

Do You See

HOPE

Christ, our Hope

READ MATTHEW 1:18-25

INTRODUCTION

This very familiar passage deals with the birth of Jesus Christ, our Savior. It is key to note that His birth was long awaited by the Jewish nation and yet, it was missed by many. The angel that came to Joseph in a dream was proclaiming the long-awaited news that a Savior was to be born and that Mary, Joseph's future wife, would be the one to give birth to Him. Notice in these verses that the angel describes who Jesus was going to be. There are implications to a name and the Son of God would be no different.

Jesus would be the Child's name but, what He was going to do here on earth, for humanity, would be the defining characteristics of that name. In verse 21 we see that He was going to save His people from their sins. This provides hope. Hope that we no longer have to be underneath the eternal judgment of God. Complete forgiveness is something that the sacrificial law of the Old Testament could never fully give. Jesus was going to provide hope in that, He would deal with mankind's sins once and for all.

In verse 23 we see that His name would be "Emmanuel" which means God with us. More hope. God, condescending to our level in order to provide a lamb to shed His blood for the remission of sins. This is the message of hope and there is no real hope outside of the forgiveness of God because God is the One that can judge our souls to eternal punishment or, forgive us and welcome us into eternal rest. When we consider the implications of that, it is no wonder that Jesus Christ is our true hope in this world.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was so significant about the coming of the Messiah? Why is it still important today?
2. Why do you think the angel went to Joseph? What would your thoughts have been if given this kind of news?
3. Where is our hope found? Why is it so important to have this hope and not place it in things that can pass away?
4. How does God remind you that He gives us hope? What areas do you need to be reminded of the hope of God?

WRAP UP

The hope of forgiveness is something that everyone can experience. We must confess and repent and turn to Christ if we are to experience that true hope. That is the only way that we can know the hope of God and be at peace with Him. He loves us and desires to see us experience hope for the coming days and we do that through trusting in His Son Jesus.

Do You See

PEACE

| Where our peace comes from

READ PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9

INTRODUCTION

Peace is something that can be hard to find. We struggle so often with calming down enough to be able to breathe in our society because of all the turmoil and pain that this world can put us through at times. What begins to happen is something called worry. Worry is the antithesis of peace. When

we worry we take our fears and struggles and we begin to try and “fix” them under our own power. This is not what God wants however. He desires that we would give Him all of our burdens so that He can carry them and trade them for His burden which is light. (Matt. 11:28-30)

When we place our burdens, our cares, on Jesus He is able to carry them for us. When He is carrying our burdens, we experience His peace which makes no earthly sense. Being able to press onward in rejoicing is confusing when we are faced with life’s burdens. Even for Paul to encourage believers to rejoice in the Lord always is confusing because when he wrote those words he was sitting in prison. This is hardly a time to be rejoicing and yet, through placing his worry on the shoulders of Jesus, Paul was able to not only experience personal peace but also able to worship God for the gifts that He had given. Jesus desires us to experience His peace that overcomes all anxieties.

This concept is possible through Jesus Christ. Peace comes from Him, not from ourselves. When we think of the coming of Jesus to live the life of a man, we see example after example of how He brings us peace when we trust in Him and it is due to His sacrifice. He came to save us from the one thing that would separate us from the Father; sin. Separation from God doesn’t come from not working hard enough or not being strong enough. Separation from God comes from sin and Jesus coming to earth to live a perfect life as 100% man and 100% God, to die on a cross and to wash us with His blood was the design God had to restore that relationship. That brings us ultimate peace because there is nothing that can take that love and sacrifice away from me. (Romans 8:38-39)

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What areas of life do you struggle finding peace in? Why? How can you start to lay those burdens on Jesus' shoulders?
2. Read Matthew 11:28-30. Why should these verses give us peace? How does the peace we experience from Christ differ from the peace we create on our own?
3. What does it mean to have peace that surpasses all understanding? How do we experience that kind of peace?
4. What does the birth of Jesus have to do with peace? How does His life give us the example of living in God's peace?
5. Read Romans 8:38-39. How do these verses encourage us to experience God's peace? What should give us ultimate peace in life?

WRAP UP

Peace can be hard to find. Jesus is the one to help us experience the peace that will ultimately overcome any earthly struggle or worry. We rest in Him to enjoy a peace that looks strange to others. He is our hope and He is our peace.

Do You See

JOY

The Greatest Joy

READ: LUKE 2:8-14

INTRODUCTION

When we talk about being joyful, there can be a temptation to make it exclusively about happiness. While happiness can be something that contains joy, a person can be joyful without being happy. (1 Peter 1:6-8) In Scripture God emphasizes the importance of joy in our lives because He has given us a great gift to be joyful about; Jesus. This gift was not earned and it was not something that people sought after because mankind is often focused more on temporary happiness that provides a dopamine hit rather than choosing joy in all circumstances. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

The gift of Jesus Christ to mankind was one that would help us to experience God in a personal manner through His death on the cross but also, we can see Him as One who shows us the path to being joyful in every circumstance. It is because of His sacrifice that we know we are saved and it is His continually looking to the Father that we can be assured that we can face every trial with joy. He didn't have to come in the form of a man but He did. So, that means that we can be joyful. God gave us the ultimate gift and that should cause us to be joyful.

In any trial or circumstance we can look to the gift that God gave us and have confidence that His love for us is bigger. His gift causes us to focus our eyes on Him and because it is so big and so unearned we can look past those hurts and pains and experience something that is greater than a dopamine hit. Jesus gives us the ultimate joy and the angels expressed that joy when they said, "Glory to God in the Highest!" to the shepherds in that field. We are to not be afraid but to hold on to the joy that Jesus brings and continue pursuing a life that is not only reflective of Him but brings honor and glory to His name.

ADVENT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read 1 Peter 1:6-8. What does this passage say about joy versus happiness? How can we experience the joy that Christ has to offer? How do we share that joy with others?
2. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. What does it look like to choose joy? How are joy and happiness different? How are they the same?
3. Can you think of a time when you were joyful in spite of your circumstance? What was complicated about it? How did God help in that time?
4. Why should we be joyful about Christ's coming? What was the great joy that the angels were talking about to the shepherds?
5. What things in life take our eyes off of the joy that Jesus gives? How can we recalibrate our minds to focus on Him rather than the distractions?

WRAP UP

Christ's joy was to bless us with salvation. That was only possible through His amazing sacrifice. He had to come to earth as a baby and that coming was the beginning of something that would allow for all people of every nation to experience the joy of the Lord. This is not a temporary happiness but an eternal joy that outshines any darkness. Glory to God in the Highest!

Do You See

LOVE

God's Plan for Us

READ: MATTHEW 1:18-25

INTRODUCTION

The Nativity of Jesus Christ is a profound expression of God's love for humanity. The story of Jesus' birth, as recorded in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew, reveals the depth of God's affection and desire to reconcile humanity to Himself. We see Joseph and his love for Mary. Mary and her love for God and her future Son. We even see the love from the Magi towards the coming King in Matthew chapter 2. There is love surrounding the birth of Jesus and that is an image that we see throughout His whole life on earth as well.

God had (and has) shown from the beginning of time that He loved humanity. The Old Testament is full of His faithfulness and His love for His people. He made effort after effort to bring them back to Him to experience His love and His mercy so they might have fellowship with Him. It was made perfect in the coming of His Son Jesus. In the moment that Jesus came, He showed all of the world that God was willing to meet us at our level in order to restore relationship to Him. There is no greater love than to give your life for your friends. (John 15:13)

Jesus came for a specific purpose; to die on a cross. He came so that, in His death and resurrection, all of humanity might be restored to the Father. This is His purpose and while we experience the gift of that purpose, it is also important to remember what it means. It means that God loves us. He loves us more than we could imagine and more that we give Him credit for. Many times we are tempted to think God has left us behind but it is important to remember that even if the world crumbles around us, God's love for us is pure and holy. He loves us perfectly and will never leave us. (Matthew 28:20)

ADVENT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Jesus' birth show God's love for us? What does God expect in return?
2. What do we see in this passage concerning Joseph's love? Mary's? How can we show love to one another as they did?
3. What does it mean for God to come in the form of a human? How does that show love? Why is that so significant?
4. Read John 15:13. What does this verse imply is the greatest form of love? How did Jesus express that love?
5. How can we love others the way Christ has loved us? How can we keep each other accountable to loving in this way?

WRAP UP

Love cannot be more perfected than in the instance of Christ and His love for us. There is no better expression than to have God come down to earth, live a perfect life, die on a cross for sins He didn't commit, and raise again three days later to provide access to the Father and to eternal life in Him. This love is unmatched. We can only express our gratitude and try to love others in a small reflection of the same attitude.