



Christmas 2025 – Part 1

The Christmas Promise

Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well, our kids sang if you caught the whole theme, I mean, it's all captured in that last line. Jesus Christ, our hope made new. I just want you to let that one sink in for a minute. Our hope made new. That's a bit of an oxymoron if you think about it. Jesus Christ, our hope made new. That's all about a promise kept but if our hope is made new what is that all about? This is a weird thing about Christianity and if you miss this point you've missed the whole point. Jesus Christ, our hope made new. The whole point of this musical, this set of songs, is about the fact the Old Testament, as we heard from the beginning, all these Old Testament prophecies were about the coming of the Messiah, which is all about hope, right? The hope of the coming Messiah. And then Jesus Christ comes and that's supposed to be the fulfillment of the expectation. Think of Simeon in Luke Chapter 2, this old man on the Temple Mount, and he's waiting for what he calls the "Paraklēsis" of Israel, the Consolation of Israel, this one they've been waiting for. All the things that we put on our Christmas cards. This child is going to be born, and this child is going to be given to us.

The verses that we quoted in this musical, this "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, ... Prince of Peace," this ultimate one is going to show up. And yet none of the things that we expected from his coming came to fruition. Matter of fact, everything about what was expected was so anti-climactic that John the Baptist, who announced his coming, he sent messengers to Jesus and said you have to tell us, "are you the one" or not? Are you the Messiah "or shall we look for another?" And so our kids get up here and sing that Jesus Christ, our hope made new, it's almost like this is round two on the hope. And they're absolutely right. But we have to start at the beginning. Last year, if you were with us, we talked about the beginning of the gospel in the Garden. There was even a hint at the beginning when Adam and Eve sinned there was a promise that there would be a fix for all of this, and it would come through a child ultimately from Eve, of course, she's the mother of all the living. And there would be a child one day who would be born and it would crush the work of the enemy.

And now we think about the fact that we have a promise that has been given to kind of the archetypal, the ultimate picture of who the Israelites would look to as their father, their father of Israel. If you asked who the father is? Right? In the New Testament, we've learned to call God our Father. That's how Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6, we should say, "Our Father who art in heaven." But in the Old Testament they said well our father Abraham. And Abraham, 2,000 years before Christ was the father. And what's interesting about his name is when we meet him in the first book of the Bible in Genesis, he's called Abram, not Abraham. "Ab" and "Ram," Ab means "father," Ram means "great." He was known as the Great Father. And that's ironic because he's 75 years old and they have no kids, he and Sarah have no kids and that's a problem to have a name that reminds you all the time that you are not a father, and yet they desperately wanted to be parents. But God shows up in Genesis Chapter 12 and promises Abraham that he would be a great father, not only a great father, but he changes his name to Abraham. Abraham, right? "Haram" means a "great many." You'll be a father to a great many, a multitude of people.



Well, that's a great promise. And he becomes the prototype, the paradigm, the ultimate picture of what's going to happen in the whole Old Testament. That the Father would send the Son. But the problem is everyone's going to have to wait, because at 75 years old the promise comes in Genesis Chapter 12, but not until Genesis Chapter 21 does God come, and it says there in the first verse, to Sarah and fulfills the promise. Abraham and Sarah through natural means they had a child at very unusual and providential age through the miraculous work of God, 25 years after the time that he was promised to have the child. Now, I don't know when you would give up hope, but you want to talk about losing hope. You get the promise that you're going to believe that you're going to have a child because God somehow miraculously tells you you're going to have a child, it's going to wane pretty quickly when you're 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 85, 89, 92, 97. But finally he reaches 100 years old and his wife Sarah is now pregnant and is about to have a child.

The child was born and they called the child Isaac. Isaac in Hebrew means "laughter." And you can imagine why they said we'll call this kid just a belly laugh because how are we having children at this age? It's just ridiculous. And so Isaac is born and it is, in a very real way, a template for what all of Israel was going to have to do to wait for the ultimate child. Like it was said in the Garden there would be a person who would be born of Eve, and this person born of Eve would crush the work of the enemy. And the enemy clearly in the Garden was the fact that there would be a tempter that would lead human beings into sin and "the wages of sin is death," that was promised from the very beginning. But there would have to be a reversal of all of that. There was even a picture of that you might remember if you were with us last year, or if you read the book of Genesis, and that was the killing of an animal to clothe them.

I often talk about that word "Kōfer" in Hebrew. That word is "to cover" or "to atone," and their shame and their guilt about being sinners was covered. And that picture of covering took place because this animal that didn't do anything wrong was killed to cover the shame and guilt of these people who had sinned. And here was this symbol of the fact that there had to be some kind of covering or payment for the sin, but it wasn't an animal that was ever going to pay for the sins of human beings. There would have to be an ultimate person who would come and pay for that, even though people rarely focused on that in the prophecies, even though it was embedded in the prophecies. They just kept waiting for the ultimate person. 2,000 years before Christ that's what they were thinking. There has to be an ultimate person. 1,600 years, 1,400 years, even a thousand years, they were still waiting to see the person who would come. An ultimate prophet, Moses would say in his day 1,400 years before Christ. Or as David, a thousand years before Christ, they'd say, the ultimate son of David, the King who would rule the people. All of this was a picture of the coming of the one just like in Abraham's life, they would have to wait for.

You heard a line delivered here on the stage just a few minutes ago about the fact that 400 years before Christ came there was silence. You can read about this in the rabbis' history of the Old Testament. These are non-Christians here. The rabbis will talk about the fact that there is a silence in their history where the canon was closed, where the spirit of prophecy ended, and they believe that in Malachi that was it, that was done and they knew it when it

was happening. The Spirit of God, the "Rûah," they called it holiness, the spirit of holiness, the spirit of inspiration. That God-breathed nature of Scripture had ended the "qadosh" they called it. It was gone. And they thought, well, that just makes us anticipate the fact that I guess the canon is closed and the ultimate messiah is going to come. So they leaned into Daniel Chapter 9, and Jeremiah Chapter 23, and they thought about Isaiah Chapter 9. The ultimate king is coming. We're waiting because God has closed his divine library and here comes the King.

And so sure enough he comes. And that is what Christmas is all about. Micah 5:2. Here he comes in Bethlehem. We had it all quoted this morning. Jesus comes in. And that's why on the worksheet this morning I gave you a text of Scripture in Hebrews Chapter 6. I'm trying to take this from a Hebrew perspective. You look at this first-century set of Hebrew Christians, they would think of Abraham as a great template of the fact that a father is waiting for the coming of the son. And that's how it certainly was based on a promise. And in a sense, this promise of God is fulfilled. It's fulfilled in the first coming of Christ. And so in a way you need to see, and this is how I want us to see Christmas, see Christmas really as a promise kept. God kept a promise just like he did for Abraham. If you happen to have that piece of paper there open and unfolded, you'll see in the text in that column, when God made a promise to Abraham he goes through this point of making a swearing, an oath. He couldn't swear by anyone greater than himself so he just swears by himself and he says, "surely I will bless you and multiply you. And thus Abraham, having patiently waited," Hebrews Chapter 6 verse 15, it says, "obtain the promise," 25 years later, a quarter of a century later.

So Christmas is the fact that God promised and then he fulfilled his promise. It says then in verse 16, if you see it there, keep reading, "For people swear by someone greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation." And of course, that's how it still takes place in some settings, at least, you swear, people will swear so help me God in court, for instance. That's supposed to be an empirical vocative you're calling out to some higher power that if I'm doing something or saying something that is not in line with the truth, well then I'm calling on a higher power to strike me down. I'm calling on God to punish me. May God hold me accountable for not telling you the truth. That's the idea. So it says in Hebrews Chapter 6 verse 17, "when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it's impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have a strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope that set before us."

Now a lot's taking place in those three verses Hebrews Chapter 6 verses 16, 17 and 18. What's happened is we've gone from the first advent about God bringing a child into the world on the pattern or the template of father Abraham having the promised child, the child of promise, and all that was fulfilled in Hebrews Chapter 6 verse 15. But now it's shifting. And what shifting is a focus on this oath that God swears by someone greater than himself, which is himself. That said, there's no one greater than himself, so he swears by himself. But when does that take place? It doesn't take place in Genesis Chapter 12. He reiterates the covenant in Genesis Chapter 15, the promise. And even in 21, when in Genesis Chapter 21 when Isaac is born, we all celebrate the fulfillment of all of that.

Some interesting things in Genesis Chapter 21. What really is interesting is when we get to Genesis Chapter 22, when at the beginning of that chapter something completely unthinkable happens. God says to Abraham take your son, your only son, the son whom you love, and go to a mountain I'm going to show you and there on that mountain sacrifice him. That's just absolutely crazy talk. Crazy talk, particularly if you keep reading in the Bible and you find out that 600 years later Joshua leads people into Canaan. And one of the main reasons they're sent into Canaan is because absolute, decrepit, ridiculous, abominable sins. One of them is taking their children and having human sacrifice, throwing them into the fire for their god, Molech. And because of that, one of the main reasons God says I'm going to wipe them out. So we're going to get rid of that whole society because of their sacrifice, their human sacrifice. But here, 600 years earlier, God's saying go take your son. Go to this place that I'm going to show you. He goes and takes his son to a place called Mount Moriah, which ended up being a ruinous threshing floor that David would be shown that his son Solomon would one day build the Temple Mount on and that all these sacrifices would be made on as a picture of the coming Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world.

But it's there in verse 16 of Genesis Chapter 22 that God, once Abraham raises the knife to kill his own son that then he stops and the angel stops him and says there's a ram, there's an animal caught in the bush. Go take that animal, put him on the altar, take your son off the altar. Of course, I don't need a human sacrifice here because there's no fallen human being who can be any kind of exchange for anyone's sin, because that's what sacrifice was all about. It was picturing the exchange. And I'm not going to take a human being for a human being. It's not going to work because you guys are all sinful, but take the animal and we'll symbolically sacrifice. And so it happens, and the sacrifice takes place. And then God says, he adds this oath and he swears by himself. That's the line in verse 16 of Genesis Chapter 22 where God says, "By myself I have sworn ... I will surely bless you."

Well, at that point it's not the blessing of the child. The child is already an adolescent, a young adolescent, maybe a pre-teen at that point. What kind of blessing are you talking about? We're not talking about the blessing anymore of Abraham having a child. He already has a child. But the blessing is the descendants of Abraham and not just making him a great nation, but the ultimate promise in Genesis Chapter 12 is that through your descendants all of the families of the earth will be blessed. There's an ultimate child coming through Isaac, your child, who will ultimately be the solution to all the problems that every human being has and everyone in the world. It's going to touch every clan, every ethnic group of all the people of the planet. Not just for Israel, not just for your clan, but everyone who's preceded you all across, not just from your family tree, but every family tree is going to be touched by that life. And in that he says I'm going to swear.

Why is that? One reason is it's so much further down the road. I mean this is 2000 B.C. rough and dirty where this is taking place. And you can already see the nation in the millions by 400 years later. But now we're talking something that isn't going to happen. The sacrifice itself that mirrors the template, the exemplar of putting a human in a sacrificial place doesn't happen for 2,000 years, which in fact it does happen. The one human sacrifice God accepts is the



sacrifice that's perfect. And Hebrews, the book of Hebrews, makes a big point of that. There is a sacrifice, a sacrifice that works, and that is a human sacrifice of someone who is perfect. Now you can take an animal without spot or blemish and you can bring that animal to the Levites, and you can have that sacrificed ceremonially to remind you that "the wages of sin is death." And just like in the Garden there needs to be an atonement, a covering for sin. But it's not really going to do anything for your moral sin problem. Your ethics aren't fixed by all that. The penal problem of your sin isn't fixed by that. The punishment isn't removed by that. But there could be some exchange that could take place if there were a perfect person of infinite value, we could take a sacrifice, a human sacrifice.

And that sacrifice, as Isaiah Chapter 53 says, could be crushed as a guilt offering, and your guilt can be removed if you just exchange that. And so, just like Isaac in the passage in Genesis Chapter 22 was there symbolically sacrificed, though he never was, and the knife never struck his body, Christ was sacrificed 2,000 years later who he adds this layer. And then here we have in our passage, yeah, if we fled to him for refuge then we can have strong encouragement. Why? Because of this oath. He gave the oath after the son came and the nation would be built soon after. But what would come later is the ability to run to the offspring of Abraham for refuge. What does that mean? Well, just like Adam and Eve were hiding in the shadows, they needed refuge from their sin. "In the day that you eat [of the fruit] you shall surely die." Because of sin we should die, because of sin there should be punishment. But you can run to him for refuge. A big part of the book of Hebrews is the fact that he is the one who absorbs the penalty of sin. He's the one who's the target of God's justice, and he is the one who's an acceptable sacrifice.

The blood of bulls and goats, the famous line that comes from the book of Hebrews, it can't atone for sin. It's just a symbol. As Hebrews Chapter 10 verse 1 says, it's just "a shadow of the good things to come." Now the substance is in Christ, the substance of a real human sacrifice that works, it was in Christ. So the promise was there so that we could flee to him and say, I am a sinner, have mercy on me, take my sin away. And there are some people in this room who have done that. We've come to God. We've come to Christ. We've said I know this is the sacrifice that can take my sin away. And this is a great line. We "fled for refuge" to Christ. Most people don't know they have a sin problem. They don't have a sin problem, and then they don't flee to Christ. When they know they have a sin problem they flee to Christ. They say this is the only place where the wrath of God has already been. I need to be there.

We have a little illustration around here called the umbrella illustration. It's a good illustration, I think, to describe the fact that the wrath of God is coming. That's a big, big motif in Scripture. God's judgment is coming. But there's one umbrella, the sacrifice of Christ, where the wrath has already been, and we can flee for refuge under that umbrella. And that's a place where God says my justice is already satisfied there. So we flee for refuge. And we get in this and it's great. We have a sense of consolation as Simeon said in Luke Chapter 2, the Consolation of Israel where we have that sense. It's a division, Simeon goes on to say in that passage, Christ is coming and he's going to raise people up and others are going to fall away. He's going to divide people in his ministry into two groups. Jesus said that constantly. You're either



going to be for him or against him, and that's still happening today. People are for him or against him, and you're either going to get in with Christ or you're going to just stay out.

And John Chapter 3, we always remember, "For God so loved the world." In that passage he says the problem is "people loved the darkness," outside of this umbrella, "rather than the light." But we have to go into the light so our deeds can be exposed. And that's the hard part. We flee to him for refuge. So we get in. Some of us are in. We say, yeah, I need Christ. And the fulfillment took place 2,000 years ago. And that's why we celebrate, that's why Christmas is important. But then what happens? Well, he rises from the dead and that's important. We celebrate, discuss that, articulate that, explain all that at Easter, we make that very clear. And then what happens? He leaves. Acts Chapter 1. He leaves, he leaves. That's a problem. He goes. He leaves us. And in the passage in Acts Chapter 1 where he leaves us, he says just before he leaves, you know what? I'm going away. And they're saying well is now the time the kingdom is going to happen? Is all the good stuff talked about in the Old Testament going to happen? "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons," right? Here's what you're supposed to do. Go be "my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth," all the way to California one day. Get all the way around the globe, be my witnesses. And then he leaves.

And the angels say exactly what Jesus had said many times. You saw him go, he's going to come back. Don't worry. He's coming back. Jesus said, if I go away, I'm going to "prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." This whole promise extends beyond the first coming, the promise that God swore that he would bless all the nations. Well the blessing first is you can have refuge in Christ. The second are all the things we have on our Christmas cards about "the government shall be upon his shoulders," and that "of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end." Where is that? We have 193 nations in the United Nations right now, sovereign nations on our globe. Throw in the Vatican if you want. Think about this. We don't have a government that extends around the world. We don't have that Revelation Chapter 11, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." I'm sorry. Some of the lyrics often just over promise when it comes to the first coming of Christ. That's not here yet. It's not here. We don't have it.

So Christ's coming when we say the promises have been kept, Christ is here. And then the last line of our kids singing is Jesus Christ, our hope renewed. Do you get it now? Number two on your outline, if you're taking notes, that's the whole point. You need to "Embrace Hope as the Heart of Christianity." It's a different hope in that we rest in the fact that God has already kept promise number one, if we're going to put them in big categories. Category promise number one, a set of promises regarding the first coming or the first advent. But he has a whole other set of promises, the second advent. Now, the problem with the first advent is we had to wait. And it's hard to be patient, isn't it? I like to think I'm patient as long as nothing takes longer than I expect it to take. Right? And it took a lot longer in the Old Testament than they wanted. And it takes a lot longer now than we want. And people will say as it says in Second Peter Chapter 3, God is slow in keeping his promises. And the apostles'



response to that is "the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promises as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

So God has a list of people he wants to come to repentance. And the reason, according to that passage, that we haven't had Christ return yet is he's trying to grow that witness list, if you will, the people who are going to be affected by the witnessing in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and California. He wants more of those people to come to repentance. And when they come to repentance then at some point we'll see him return and we'll see the second part of all of those promises come to fruition. And then John the Baptist and no one else is going to ask are you the one. Everyone's going to say, as Jesus promised, you're going to "see the Son of Man coming on clouds with great power and glory," in the glory of his Father with all the angels, and he's going to come back and set up his kingdom. No one's going to question are you the one? Everyone's going to know you're the one. First he had to come, though, so that he could be a refuge for sinners. The next time he's going to come as a conquering king and he's going to separate people as a shepherd separates sheep from the goats. Those who have repented and come to him for refuge and those who refused. And there will be a dividing, a bifurcation of all humanity. And then God is going to set up his kingdom and "the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end." But here's what Jesus said about the interim. We have a job to do. It's our mission to make disciples of all the nations. That's the whole point of the Church. That's what we should be doing. That's what the Church is supposed to be doing for the last 2,000 years. And we're waiting.

But it's going to be hard. Jesus said this. Let me read it for you. John Chapter 16 verse 33. God gave us a bit of a roadmap. He said, "I've said these things to you, that in me you may have peace." He doesn't want us to be freaked out. Why? Because he's made promises. If I go away, I'm going to come back. "In the world," though "you will have tribulation." But I love this. "But take heart," have courage, "I've overcome the world." But the problem is, there are not 193 sovereign nations. Well, there are, but one day they're all, the pink slip is owned by Christ and one day he's going to take them back. He's going to take his "great power and begin to reign." It hasn't happened yet, but it's coming. So he wants us to take heart. How do we take heart? Well, because "I've said all these things to you." What did he say? He said a whole other set of promises that are going to be fulfilled. Number three, if you're taking notes, this is all I need to say this morning. Number three, you need to "Trust God's Promises When Life Hurts," when it's hard. When things are difficult. When it gets hard for you and me, when in this world we have tribulation. When your body starts falling apart. When your money runs out in your bank account. Right? When there's cancer, when there's divorce, when there are lawsuits, when there's trouble, when there's depression, when there are broken bones.

And now it's time to say, what do I have in this world? Well, Jesus said, you know, there's a lot of stuff that's going to happen. And in the news, there is a lot of stuff that's going to happen. In religion there is a lot of stuff that's going on. "Many will come in my name." He says this, I'll just read it. Matthew 24 verse 4, "See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray." But you don't fall for that. "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars." You're going to see all these things taking place. "See that you are not alarmed, for these things must take place, but the end is not yet.



For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of birth pangs." So we're going to have a lot of trouble. But the whole point of us hanging on to the hope is that we had Christ come. Now it was on schedule according to God. He just didn't tell us when. Galatians 4:4, at "the fullness of time," from God's timetable, "God sent forth his Son." I guarantee you they wanted it a whole lot sooner than it happened. "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son," the first time.

Now we're in the second period of time waiting for the Second Advent and we wanted it a long time ago. But for some reason, Second Peter Chapter 3, he wants you perhaps to join us and run to Christ for refuge so that we can fill this thing up and get on with the Second Advent, and we're going to have trouble until that happens. But the hope that we have is to hang on to the promise. One of my favorite passages, and if you might indulge me here and turn to it, is Romans Chapter 8, Romans Chapter 8 verse 18. I quote this often in Romans 8:18. Let me read it for you, "For I consider..." you might want to turn there, this is a powerful text of Scripture, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." If you're not thinking about the glory that is to be revealed to us when Christ comes back, well then you're always going to be consumed and overwhelmed with the sufferings of the present time. This is the whole point of hope. The hope renewed is that Christ came and God kept his promises. Now I'm in a time where God has yet to keep his promise. Well, where is it? Where's the hope of his coming? Well, the skeptics are going to come and say he's not coming. And Peter says, no, he is coming. He's not slow. We have a task. Let's lean into the mission. But the troubles, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that's to be revealed to us."

Then he says, verse 19, "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God." It can't wait for this day. Now, of course, creation has no feelings. It has no thoughts. It's not rational. He's animating this, right? He's personifying this just to give us this sense that something's wrong with creation. Just like there's something wrong with the world. Just like there's something wrong with the nations. Just like there's something wrong with us. And in a sense you can personify this poetically and say, it wants to be fixed. Verse 20, "For the creation was subjected to futility." Right? We have disease. Your trees have disease. We have problems. Your garden has weeds. It "was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it." God himself subjected the world. He said, "cursed is the ground because of you." He took the moral agents who rebelled against him and said now I'm going to curse the world and subject the world to futility because of moral sin. But he did it, the last two words, and this is the big deal, "in hope."

Now, all that happened in Genesis 3 and the coming of Christ was a good thing but it wasn't enough. It was the first installment of the fulfillment of all things. So what we want is to renew our hope at Christmas time. Christmas is the renewal of our hope. Jesus Christ, our hope renewed. That's the lyric. Because of him who subjected it "in hope." What's the hope? "That the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory," the greatness, "of the children of God." There are pictures, even in the millennial



kingdom, of lions lying down with lambs, of cobras being played with by children and moms not freaking out. Everybody's fine. Everything's perfect. Romans Chapter 8 verse 22, "For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth." You can lean into a tree and listen to it. You're not going to hear the groaning. This is not audible. This is not something you can hear. This is the poetic point of a personified creation going it doesn't like it either, so to speak. We don't like it. We don't like a lot of things about this world. Welcome to real Christianity. It's not about the "here and now," it's about the "then and there" and we wait for it.

Romans Chapter 8 verse 23, "Not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit." And if we have run to him for refuge he gives us his Spirit. That's why we're not orphans. He left us. I get that. But he didn't leave us orphans. Right? We have a sense of comfort. He is called the *paraklēsis*. Simeon said, I'm waiting for the *paraklēsis*, the Consolation of Israel. He sends his Spirit. He leaves his Spirit, and we "groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of the body," which is one very palpable, clear thing that we're going to really feel the difference of when we get our new redemption, our new redeemed bodies back. "For in this hope we were saved." The perfection of creation, the perfection of our bodies, the perfection of all things.

"Now hope that is seen is not hope." Some people think Christianity is about the "here and now." You're going to hear people on TV, the radio, whatever, who are going to say it's all about the "here and now." They're going to promise you that Christianity can fix your stuff now. That's why Christmas sometimes is stretched by preachers into being this thing where you can have it all year long, all this kind of nostalgic, sentimental, good feeling. It's not. It can't be. It's impossible. It cannot fix the world, right? The only fix for the world is ultimately the return of Christ. What we're doing is creating a citizenry, a governed people. We're trying to collect hearts that are going to follow Christ so that when he returns they'll be ready and they'll be crying out, Maranatha! The Aramaic word "come, Lord Jesus."

No one "hopes for what he sees. But," verse 25, "if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." It would be a lot better if we knew when it was going to happen. That's why every now and then you see some Christian kook trying to set some kind of date for the return of Christ. Don't listen to any of that. Don't. Don't you dare bookmark some crazy channel on YouTube. Some guy who's trying to set dates. Don't. It's all nonsense. What we need is to lean into the mission and hang on to the promises. And just to quote our passage, Hebrews Chapter 6 verse 18, it's so good. "We hold fast to the hope set before us." "We have this," it says in verse 19, "as a sure and steadfast anchor for the soul." You don't need an anchor, in the ancient world, you don't need an anchor if there's smooth sailing. You drop the anchor in the midst of a storm so you don't get tossed into the cliffs. We need an anchor for the soul when times are tough. "A hope that enters into the inner place." That's future for us. We're going to get into the presence of God one day. Matter of fact, the presence of God is going to come down in a city and dwell among us. Jesus has already gone as a forerunner. He's already there, having become our intermediary, our high priest, according to not a Levitical priesthood, but a different kind of priesthood. This picture of an anchor is what we



need when times are tough. And if life is tough for you and I don't know what's going on with you, I need you to cling tighter to the promise of God.

It reminds me of those 12 boys and their soccer coach in northern Thailand who got stuck in that cave. Do you remember that story in 2018? Traumatic. I watched the National Geographic documentary about the whole system of caves that they have. Some nut took me in high school into this, I don't even remember where it was caving, spelunking is that what they call it? Spelunking and I hated every minute of it. Flashlights back then weren't that good. I didn't like feeling... I was claustrophobic. It was terrible. Anyway, whatever. When I was watching this I felt all of those feelings of that. Well, these young kids on the soccer team taken by their coach, they rode their bikes to the mouth of the cave. They went in, they go way down in there. And then an unexpected rainstorm before monsoon season, it came up and all the tributaries on this mountain just gushed all this water into this cave system. And it sealed them in with water, all kinds of water. So they were stuck in a pocket with just whatever air they had trapped in that pocket. And those kids, amazingly, they were stuck there for, what was it, nine days before there was any contact from the outside world. Of course, the parents knew immediately that everyone was trying to get to them immediately. They realized what had happened. They saw their bikes all locked up along the pole at the mouth of the cave.

What was interesting about the story was that they talked about the kids remaining relatively calm, the coach being able to calm them, and then once the heroes got there to save them the kids had a renewed hope. They trusted in the coach, the coach had hope and optimism for them. Now, he was not a prophet and he was not Christ and he was not God. He couldn't give them absolute truth, but they believed his promise. And then the renewed hope is when, you know, the Calvary arrived and said, hey, we're going to get you out. It took them nine days after that. Right? A whole week at least to get out as they started taking these kids out one by one. It was an amazing ordeal, but their hope was renewed halfway through this and they said, yeah, you said someone would come for us and they did. Now we're not out yet. The water was still rising. It was still dark. They still didn't have food. It was still a mess down there. But they had hope.

Our hope is much more sure than the technology and the skill of a rescue team in a cave in northern Thailand. We have God who's proven that he keeps his promises and that all of his prophets are just telling beforehand what God has revealed to them is going to take place. The Bible is a remarkable book, the bestselling book in all the world. Christianity is the largest religion, most dominant religion in all the world because it's true. Because God's Word has predicted all the things that have come true in the first coming of Christ but there are a lot of promises left on the table. That's our hope. That's what we cling to. Everything's right on schedule. We need to lean into the mission of the Church, and we need to hold tightly, hold fast to the promises of God. That's what Christmas helps us do. It is Christ Jesus, our hope renewed. I hope it's renewed for you this morning.

Let's pray. God, help us, like Abraham, to hang onto a promise and then scratch our heads, sometimes wondering why it's taking so long. But never forget that he who promises is



faithful. You've been faithful in the past. We read about it in history, in Israel's history, even watching on a much smaller scale, sometimes watching our parents or grandparents, even reading in Church history how you've been faithful to former generations. God, we want to know just deep in the heart of our own lives that you are a faithful God, you keep your promises. Because of that, we can get through whatever trials we face. We don't ever want to give up hope. We don't want to lose hope. We don't want to doubt you. We don't want to really insult you by acting like you don't keep your promises. And you have promised that if you go away, you're going to come again and receive us unto yourself, that where you are we'll be also. And you said you're going to come back with the city, the New Jerusalem, and you're going to set up a city where righteousness dwells. As Peter said in Second Peter Chapter 3, "according to his promise we're waiting for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells," according to the promise. So, God, help us to hold tightly to those promises in your Word.

In Jesus' name. Amen.