

Advent Message

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The first Sunday of the church year, the first Advent Sunday, has arrived. I have noticed a pattern, before the Advent season people have questions about these four weeks, what's the theme we will celebrate, what colour candle will we light, etc. And these are important questions, but probably more important for us to know is who we are waiting for. The last Sunday of the year is Christ the King Sunday, which reminds us that before we start the season we have to know who we are waiting for. We are waiting for Christ the King.

And the first Sunday of Advent is about hope. What is hope? Somehow we feel that we need hope, but it's hard to define what hope is. Maybe try to think about situations where you were in desperate need and all you wanted was to find hope in something or somebody: hospital rooms, waiting rooms, doctors' offices, funeral homes, first days of a new job or school, nursing homes, or the first day being alone. We all need hope, it doesn't matter how old we are.

A dictionary says that hope is "a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen, a feeling of trust."

When we hope for something we trust and try to believe that it will happen.

Last week I thought about hope many times because I noticed how often I hoped for something to happen in my personal life. As many of you probably know, we are expecting a baby and have to go through many tests and I still hope to get good results, and that in the end, we will see a beautiful baby as a gift from God. But last week I also noticed that I started to lose my voice and I hoped that it's not the sickness we don't want to get. And it's not. But because of the baby, I couldn't really take any painkillers, and then I got a cold and couldn't sleep for many nights. During those nights I hoped for the mornings when after the darkness I could see light. And you know what I mean when I say that as Christians sometimes we have to go into the darkness, our life is not without valleys. Yes, we have many moments on the mountain top, and we are like the disciples who went up with Jesus when his transfiguration happened. They just wanted to build tents on the top and stay there, but they all had to go back to their everyday lives.

For us Christians, hope is more than a feeling. Look at Isaiah 9:2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

We know that our hope is in a person, our hope is in Jesus Christ, whose mission was and still is to come and save the lost ones. Because God so loved the world that he sent Jesus to save those who believe in him. And it means that we need saving from the darkness. Jesus didn't come to save us from happiness and joy. He came because he knew all about the darkest nights. He knows us, he knows how hard it is to be in the hospital waiting room, waiting for the doctor and hearing the news about cancer. He knows our heart when we are waiting for an ultrasound result and our heart is racing. He knows that the hurting, the lost, the broken-hearted need the good news. And Jesus brought the good news to all of us. Because we have to know, life is not always about the happy moments, we all need Jesus, we all need hope.

And Jesus promised to come back. He will come back on the clouds and every knee will bow before him and every tongue will confess that He is the Lord.

Maybe you have a question, how is it possible that we can be sure Jesus will come back. And many people can say, that oh I'm not sure, maybe he will or maybe he won't come back, I don't know. The problem with this answer is that it's far from the Bible. That's why I say many times, friends, please read your Bible. If you don't have one, ask for one, Christmas is the best time to ask for a Bible as a gift. Call me and I will give you one. I cannot emphasize enough that the enemy knows what's in the Bible and can come after you and tempt you and ask you whether Jesus would really come back. Look at the world and see the struggles, suffering, how many people, especially children are dying in war zones, or without food and clean water. We could go on and on with the problems in today's world. But! When we know the Bible we know that Jesus didn't want to hide these things from his disciples; he wanted them to know about suffering in this world. From Romans, we know that even the created world is crying out for justice. And we too are crying out for the one who could come and ease the pain, suffering and bring hope, peace, love and joy.

And these are not only our expectations. There are promises in the Bible that Jesus will come back. But we also have to know how promises from God work in the Bible. God doesn't make promises then decide whether to keep them or forget about them. If God promises something, he will do it. He is a promise-keeper, miracle-maker God.

Read your Bible! Try to find the promises about Jesus Christ and see what happened to those promises. Did you not know that there were prophecies that were fulfilled about Jesus, that he had to be born from a virgin woman in Bethlehem, he would be a descendent of Isaac and Jacob, He would be called Immanuel, and many other prophecies.

If Jesus promised to come back, he will come back. And it's not just something that I wish, for Jesus to come back. Our hope is coming from our faith in Christ, that if he said that he will fulfill it.

Hebrews 11:1: Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

Somebody once said to me that if you trust in God you will never feel cheated. You will experience hope in those dark moments when you don't know on your own what to do. Your hope in Jesus Christ will open doors, will bring peace and joy into your heart.

With this Advent message, I wish you a blessed Advent season and Christmas, waiting for the one who will come. Be blessed and filled with hope, peace, love and joy in his name. Amen