

Christmas Hope

Text: Christmas story & Micah 5:2-5a

Christmas, more than any other time of the year, should be the season of hope.

Hope...

The very sound of the word can lift your spirits when you're down.

Hope keeps you going when life seems to be going nowhere...

Or even going in the wrong direction.

Hope gives you something to cling to when you cling to when your things go wrong...

When you lose your job, or your health, or someone you love.

Hope is a spark inside that tells you tomorrow will be better.

What do you hope for?

But there are really two kinds of hope

There is hope based on wishful thinking, not a certainty

Like, I hope it will rain tomorrow (or not rain).

It has unpredictability to it.

This is the kind of hope expressed by children as they sit on the knee of Santa in shopping centres around Australia.

I hope I get a Play Station/I Pod.

I hope I get a horse/new bike.

It is the wish for something good...which you might get, often not.

While we may be disappointed when we don't get what we hoped for...

Not having it is not usually devastating.

Then there is hope based on an absolute certainty.

This is the hope of the Bible.

You can utterly depend on it.

It is the kind of hope the wise men had in the Christmas story.

Biblical hope is based on the promises of God.

And God always keeps his promises...no matter what.

Those promises, and that hope is always tied to Jesus.

If we believe in him we have the hope (certainty) of eternal life.

If we follow him, we have the hope (certainty) of his guidance, protection, provision and care.

Jesus is the anchor that links us to the promises of God.

So if you want that sure and certain hope...

Recognise that God is the source of that hope.

He is the source of all hope.

This is what spurred on the people of the OT.
They were looking forward to the coming of the King...
Because God had told them he was coming.

Just a brief look at the OT shows that God was giving them something to hope in.

You and I might moan about that fact that Christmas seems to start earlier and earlier each year.

But spare a thought for poor Micah.

Micah saw that first Christmas coming some 700 years before Mary and Joseph ever arrived in Bethlehem to find no room in the inn.

700 years before Jesus was born in the stable, Micah, a Jewish prophet said it would happen!

And it did!

Micah made 2 accurate prediction, based on what God had told him.

Firstly, the Messiah would be a descendant of King David.

Secondly, he would be born in the little town of Bethlehem.

He was 100% right!

There are more than 300 prophecies of the OT, telling us about the life of Jesus before he was born.

Those predictions all came true when he came to earth as the baby in a manger, lived and died and rose again.

There are more predictions, words from God to his people, that are waiting to be fulfilled when he comes again.

When Micah said these things were going to happen,
that the Messiah, the saviour, the king was coming...

God's people had been through a lot.

Because of their rebellion and disobedience to God...

they had been enslaved and defeated in war.

They wondered if God even knew they were still around.

By all appearances there was no hope for them.

Then God gives this message of hope through Micah.

You know, even though Israel did some horrible things, God did not give up on them.

He said someone was coming to save them...

To save them from their sins, from the enemies that surrounded them.

These prophecies of Micah and the other OT prophets gave the people incredible hope in the face of incredibly tough times.

Their **God was the source** of their continuing hope.

And Jesus is the fulfilment of that hope.

The hope of those people was tied to the coming Messiah...Jesus Christ.
It always was...and still is.
Our hope is tied to him too.

When the angel told Mary about the coming birth,
she was told the name of the child would be Jesus...the Lord saves!
He was coming to save his people.
The message to the angels was...the Saviour has been born!

He is the one coming to save us...
To save us from our sins.

Romans 5:8 says, 'God demonstrates his love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.'

God knows about our wrong, he knows about our sin...
Those thoughts words and deeds that separate us from him.
But he didn't give up on us.
Right from the beginning he promised that a saviour was coming to pay the price for your sins.
He promised someone to rescue us.
That someone is Jesus.

That's why Christmas is the greatest time of the year.
Heaven celebrates...the glory of the angels singing in the night sky.
We need to remind ourselves that Christmas is about God and his love for us.

But the message of the OT guys is not complete...
He is coming back...
Coming back as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
He is coming back as the mighty Lord, the prince of Peace.

That is our source of hope.

Conclusion

So what do you hope for this Christmas?
Toys, new phone, plasma TV, car?
Is it wrapped up in the expectations of presents under the tree?

Or have you lost all hope in the darkness that surrounds your life.

Out of the darkness God spoke to the people of long ago...
Giving them hope.
Out of the darkness God speaks to us...
Giving us hope.

Maybe you need to learn again that there is hope, always hope in God.

Christmas hope is found in God's rescue plan for a hurting world.

Jesus birth reveals God's active love for the world.

Despite the fact that people are the cause of the world's problems,

God rolls up his sleeves and gets to work.

Jesus came and healed the sick, he gave strength to the weak, he untangled complicated lives, he gave hope to the hopeless.

Hope that God really cares and that God is going to repair and heal what we have broken and hurt.

Christmas hope is not found in the things you hope to do or achieve.

Nor is it found in the presents.

Nor is it found in family and friends.

These may be good things but...

Unshakeable hope can only be found in God.

Because only he loves without selfishness,

Only he has the power to rescue your life.

Christmas is the time we celebrate the birth of Jesus.

He came to bring to your life real Christmas hope.

Because of who God is and what he has done you can be filled with confidence and hope.

Who or what have you put your hope in?