

sermon study guide

Speaker: Ashwin Ramani

Date: December 5/6 2020

Sermon Title: Divine Interruption – Waiting With Hope

IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. Other than an end to the pandemic, what are you most fervently looking forward to in the coming year?
2. Think of a time when you had to wait for something important. What did you learn about yourself? About God?

UP - PURSUE GOD

Read Psalm 130

3. The psalmist progresses from despair to hope. What are the steps he takes in this movement?
4. What aspects of God's character does the psalmist discover and/or acknowledge? How do these characteristics help lead to hope?

OUT - PURSUE MISSION

5. Pastor Ashwin said, "It is only as we wait patiently we understand the character of God. It is only when we understand the character of God we can find hope. And only those who have hope in their heart can be a beacon of hope to others." In which of these stages do you most see yourself today?
6. How can you be a beacon of hope to those around you in this Christmas season?

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

In what ways are you planning to engage in the Advent season this year? How can you prepare to receive hope, joy, love, and peace as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ?

THE WORD (NIV)

Psalm 130

A song of ascents.

¹ Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD;

² Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.

³ If you, LORD, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?

⁴ But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

⁵ I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.

⁶ I wait for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.

⁷ Israel, put your hope in the LORD,
for with the LORD is unfailing love
and with him is full redemption.

⁸ He himself will redeem Israel
from all their sins.

sermon study summary

Divine Interruption: Waiting With Hope

December 5/6, 2020

Pastor Ashwin Ramani

A pandemic has interrupted our lives. Yet Christmas without many of the usual distractions may be an opportunity to center our attention on the true meaning of Christmas. The first Christmas was a divine interruption of the predictable course of events. When Jesus left heaven's glories to enter our world, a special story unfolded. He came into our world to rescue us from sin and death, bringing gifts of hope, joy, peace and love; gifts desperately needed today. As we turn to God in the midst of our interruption He infuses these gifts into our lives.

Psalm 130 calls us to wait on God for hope in the midst of darkness; which is what Advent is all about – waiting in anticipation for God to come! As we wait we learn to understand the character of God. The psalmist's heart fills with hope when he discovers the character of God. His prayer of deep distress (v. 1) raises an implicit question: What is God really like? Praying for God's intervention, he yearns to know who God really is. The psalmist and Jonah describe their distress in a similar way (Jonah 2:3) - both are drowning and afraid. God caught Jonah's attention. From this difficult place, a cry rises to God. The psalmist wants a God who is attentive to and able to identify with us. Faced with pain and suffering, we are confronted with a choice: Are we going to do it our way or do we humble ourselves and seek God's help? The psalmist is overcome with guilt and knows he is not entirely free (vv. 3-4). We look for a God who can and will forgive us.

Now the psalmist waits in a quiet place to discover God's true character (vv. 5-6). Waiting is a time of reflection and introspection as God prepares our hearts to receive the revelation. We give up what preoccupies our time. We ask deep questions. Does God care for me? Does He identify with what I am going through? Will He keep a record of my sins? Waiting time is not wasting time; the hardest part is relinquishing control to God. We recognize our frailty. God's Word sheds light and offers us perspective. When was the last time you sought the Lord and studied His Word diligently for an extended time? The season of Advent offers us the privilege of making room in our life for God and to turn to the Word containing His promises and truth.

The psalmist gives us a prophetic picture of the God of Advent (vv. 7-8). What is God really like? First of all, "With the Lord is unfailing love." Love that never fails, never gives up, never runs out. God demonstrated His unfailing love and plan of redemption (Matthew 1:21). Jesus is his reflection, whose very name communicates His character as Saviour. The hope He gives you, He wants you to pass on to others. We who are waiting in darkness are now brought to light. Let us share this Christmas hope wherever God has placed us.