

Psalm 130 – The Hope of Christ at Christmas

Exegetical Big Idea: God's people look to and wait for the hope of the Lord because they know he is faithful to forgive sin.

Homiletical Big Idea:

The gift you need most at Christmas, is the hope of Christ.

Fallen Condition Focus: Humanity has been waiting for God's salvation, let us not miss it.

Intro:

Have you ever received a gift that was way better than you expected it to be? I got a gift like that already this year. Our family has already been to a family Christmas and we exchanged some gifts. One of the gifts I got was a spatula. Now you may think that it's only a spatula, how good can it be? And yes, I have other spatulas at our house, but this is a fish spatula. It's a very flexible metal spatula. And let me tell you, I didn't know how much I needed a fish spatula before I got one. I don't need any other spatula. This is the only one I need to use from now on.

Have you ever received a gift like that?

There are many great gifts out there. But there is one gift that far surpasses all other gifts. You can't get it at Walmart or Amazon. You can't wrap it up and it doesn't need batteries. In fact this gift will never wear out or break. It's a gift that has been available to all for thousands of years.

The greatest gift that you need at Christmas, is the gift of the hope of Christ. My prayer is that if you already have this hope, then this Christmas you will grow a deeper dependence on this hope, and if you do not already have this hope, that this Christmas you will receive it and be changed forever.

The gift you need most at Christmas, is the hope of Christ.

Verses 1-3: Everyone Needs the Hope of Christmas

Let's look back at the start of this Psalm. The Psalm starts out with a cry to the Lord for help. Why is the Psalmist crying to God for help? It could be a number of things, but I think we get a pretty big hint in verse 3. If God kept a record of sins, who could stand? This is a cry of the most profound need of the human heart, the need to have our record of sins erased.

This need came into the world at the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were created by God and were blessed by God to enjoy his presence and his creation and to be fruitful and multiply. Instead, they chose to disobey God and eat from the tree that God had commanded them not to eat from. In so doing, they plunged the world into sin. The world since then has been broken and wearing down. Not only that, but humanity itself now wore the stain of sin. Every human being since Adam and Eve have inherited the stain of sin and have also disobeyed God.

In fact this Psalm was used by the people of Israel as they journey up to the temple to worship God. Part of this worship is offering sacrifices that took away sin. An animal was sacrificed on behalf of the person so show that the punishment of sin was going on to the animal, instead of the person. Of course the

obvious problem with all of this was that the sacrifices needed to be made over and over again! Why? Because sin just grew and grew.

[I grew up in Ottawa, and from what I remember as kid, it get a lot more snow that what we get here. I also grew up with brothers. There were many winters when the snow flew and we brothers would hear the familiar call from my parents to go and shovel the driveway. Now I generally didn't mind it, but there were days when the snow just kept coming and coming and coming. I remember taking forever shoveling the driveway and by the time I was done looking back up at the top and seeing that so much snow had fallen that I might as well start again. Not to mention it wasn't infrequent to be shoveling the heavy part at the bottom and see the blue flashing light coming down the road. The snow plow would push a fresh batch of heavy snow back on the driveway. It seemed to be never ending]

That's the nature of sin. It just keeps piling up more and more and more, and we are not able to remove it. That's the reality of sin, and the consequence of this sin is God's righteous punishment and separation from him.

That's why there is not a person in the world that does not need the hope of Christmas. Christmas forces us to ask the question "why is this baby so important"?

The answer is that this baby was the one to finally remove sin once and for all. This baby was the one promised to Eve in the garden after she and Adam had sinned. God had promises that from her seed, one would come to reverse the effects of sin. This baby is that promise.

We are all under the curse of sin, and we all need the hope of Christmas.

The gift you need most at Christmas, is the hope of Christ.

Verse 4-6: God's hope at Christmas was always his plan.

The reality and consequence of sin is a horrible thing. But God has not left us without revealing to us where to look for relief from sin. In verse 4 we read "but with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared" Know that when the word "feared" is used here in this context it means to hold God in reverence and awe because of who he is. And who he is, is the one who offers forgiveness! That's good news!

We mentioned earlier the peace offering that God had given to the Israelites. But they knew that something more had to come. They knew that offering animals time and time again with no end to it was not the fulfilment of the promise to get rid of sin that God had promised. Something more was coming. That much was certain. In fact look at verse 5 with me. The writer says "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his Word I put my trust". If the offering of an animal could fully do away with sin then there is no need to be waiting on God for forgiveness. No, something more was to come.

Though God had not fully revealed how he was going to do it, he did give glimpses of this hope in his Word. That's why the Psalmist can say that he or she puts his hope in God's Word. They can be sure that it will happen, but not exactly how it will happen or when it will happen.

[My in-laws took my kids out Christmas shopping this year to get little gifts for my wife and I. They let the kids pick something out that they wanted to get Alana and myself and they wrapped them we tomorrow Alana and I will open them. The kids have been really good to keep what the gifts are a

surprise, but that doesn't stop them from giving hints. I don't know exactly what I'm getting from my youngest daughter, but I know it's something I can eat and something that she likes to eat because she bought it specifically because she wants to share it with me when I open it.]

Israel knew the hope of not only Israel but the world was coming! But they didn't know when.

Like watchmen waiting for the morning, the world was waiting in eager expectation for God to bring his promised hope. A watchman waiting for the morning is certain the morning will come, but they do not know it has arrived until it arrives.

[Many a child has felt like a watchman on Christmas Eve, waiting for the morning. Many kids here I'm sure will experience the longest night of the year tonight. I remember as a kid, our tradition was that us brothers would all sleep in the same room on Christmas Eve. It was so hard to fall asleep that night, but often we would wake up way too early. One of the brothers would be convinced to go into mom and dad's room and see if it was time to wake up yet. If there was a 4 of a 5 on their alarm clock the answer was "no" it's not morning yet, go back to bed]

God's plan for the hope of Christ at Christmas was always his plan! It was never a matter of "if" but of "when". Christ being born at Christmas was not the backup plan or a second thought. He is the one and only solution to the problem of sin. That's why...

The gift you need most at Christmas, is the hope of Christ.

Verses 7-8: The hope of Christ is before you now, and is yours through faith.

Verses 7-8 are a call to the people to put their hope in the Lord. Based on the facts that God is unfailing in his love to keep his promises, he offers full redemption which means the full forgiveness of sins, and the fact that God himself will be the one who does the saving, based on these facts, Israel should put their hope in the Lord.

The people of Israel in those days waited patiently for the day that God would fulfil his promise of hope, but they never saw the day. That day happen on the night Jesus was born.

Whereas they looked forward to that day, we have the luxury of looking back at it and remembering it. That day happened when Jesus born that first Christmas.

Like a watchman waiting for the morning, that first light had dawned.

[It's like knowing that the forecast says there is a big snow storm coming. I know that not everyone looks forward to snow storms, and maybe I'm a little bit weird, but I love the snow. Especially now that I have kids who like to play in the snow. It's like knowing that the storm is coming and the kids are looking out the window waiting for it to come. Then all of a sudden a single snowflake slowly falls down, then another, then another, and before you know it it's a blizzard outside! The snow has arrived!]

Can you imagine that first Christmas? It's a normal night, a young couple with the woman pregnant is looking for a place to stay while visiting a small town and can't find room anywhere. The only room is a stable. That very night the first pains of labour hit Mary. The first snowflake. A few minutes later the next contraction hits. Another snowflake. Soon they're coming at regular intervals and it becomes obvious that this baby is coming tonight! Just like that the anticipation of the world explodes onto the scene. God himself who took on human nature as he was conceived in the womb is now born into the

world as a normal human would be. Then all of a sudden angels appear to the shepherds nearby to announce the birth of Christ. All of a sudden the sky is filled with countless angels singing glory to God in the highest! At some point a star appears in the sky indicating to those outside of the nation of Israel that the king of all is finally born. The blizzard has arrived! The dawn has finally come!

That morning, unfailing love was born. That morning, full redemption was born. That morning, God himself who would take away the sins of the world was born.

Of course Christmas was the beginning in one sense of God's plan. The cross was the ultimate mission and goal. Jesus grew up and lived for the purpose of dying as a sacrifice for our sins. He would put an end to the animal sacrifices that needed to be done time and time again. Because Jesus is truly God, he was the perfect and infinitely valuable sacrifice that was needed to take away our sins. Because Jesus is truly human, he could die in our place taking upon himself God's punishment for sin that we deserve.

With the problem of sin finally dealt with, those who have received this gift are promised eternal life with God.

The good news is that we receive this gift through faith. It's not bought. God is not bribed or impressed into it. Going to church 52 times a year or once a year on Christmas does not convince God to give this gift. The gift of the hope of Christ is received by putting your hope in the Lord for the full forgiveness of sins. There is no greater gift, that being made right with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

And the best part is, God's not done yet. We don't only look back to Christ's birth, death, and resurrection in thankfulness, we too look forward in faith to the day when he will return make his redemption and unfailing love a reality by bringing all who trust in him into his presence forever and ever.

Behold, God is making all things new. Like the Psalmist, put your hope in God's Word that this is not a matter of "if", but of "when".

So church, put your hope in the Lord this Christmas. Trust his redeeming work on the cross and his glorious resurrection. Trust that all who believe in him will be resurrected as he was to spend eternity with him. Put your hope in the Lord, because

The gift you need most at Christmas, is the hope of Christ.