



ADVENT THEMES

HOPE

Introduction

John Wesley could be characterised as a ‘hope-bearer’, particularly for those who were oppressed by the inequities of society. When challenged by the institutions and naysayers he, and his brother Charles, continued to persevere against injustice. He went to where the people were – those who were just managing to survive – carrying Christian hope.

Almost hope stands at a distance and offers platitudes, while **altogether** hope pursues and dives deeply into the hopelessness of situations to offer light in dark places.

Hope can be defined as: ***desire accompanied by expectation of or belief in fulfilment.***

For the Christian, our hope in Christ is sure and dependable. Romans 5:5 supports this: “*Hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.*”

1 Peter 1:3-5

- What key ideas do you notice?
- What does ‘living hope’ mean to you?
- What is the ‘inheritance’ Peter writes about in vs.4?

Look at these different versions of 1 Peter 1:4:

NRSV – *an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.*

NIV – *an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade . . . kept in heaven for you.*

CEB - *You have a pure and enduring inheritance that cannot perish – an inheritance that is presently kept safe in heaven for you.*

- What do these words tell us about our hope and inheritance through Christ?
- Which words hold the most meaning for you?
- How is this inheritance received?

The Christmas Story

Luke 1: 24-25 Elizabeth

Luke 1: 39-45 Mary visits Elizabeth

Luke 2: 4-7 Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem

Luke 2: 8-12 An angel visits the shepherds

- Why do you think God chose Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph and the shepherds to have leading roles in the story of the birth of Jesus, the hope of the world?
- In what ways did Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, and the shepherds have an ‘altogether hope’?
- Who are the unlikely people who serve as bearers of hope to the world today?

Hope – the real thing – breaks into seemingly strange, unexpected places where people often can’t afford much of anything. (Ingrid McIntyre)

- When we are comfortable, can we even hear the angels?
- Why do people stand at a distance rather than pursue hope?
- What ‘platitudes’ have you heard, often by well-meaning people, that actually have no power to offer hope?
- Where do you see situations of ‘hopelessness’?

Despair is the antithesis of hope; and despair happens when skin doesn’t show up. (Ingrid McIntyre)

- How is hope an antidote to despair?
- What does an ‘altogether hope’ mean to you?
- In what ways can we embody hope to others?

Hymn - Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

Reflecting on the words of the hymn: How do we hope for what is not yet while knowing that it has already been?