

Talking Points “The Breaking Forth of Hope” By Pastor AJ Johnson Delivered 11 29 20

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 1st Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37; Isaiah 64:1-9 (Sermon)

Isaiah 64: 1 “Oh that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence.”

Tear open the heavens.

And come down.

Do you hear how Isaiah sounds?

Tear open...Come down..

Isaiah gives voice to a man and a people who need God and God’s action in the world.

Our Advent begins with a prayer of the prophet Isaiah that is a passionate plea and a desperate prayer.

See the children of Isreal wanted, needed a visible sign that their God was still with them.

They wanted their friends and their enemies to see it and know it was God...their God.

“Quake the very mountains” at the presence of God he begs!

They wanted a *divine intervention*.

A visible manifestation of His presence.

And in Verse 4, “...no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him.”

Repeatedly, God’s people are a people who are told to wait.

“Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord” (Psalm 27:14);

The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.

Lamentations 3:25

I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me and heard my cry” (Psalm 40:1).

Isaiah 30:18 “...For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.”

And because we live on this side of the birth death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, it’s hard for us to imagine the whold community of people, all of Isreal, waiting on God.

The period of time between the gospel opening to Jesus Christ and the last words of the Old Testament is hundreds of years.

Isreal knew how to wait on God, but they were growing impatient.

Desperate.

The world seemed at times to be closing in on them.

Of all people they knew that the God of miracles can seem mighty slow to human understanding.

They knew that the God who eventually delivered them from slavery in Egypt didn’t do so overnight.

When God moved, He moved dramatically and emphatically so the world knew He was God and these were His people.

It’s not that hard anymore to understand that level of desperation.

That desperation that we sing of each year at this time.

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel and ransom captive Isreal

O come Thou Rod of Jesse, free Thine own from Satan’s tyranny.”

That desperation that Isaiah expressed now, more than in any other modern time isnt’ so hard to understand now.

Now, in our time, an entire world awaits a vaccine, a cure, a treatment, for an invisible foe.

We've gotten tired of wearing masks and taking precautions.

Globally we are crying out demanding a breaking forth of something to hold onto.

The people of the Old Testament this year, don't seem so unlike us today.

We, who watch as our death tolls rise against the threat of an invisible enemy cry out to the one whom many feel is an unseen God, wondering if the God of the universe is still worthy of our hope, our trust, our waiting.

In this moment in time, the whole world this Advent, is waiting for a breaking forth of Hope.

Like God's people of Isaiah's day we cling to the hope of a breaking forth.

We wait.

Expectantly.

We wait.

Wondering why must we wait.

We serve a God who can do anything!

Why must we wait?

It is our Psalmist this morning that God allows the clarity to begin to shine forth.

“Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock...” Psalm 80:1

“Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved” Psalm 80:7, and “Then we will never turn our back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name.” Psalm 80:18

It is in the waiting we realize, it is God whom we are waiting for, and perhaps we need only see with new eyes that we might watch God move anew.

In the waiting there is a heightened watching for the presence of God.

Even when Israel fails to keep God's covenant, God is with them.

It is indeed God who has allowed there to be even the possibility of restoration of relationship.

In the waiting, we find we are really waiting for our own behavior to change.

And there is a realization that it was indeed the people that had turned from God.

In the waiting, it's as if there are given new revelation and new eyes to see the situation at hand.

As Isaiah says that our righteousness is as filthy rags.

How can we even begin to stand before a holy God?

What begins in lament is quieted in the facing that "we your people need to be restored."

When we look enough we see that we need God's salvation.

"Let your face shine, that we may be saved." The psalmist declares.

With new eyes are the ability to watch for God.

In the voice of our own hearing, we may feel that God has left us to ourselves, but

Advent is this time of tension the combination of God's judgement, and God's promise.

The God Isaiah and the Psalmist speak of does mighty and amazing deeds that bring surprise and delight to God's people, but God's people have forgotten to call upon God, they have forgotten to walk with God, leaving them apart from the one they need and love.

They call for a divine display, but they are in need of a divine mercy, a divine love and a divine hope in a God who still loves them, still protects them, still calls them to Himself; still forgives them no matter how far their sins have separated them from Him.

In our waiting, we learn to watch for God with new eyes made clear by the discovery of how much our sin has kept us from him and how great our need for Him is.

That is the message of Advent. ‘

That we need God.

We need the God of Hope breaking forth into our lives, our hearts and our world.

That is the message of the birth of the Christ child.

And one that we should not miss

We cannot get to God on our own, we have to come by faith, through Christ.

Christ entering into the world is God’s answer to the lamenting, demanding prayer of Isaiah,

The answer to the call of the Psalmist.

We have waited, but have we really watched for God’s arrival?

See, the message of Advent is that Christ has come, and that He will come again.

And for that return, God’s people are again told to wait.

Wait expectantly.

Wait with watching eyes.

Christ told us that He would come again.

“Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come.” Mark 13:33

“Therefore, keep awake == for you do not know when the master of the house will come... or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly.” Mark 13:35-36

The message of Advent in these days of Pandemic and unrest in the world is the same as it was. Help is on the way. We have to be found ready. Waiting. Waiting is not passive. It is not just laying around. It is active, engaging with the Word, will and work of the Lord.

Advent stands as a reminder to see the world through God’s eyes.

God has used our pandemic to show us, through His eyes, where our society is hurting, uneven and unbalanced.

In this time God has revealed the work that the church is to do. Proclaim His Word.

Work for peace and justice. Show love and kindness.

Each display of prejudice, war, injustice, want, need, hunger, poverty, division, the list is long...is proof the world is still waiting for wholeness, redemption, and still in need of The Savior.

Oh, church there is work to be done in the waiting of His return.

1 Corinthians 1:4 says we have been given grace. Paul tells us further that we are “not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We have been equipped by God with all that we need, called into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ Our Lord (1 Cor 1:9) that we might work in the waiting and the watching with Godly eyes for His return.

Our challenge today is as it has been since Christ broke forth bringing with Him all the world needed.

Our challenge is ***to be the church.***

One day, the pandemic will leave. Of that we can be assured.

There will be countless families who do indeed have an empty chair at their family table, who will need to be told or reminded that their loved one now sits at the table that Jesus Christ prepared for those that love Him, accept Him, and believe in Him.

One day, the pandemic will leave.

There will need to be those that advocate for justice, fairness, equity, and equality.

One day, the pandemic will leave.

And The Church, will be called upon to speak for the voiceless. To proclaim God's message and demand that the things The Church was allowed to see through God's eyes in society must change.

Our challenge is one day the pandemic will leave.

When it does, will we just go back to 'life as usual' or will we work for God to make the world, our countries, our communities, our neighborhoods, our homes, better than they were?

In the name of Jesus the Christ, the Risen One.

Amen.

CHALLENGE

We enter this Advent season with a call. A call by God to watch, to wait, and to work. We enter this Advent it is with renewed understanding that waiting and watching can be a challenge. It's a challenge to faithfully do the work of the church while we are waiting. Waiting can make us think God is not waiting with us. Watching requires that we watch actively. Watching can be exhausting and can cause us to become disillusioned in the work we are to do for God. And work under those circumstances can be almost impossible, unless we have faith and hope in the God who is faith and hope eternal. Knowing the God of Hope means we can wait, watch and work with anticipation. Knowing that Jesus is coming back again. In this we can have hope and not be discouraged. We may not know what tomorrow brings, but we know Who holds tomorrow. Be careful that in the absence of certainty we do not lose hope. God has a bright tomorrow planned. And we do not have to live in darkness of "uncertainty" We CAN have Hope that the God of Hope will breakthrough into this world at a time of His choosing once again. And in the meantime, we can count on Him to break forth into our situations and bring with Him peace, love and joy. Be Encouraged! He has not forgotten you!

Amen.

BENEDICTION

Our Benediction this morning comes from

2nd Thessalonians 2:16-17

¹⁶ May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, ¹⁷ encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

AMEN.

Friends, go in peace knowing you are God's beloved child.

If you found today's worship service helpful to you please send us an e-mail at:

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We would LOVE to hear from you!