

GOD, OUR SURE HOPE

DECEMBER 10, 2023

WORSHIP

For Unto Us / Open the
Eyes of My Heart, Angels
We Have Heard On High,
Hope Has Come, O Lord
My Rock and My Redeemer,
The Name of Emmanuel

WELCOME

How do you define “hope”?
How is hope different from a
wish?

WORD

LUKE 1:57-66

(READ LUKE 1:1-25 FOR CONTEXT)

⁵⁷ Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son. ⁵⁸ Her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her; and they were rejoicing with her. ⁵⁹ And it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him Zacharias, after his father. ⁶⁰ But his mother answered and said, “No indeed; but he shall be called John.” ⁶¹ And they said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name.” ⁶² And they made signs to his father, as to what he wanted him called. ⁶³ And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows, “His name is John.” And they were all astonished. ⁶⁴ And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he began to speak in praise of God. ⁶⁵ Fear came on all those living around them; and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶ All who heard them kept them in mind, saying, “What then will this child turn out to be?” For the hand of the Lord was certainly with him.

Hope in God is different from how we usually understand it. Hope in the Bible is the certainty and assurance of expectations based on faith in God’s promises and character. It’s not wishful thinking but certainty! There is no substitute for knowing God’s Word for our faith to be anchored in God’s promises and character. You can choose to have a positive attitude, not based on “dreams”, but on real hope! We feel like giving up because of our struggles and circumstances. But did you know that with God, nothing is impossible? Do you also know that Christmas is real? The reality of Christmas brings us real hope as we continue our study in **Luke 1:1-25, 57-66**.

The author, Luke, was the only gentile writer of the New Testament; he was a doctor and an amazing researcher! He was writing to a friend, Theophilus and the purpose is “so that you may know the exact truth”. Christmas is not a myth; it’s real and not wishful thinking. The implication is that God cares for you and me. Most of us are so busy at Christmas that we forget to reflect on its true significance. God planned Christmas; nobody forced Him to send Jesus to earth. There are three things that we can discover about Christmas based on the three characters in our study: Zacharias, Elizabeth, and John.

Zacharias was a priest married to Elizabeth from the line of Aaron; they had no child because of old age and Elizabeth was barren (**Luke 1:5-7**). Why did God choose this couple and what did they have to do with the coming of Jesus? Christmas was God’s promise, but many things needed to come into play for its fulfillment. Nothing is by accident, and even names have meaning! 1- Zacharias comes from “zakar” (to remember) and “ya” (God)---God remembers; 2- Elizabeth comes from “sheva” (oath) and El (God)---God keeps his promises (**Luke 1:5**). 3- John come from “yo” (God) and “hanan” (to be gracious) – God is gracious (**Luke 1:13**).

Christmas was prophesied as early as Genesis (**Genesis 3:15, 22:18**), **2 Samuel 7:13** and **Isaiah 7:14, 9:6**. These were about the Messiah’s birth, but there was another prophesy about God’s “messenger” (**Malachi 3:1**). On top of all the prophesies, people will know who Messiah is because of this “messenger”. Between Malachi and the destruction of the Temple (70 A.D.), the Messiah will be born. Even after the Jewish people being conquered and exiled, God remembers His promise of the Messiah. God is our sure hope because He remembers His promises; He does not lie or change (**Hebrews 6:17-18**). God is our anchor, a symbol used by the early church. We have the hope of eternal life and the “blessed hope” of Jesus’ coming again for us (**Titus 1:2, 2:13**) and our reward (**2 Timothy 4:8**). Christmas is true, which means that God remembers His promises. We may not be happy with our circumstances but we can look forward to the future with hope (**Jeremiah 29:11**). We don’t have to be in despair but put our hope in God (**Psalms 42:5-11, Lamentations 3:21-24**). We can claim God’s promise in Romans 8:28 that God works everything together for our good, no matter what’s happening in our lives. His purpose is that we will be like His Son in our character. This promise is conditional --- for those who love God!

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What does Zacharias and Elizabeth have to do with God's promise of a Messiah? An angel appeared to Zacharias while he was on his priestly duties (**vv. 8-12**). The angel Gabriel told Zechariah that his petition has been heard, and that Elizabeth will bear a son who will be named "John" (**vv. 13**). Zacharias must have been praying for a child for a long time, perhaps he has given up hope that it will be answered.

God's grace is also seen in Zacharias and Elizabeth story (**vv.14-16**). John was prophesied to bring joy to many, and even before he was born, he will be filled by the Holy Spirit. The grace of God comes when we are filled by the Holy Spirit. God already made known what John's role will be in His plan (**v. 17**).

Zacharias asked how he can be sure of God's promise because it was humanly impossible (**v.18**). With God everything is possible and His promises will surely happen. God is gracious, despite Zacharias' doubts, He kept His promise. God rebuked him, but even God's discipline is a form of grace (**vv.19-20**). The grace of God is not for salvation only; it also involves how we live the Christian life. Grace is the desire God plants in our lives and the power He gives us to do His will (**Titus 2:11-13**). If you have Christ, your life will change!

John's life was impacted by the grace of God and his parents had a part to play. Zacharias taught John God's vision for his life (**Luke 1:76-79**). John pointed people to Jesus because God's grace brings humility; humility brings grace (**John 1:19-23, 36-37**). John and Jesus were cousins. God made sure that these two families' lives intertwined to fulfill prophesy! God remembers His promises, God keeps His promises no matter how complicated things are; don't put God in a box. God promised to bless us, do us good and the best is yet to come. God is gracious; John the Baptist knew that he was a chosen instrument of God. But what kept him faithful to the very end was the grace of God. John acknowledged God's grace in his life and ministry of connecting people to Jesus (**John 3:26-30**). When God looks at your life, is Jesus increasing? May He see that Jesus is prominent in our lives, in our church. John fulfilled God's design because God is gracious. Let **Romans 15:13** be our prayer today, that we will abound in hope that is anchored in Christ, that we may be rested (**Psalms 62:5**). God is our sure hope

DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. Self-Check.

Why is hope important?

2. Setting It Right.

What is secular hope vs biblical hope?

3. Living It Out.

How do we develop biblical hope?

4. How should biblical hope impact our life now?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE
IN ACTION

Pray for God's hope to be revealed to people in despair even during this Christmas season--- those who may be sick, in dire financial situations, in painful relationships. Pray for those who are not aware of their desperate need for God because they are enjoying much success and happiness. Let your hope in Jesus shine through this Christmas season as you celebrate the true meaning of the holiday. Beyond the physical gifts, share the gift of the gospel of Christ to your loved ones

WEEKLY
PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives.

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of public servants; repentance and salvation for government leaders and citizens for a Christ-centered Philippines.
- God's help and comfort, salvation for Israel, wisdom for their leaders in government, military and their soldiers as they defend themselves against terrorists' attacks. PRAISE GOD for the release of hostages so far! Continue to pray for the release of the remaining ones.
- War in Ukraine to end, loss of lives prevented; conflict in African, East Asian and Middle East countries to stop.
- Middle East countries to stop.

III. Church

- CCFers would honor and love God and make disciples.
- Elders, pastors, dleaders, and families (holy, humble, harmonious, happy, heart-working).
- Ministries and churches expansion worldwide.

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God.
- Righteous living.
- Salvation of family and friends.

MEMORY VERSE
ROMANS 15:13

¹³ Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.