

Christmas: A Taste of Heaven Here and Now

Part 1: How to experience real hope today.

1 Peter 1:3-6

Summary: Christmas offers a taste of the life Jesus brings—real hope, peace, and joy now and forever

Main Ideas:

There's something about Christmas that makes us long for what is "supposed to be."

Christmas is a taste of the life Jesus offers.

Hope lets us experience Christmas every day.

God promised he would make everything as it's supposed to be.

God kept his promise through a baby in a manger.

Jesus was the fulfillment of Israel's hope and is the source of our hope now.

The resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of real hope.

One day EVERYTHING will be as it's supposed to be.

Hoping for God's tomorrow gives us peace and joy today.

We can have real hope because Jesus keeps every promise.

Invitation:

Let real hope shape your real life.

- Read: 1 Peter 1:6
- Practice saying: What is "supposed to be" will one day be.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are your favorite and least favorite aspects of Christmas, and why?
2. How do you relate to the idea of longing for life to be "as it's supposed to be," especially during the holiday season?
3. What does "hope" mean to you, and how does that compare to the "living hope" described in 1 Peter 1:3-6?
4. What are some practical ways you can live out the hope of Christmas in your daily life?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

Transcript:

ME: How do you feel about Xmas?

I love it. Maybe not as much as my wife... but it's my favorite time of year.

- Magical. Purposeful. Family.
- Feels like, at least for this moment, life is as it's supposed to be.

WE: But maybe for you, Christmas isn't magical at all. Maybe it feels stressful, empty, or even painful.

Either way, we feel this pull... **There's something about Xmas that makes us long for what is "supposed to be."**

- Most of the year we tend to accept that we're just getting through life, but at Xmas, we feel like things should be different, better, whole, at least for a day.

WHY? Where does that come from?

- It's gotta be more than roasting chestnuts (whatever those are) on an open-fire
- It's gotta be more than twinkling lights, carols, or even family moments.

All those things are wonderful, but WHY do they stir something deeper in us?"

I watch the movies, read the stories, listen to the songs, and can't find a real answer...

- If we just looked on the surface it seems like we're just celebrating that we're celebrating...

But WHY are we celebrating?

- What creates all these feelings and gives us this idea of what life is "supposed to be?"

At the core of all of it is a baby in a manger who grew up and invited people to enjoy life in the KoG.

- A life of hope, peace, joy, love
- A life filled w/ beauty, wonder, imagination, and endless possibilities.
- Life the way it's supposed to be... the life we are all deep down longing for.

At Christmas, we see little glimpses of what this life could be like... of what life is supposed to be

Christmas is a taste of the life Jesus offers.

- It's an appetizer to the feast we are invited to enjoy every day now and forever.

The promise of xmas is that we CAN experience the life Jesus offers every day...

And it starts w/ a word we see all over at xmas time... on signs, lit up w/ lights, on our decorations... HOPE

- But it's not just hoping for hope's sake
- It's not hoping for some vague idea of happiness
- Or hoping for just one Xmas that lives up to the hype.

It's a hope that's reliable and concrete

Hope lets us experience Christmas every day.

And I get it... you might be skeptical... but...

This longing we all feel at Christmas—that things should be different, better—is not accidental and it's not just sentimental nostalgia.

It's a signpost pointing us to a promise God made long ago, one that He fulfilled in the most extraordinary way.

GOD: Here's part of the story...

2700 yrs ago Iron Age Israel was a mess—oppression, injustice, and rebellion had torn the nation apart.

- Life was far from what it was supposed to be

- The rich abused the poor
- The leaders didn't provide true justice and loved getting bribes

So, through the prophet Isaiah, God told them they would be conquered and exiled to a foreign land.

But it wouldn't last forever... God was going to do something... he was going to send someone to fix it all

Isaiah 9:1-2; 6-7 ¹ Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever... there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles... will be filled w/ glory. ² The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine...

...⁶ For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ His government and its peace will never end. He will rule w/ fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity...

And this king will bring what we all long for... life the way it's supposed to be...

Isaiah 11:4; 6; 9-10

⁴ He will give justice to the poor and make fair decisions for the exploited. The earth will shake at the force of his word, and one breath from his mouth will destroy the wicked.

⁶ In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard will lie down w/ the baby goat. The calf and the yearling will be safe w/ the lion, and a little child will lead them all.

⁹ Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, for as the waters fill the sea, so the earth will be filled w/ people who know the Lord.

¹⁰ In that day the heir to David's throne will be a banner of salvation to all the world. The nations will rally to him, and the land where he lives will be a glorious place.

God promised he would make everything as it's supposed to be.

But this king will not look or act like any other king... in fact, his own people won't even recognize him

Isaiah 53:2b-3 ² ...There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him.

³ He was despised and rejected— a man of sorrows, acquainted w/ deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care.

He will bring freedom to his people, not by conquering nations, but by dying for his people.

- He'll rescue them not from their physical enemies but from the enemy of all humanity... sin and death.

Isaiah 53:5-6; 8-9 ⁵ But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed.

⁶ All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.

⁸ Unjustly condemned, he was led away. No one cared that he died w/out descendants, that his life was cut short in midstream. But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people.

⁹ He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave.

But God says... this is all part of the plan and something extraordinary will happen...

Isaiah 53:10-11 ¹⁰ But it was the Lord's good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants. He will enjoy a long life, and the Lord's good plan will prosper in his hands.

¹¹ When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins.

So even though this King dies, he will have many descendants and enjoy a long life?

- Somehow his death won't stick.
- Somehow he will not only live again but give other people life. And be satisfied w/ what he accomplished?

For 700 years kingdoms rose and fell, Israel was conquered and reconquered, and still, the people waited and hoped.

Until one night in Bethlehem God fulfilled his promise w/ a baby born to a teenage peasant...

And the first to hear the news were some shepherds in a field...

Luke 2:8-11 ⁸ That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. ⁹ Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, ¹⁰ but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. ¹¹ The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David

"God has kept his promise! The time and King everyone has hoped for is here!"

God kept his promise through a baby in a manger.

And this baby grew up...

Said he was not just bringing the KoG, or pointing the way to God... but he was the King God had promised to send.

- He showed us the real heart of God
- Accepted the outcast.
- Loved the hated
- Healed people of diseases.

He taught w/ authority... called the leaders out for not taking care of the poor, the orphans, and widows.

But then it was all cut short when the leaders had him killed on a cross.

Everyone thought it was over... no one was thinking about God's promise, this wanna-be king was dead... it was over.

But on the 3rd day after his execution, he rose from the dead.

- Fulfilling the promise that the King would die but also live
- Showing that he was who he said he was.
- Proving that the power of sin and death has been destroyed.

He was seen by over 500 witnesses. He talked to and ate meals w/ his followers.

- And gave them to mission to tell everyone everywhere that God had kept his promise.

And b/c of that historical event... b/c God kept his promise by sending a King to die and rise again for the world... we can have HOPE in our lives now.

Jesus was the fulfillment of Israel's hope and is the source of our hope now.

Apostle Peter put it this way... **1 Peter 1:3-6 (NIV)**

V. 3 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*

In his great mercy... It's not from what we've done or earned... he gives us a... New birth

New life. The life Jesus offers. Life the way it is supposed to be... now and forever.

- Knowing you're loved.
- A life of hope, peace, joy, love
- A life filled w/ beauty, wonder, imagination, and endless possibilities.

It's a living hope... Not wishful thinking

- Not dreams that eventually die
- Not a vague feeling that can be ruined by Uncle Eddie drinking too much eggnog.
- It's a living breathing, life-giving hope

Living Hope means...

- When life feels overwhelming we can trust God's promises and face every day w/ confidence
- When we are in those moments of joy w/ family and friends... we know it's not just a fleeting moment slipping through our fingers... but a glimpse of our eternal future.
- When relationships are broken we know reconciliation is possible b/c God has reconciled us to himself
- Living Hope means when those empty chairs break our hearts we can embrace the memories knowing that one day we will be reunited forever.
- It means when things are miles from perfect we can look forward to the future when everything will truly and actually and literally be the way it's supposed to be.

And we can trust that it will happen... not bc we try really hard to believe it, or try to be good, or have some holiday spirit... we can confidently hope b/c it's all based on and through the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of real hope.

But it gets even better!

V. 4-5 *⁴and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*

One day EVERYTHING will be as it's supposed to be.

All of those things we say... "this isn't how it's supposed to be"... will be made right

- Pain will be over. Evil will be eradicated. Death itself will die.
- We will have peace w/ each other, ourselves, and God

And there is nothing that can spoil, ruin, or steal it.

- It is a guarantee from God himself.

And when we live in this hope it changes everything.

V. 6 *In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.*

As we wait for the final culmination of what everything is supposed to be we can begin living it in our lives NOW... even in the hardest times.

When you are confident in your hope for God's perfect future you can live today w/ peace and joy (Next two weeks).

B/c God kept his promise 2000 yrs ago we can have a confident hope that he will keep his promise to make everything the way it is supposed to be.

Things might not be what we want now, we will have to face the harsh reality of real life... but we can face it w/ confidence b/c we know God will keep his promise and we can rest in that hope.

And our hope allows us to taste that life every day of the year as we wait.

Hoping for God's tomorrow gives us peace and joy today.

YOU: So let me get awkward and personal and ask you... What are you hoping?

- That this xmas will finally be the one that ends up being what it's supposed to be?
- That this coming year will be the year you get ahead?
- That there's still hope for your relationship?
- Hoping to finally be healed?

Maybe you're wondering if this hope is even real. Life feels far from what it's supposed to be, but that's exactly why Jesus came.

Whatever you are going through... whatever you are hoping... if your core hope is in Jesus' promise of new life now and forever you can face life w/ peace and joy.

This hope can be yours through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

- Accept Jesus as your king... now and forever.
- "I pledge allegiance to you."
- Trust him to guide you and transform you from the inside out.

And when you do or if you already have... Let real hope shape your real life.

Read: 1 Peter 1:6

And in the good times and bad... choose to look at life through hope-filled goggles...

- Practice saying: What is "supposed to be" will one day be.

No matter what happens to you, your Heavenly Father is holding on to you and has your inheritance ready for you...

WE: Life is not what it is supposed to be. Xmas will never be perfect. But through Jesus we can experience the hope of Xmas everyday

What if... in the middle of life's most difficult/painful moments... we still dared to hope?

What if... we had the audacity and the courage to trust that God raised the dead before... He will do it again in this life and the next.

What if in the best moments of our life, we enjoy them fully knowing they are a solid promise of what is to come?

Jesus can make your today and your tomorrow what it was always meant to be.

And soon he will make everything the way it's supposed to be.

That is why Christmas has the power it does... it gives us a taste of the life Jesus offers.

And at its core is the living hope whose foundation is Jesus.

This week as you see the lights, hear the songs, and enjoy the decorations... remember they are signs pointing to the fulfilled promise of God...

We can have real hope b/c Jesus keeps every promise.