

Living With Advent

HOPE

PART 1

Advent 2022

READ HEBREWS 6:18-20

INTRODUCTION

There are people who wonder how they can trust God because of all the problems they have with religion. There is doubt and there is skepticism about fully committing to a God that allows pain and suffering. What they do not realize is that we are able to trust Him because of His nature. It comes down to what our definition of "holy" is. When we look at this section of Scripture we see that God is more than a human in His emotions and His care for us. He is ultimately holy and righteous and because of what those two words mean, we can trust Him.

God does not lie. It is an impossibility. That means that He does what He says He will do and we can trust that because He is holy and righteous, He will not lie to us because if He did lie, He would cease being God. We can rest in the comfort of knowing that God has promised safety and forgiveness to those who confess and believe. (1 John 1:9) If we are forgiven, and He no longer sees our transgressions, we can trust that we will no longer come under His judgement of wrath but be welcomed into His family. This is not only a relief but, also it is a great source of hope in this world.

Jesus is the One who has given us access to the Father. He is the One that made it possible for us to rest in His love. There are still troubles and trials that we go through but it is possible to experience hope and rest when we understand that Jesus has paid the price for our sins. That means that there is no longer anything to pay. We rest in that hope and take great encouragement in it. If we have a God that will die on a cross to forgive us of our sins, in order that we can experience His glory and goodness, how is it then that we could not experience a wonderful hope and rest in our daily life?

LIVING WITH ADVENT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What causes you to lose sight of the hope that we have been given? What is the hope that we have been given?
2. How can we better understand the definition of holiness? What does it do to our daily walk when we have a right understanding of “holy” and “righteous”? Why?
3. Is it a good thing or a bad thing that God cannot lie? Why? How can we apply that to our own way of interacting with others?
4. Why did God choose to send Jesus as payment for our sins? Does His sacrifice give you hope? Why or why not?
5. What are some practical things that you can do to rest in the hope that you have been given? How can we encourage each other in that?

WRAP UP

Jesus did something on the cross that none of us could ever hope to do. He was the perfect sacrifice that did not deserve the punishment of sin and yet, took it for us. He did that out of love but also, out of obedience to the Father. There was a hope in Him that we would be able to see the glory of God the Father and that we might hear Him welcome us into His eternal rest. That is our hope!

Living With Advent

LOVE

PART 2

Advent 2022

READ MATTHEW 1:18-25

INTRODUCTION

Jesus' birth was not just the confirmation of many prophecies and not just the coming of the Messiah. It was an expression of love for the people that He cares so much about. Jesus came to give us hope, peace and love. We can see through His life and His death how we are to be living our lives. We are to love one another and sacrifice for one another. We are not to live selfishly or for ourselves but, rather, for one another's benefit. We are to prefer one another above ourselves. When this happens, we see God move among us and can see how beautiful it can be to die to self and live to Christ.

1 Peter 4:7-9 describes this love as one that will cover up a multitude of sins. It is one that comes without complaint and with no strings attached. This can be difficult when we have a high view of ourselves or, when we do not particularly like the person we are called to love. We are called to put our own desires and preferences aside to serve and love our neighbor as ourselves. This is so difficult and yet so key in serving the Lord who came to earth to show us how to live and love.

Jesus loved perfectly and it is not realistic to think that we will always have that perfect love for one another but, it is important to practice. We are to train ourselves to love one another. We work, strive and struggle to get better at loving each other. Why? Because He first loved us. Because He showed us how to live our lives and when we claim to be His children, we must also show that we can obey His commands. (John 13:34-35) This passage is so key when trying to understand how we are to love each other. People are watching. Do you love the way you should?

LIVING WITH ADVENT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What ways can you see God's love in this passage other than Jesus' birth? How can we interact with God's love like Joseph?
2. How did Jesus coming to earth show us God's love? Why is it important? What should be our response in our daily lives to this love?
3. Read 1 Peter 4:7-9. Why is it important that we love? How can we train ourselves to love better? What steps can you take to be accountable to loving others?
4. Do you struggle with pride? How can we learn to humble ourselves more? Why is this so key in learning how to love?
5. Read John 13:34-35. What is the command? Why is it important that we obey this command? How can we better practice obeying this command of Jesus?

WRAP UP

When we better understand the reasoning for Christ coming to earth and living a perfect life to die on a cross for sins He didn't commit, we can better understand that we are extremely loved by Him and that, in turn, helps us to better understand how we are to love others around us. This is important because we are commanded by Christ to love one another. We have to practice this love. We have to train our minds and bodies in this love. It doesn't come easy but, it is worth the struggle to be able to love as He loves.