jesus into the world and how he can arrive into anything in our life as well.

Conclusion- So, let's ask ourselves this Advent: do we want God's plan or our own? Is our hope really in Him, or is it simply in the change of our circumstances? Are we willing to listen and say yes even if where he's leading feels impossible? In this time of uncertainty and for some a fearful time. We need to hold on to this Hope that we have in Jesus. As we look to the celebration of his birth and the return of him one day.

Some questions for discussion

1. Are we preparing room in our lives for Jesus? Are we actively receiving God's gift of the Holy Spirit?
 2. Read both bible passages. What hope can you see in them?
 3. What is something you are hoping for right now?
- Why not give time and space for Christ, now in this season of Advent and in the coming year.

Rachel Hamilton