

# Advent | Jesus Gives Us Hope

Written by John Fox | 12.1.2023

Text: Colossians 1:24-29

FCF: Despair/Pride

VFT: Hope

Shaft: A believer's ultimate hope is the reality of the in-dwelling of Christ.

## INTRO

### Christmas Decorations & Advent

A big thank you to "The Michelles" (Zaering & Catlin) and a small group of women who decorated the church for our advent season! Speaking of advent...

Today marks the first Sunday of the advent season. This is typically a time for us as a church to celebrate the first coming of Christ in the Incarnation and look forward to his second coming as well. This season also marks off a short sermon series that will take us through the end of the year focusing on Jesus giving us hope, peace, joy, himself, and love.

### Hope is in the air

PRAY AND BEGIN. This time of year, hopes are high. People have relational hopes with spending more time around family and friends. People have political hopes with a recent midterm election and a presidential election next year. People have hopes about Christmas bonuses and presents. People even have hopes about the reputation of their city. [Erik Lacity](#), A Seattle Times staff reporter, recently wrote an article on people's pride and hope for Seattle. [One individual](#) said,

#### Seattle Times Quote

"I'm heartened to see tourists coming to Seattle. Seattle has been and will be a great city. When my family from Colorado visited, we went to Pike Place Market and environs. Drug addicts asking for money, people confronting us at stoplights, and a general sense of dread and foreboding largely defined our experience. I was embarrassed on behalf of my city. Seattle can be great. I know we will get there one day again.<sup>1</sup>

This morning's passage explicitly teaches us about hope.

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<https://www.seattletimes.com/pacific-nw-magazine/readers-share-seattle-pride-and-hope-in-response-to-our-story-on-tourists/>

# Main Point

**Main Point:** Jesus gives us ultimate hope.

Points: Why? Three Reasons:

1. Why we need hope (v.24-25)
2. What hope is (v.26-27)
3. What hope does (v.28-29)

## 1. Why we need hope (v.24-25)

### Colossians 1:24-25

**24** Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and I am completing in my flesh what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for his body, that is, the church. **25** I have become its servant, according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known,

#### 1) Hope & Suffering

This section of Scripture comes with some difficult concepts we will delve into. This first shows us that there is a reality to living in this world- suffering. There's nothing like a heart-warming Christmas message on suffering, yay! I'm being sarcastic, of course. This is not something we gravitate to, but recognizing the reality of the world we live in is key to understanding *why* we need hope.

The Apostle Paul is explaining a very complex biblical idea of the vicarious way we as believers (including himself) can participate in Christ's own sufferings for the sake of other believers. Put simply, Paul viewed his persecution in bringing the gospel message to the Colossians as a necessary affliction on Christ' behalf. The reality I want to grab from this is that there is real suffering, real difficulty in this life. And this is very instructive for us in-relation to hope. Here is how Paul says it elsewhere.

### Romans 8:18, 24-25

**18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. **24** Now in this hope we were saved, but hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? **25** Now if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience.

Paul is essentially saying, as everyone knows, that to hope innately means you are not satisfied. You want something or need something. We have an expectation or anticipation of something. Famous church Father Thomas Aquinas says it this way.

#### Thomas Aquinas' Definition of Hope

Hope is "...a future good, difficult but possible to attain... by means of the Divine Assistance... on Whose help it leans".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hope\\_\(virtue\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hope_(virtue))

Are there lower case “h” hopes. Yes. But even those show us that we need a capital “H” hope.

## 2) Nothing else works

Another key distinction to make is that the Christian version of hope is explicitly theological. The beginning quote is essentially man-centered, not God-centered. This is important for us because it is core to Paul’s purpose in writing to the Colossians. Heretical beliefs had begun popping up in the church and Paul writes to correct those heresies with the truth of the gospel. Here’s six possible heresies Paul was combating:

### Colossian Church Heresies

- Ceremonialism. It held to strict rules about the kinds of permissible food and drink, religious festivals ([2:16-17](#)) and circumcision ([2:11](#); [3:11](#)).
- Asceticism. "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!" ([2:21](#); cf. [2:23](#)).
- Angel worship. See [2:18](#).
- Depreciation of Christ. This is implied in Paul's emphasis on the supremacy of Christ ([1:15-20](#); [2:2-3,9](#)).
- Secret knowledge. The Gnostics boasted of this (see [2:18](#) and Paul's emphasis in [2:2-3](#) on Christ, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom").
- Reliance on human wisdom and tradition. See [2:4,8](#).
  - These elements seem to fall into two categories, Jewish and Gnostic. It is likely, therefore, that the Colossian heresy was a mixture of an extreme form of Judaism and an early stage of Gnosticism (see Introduction to 1 John: Gnosticism; see also note on [2:23](#)).<sup>3</sup>

These worldly voices so easily fill our minds and tempt us to put our hope in lesser things. But we have our own versions of **heretical hope**.

I am needed	I am beautiful	I am strong	I am wise
I am wealthy	I am intelligent	I am savvy	I am culturally adept
I am of pedigree	I am competent	I am compassionate	I am powerful

Or, the opposite of all of these things can be just as strong a temptation for us to put our hope into. The truth is that what fills our minds parade hopes before us.

**We need hope because there is something we’re missing. I think everyone can agree on that. But we mainly need hope in God because nothing else works. Nothing else satisfies. Consider how placing your hope in these things has gone. Power fades, money can’t buy your health, loved ones pass away. These things will let you down. We need hope because we’re in a broken world and we are broken. Which begs the question, what then is this hope Paul is espousing?**

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.biblestudytools.com/colossians/>

## 2. What hope is (v.26-27)

### Colossians 1:26-27

26 the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. 27 God wanted to make known among the Gentiles the glorious wealth of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Paul yet again unpacks a loaded and complex theological idea. There are three important ideas here.

#### 1) Gospel (v.21-23)

It should be no surprise to us that the gospel message (good news) is how Paul describes our hope. Though we were alienated from and hostile to God, he has brought us near to himself through Jesus' sacrificial life, death, burial, and resurrection. This is the gospel message.

#### 2) Mystery (v.26-27)

The **Mystery** (*musterion*) which was hidden in ages past has now been made known by God. The greek word comes from the root word “*muo*”, which means to shut the mouth. Here's how Paul uses it in Ephesians.

### Ephesians 3:8-9

8 This grace was given to me—the least of all the saints—to proclaim to the Gentiles the incalculable riches of Christ, 9 and to shed light for all about the administration of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things.

#### 3) Christ in you (v.15-20)

What is this mystery? It is forgiveness of sins; life with God; harmony with your fellowman; all things made right. Yes and amen. But in Colossians Paul mainly focuses on the supremacy of Christ over all things. Here are key phrases Paul gives in a poem that are true of Christ:

- Image of the invisible God
- Firstborn over all creation
- The One through whom and for whom all things were created
- The One by whom all things hold together
- The head of the church
- Firstborn from the dead
- The One in whom the fullness of God dwells
- The heavenly and earthly reconciler
- The one who shed his blood on the cross

This mystery that shuts the mouth of every heavenly being and should shut our mouths is that This Christ, Paul says, dwells in you as a believer. This is a ludacris claim! Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Believer, if you have repented (turned) from your sins and put your faith in Jesus, Christ dwells in you through faith. I don't pretend to understand everything this means, but there are some simple things it means. 1) You are not alone, ever. 2) God will take care of you. Your hope transcends any difficulty you could face. Mysterious- the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God lives in you. This doesn't mean you can shoot lasers with your eyes, but this hope is effective.

### 3. What hope does (v.28-29)

#### Colossians 1:28-29

28 We proclaim him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. 29 I labor for this, striving with his strength that works powerfully in me.

This hope isn't only for personal comfort. For Paul, this comfort immediately turns him into action.

#### 1) Proclaim/Warn/Teach

We must proclaim this mystery. That means we use our mouths to tell other people the good news of the gospel. We must consider how we can warn people about the realities of heaven, hell, and the state of their soul. We must teach the non believing world what God has said and why he has said it.

#### 2) Disciple- present others

We must be passionate about discipleship and have an eye to seeing how we can help each other grow, even if awkward conversations are necessary. And they will be necessary!

#### 3) Give glory to God

This takes everything you've got: money, time, heart. And yet, in this endeavor, it is ultimately God who empowers it and receives the glory for it. It is about him and his kingdom.

I began with a quote from a man who desperately hoped the fame of Seattle would rise. But to end allow me to share a hope of Thomas Aquinas' city or kingdom of God. Hear what theologian [Beth Mortenson](#) said about the end of Aquinas' life.

#### Example of Thomas Aquinas' Life

Many scholars believe he was working on this text [compendium] when he died. Under the title, "That it is possible to reach the kingdom," Thomas begins, "We must go on to show that man can reach that kingdom. Otherwise, it would be hoped for in vain and prayed for in vain" (Compendium, Book II, C. 10). He gives as the first reason for our hope the divine promise, quoting Jesus's words from Luke 12:32: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

“Second,” Aquinas continues, “an evident example shows that attainment of the kingdom is possible.” There, the text abruptly trails off. It may have been the very last sentence that the Angelic Doctor ever wrote. It is as if God took St. Thomas at his words, “We must go on to show that man can reach that kingdom,” and used St. Thomas himself to complete the “evident example.”<sup>4</sup>

**Church, do you have this hope? If you do, like Aquinas, it will change you. It will transform you into the very image of Christ who is our ultimate hope.**

## CONCLUSION

**Main Point:** Jesus gives us ultimate hope.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.aquinasinstitute.org/post/aquinas-on-hope>