

HOPE: GOD WITH US!

Scripture used: [Matthew 1:19-23 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

Pastor Hurmon started a new sermon series this week called “Hope!” to help us get the most out of this holiday season. If there was ever a time to find hope, it’s now. Thank God it’s Christmas! The whole point of Jesus being born is to redeem a broken world. And right now we are surrounded by so many signs of brokenness. But that isn’t the real story. What really matters is God’s story, and that is what we need to replace the “hope killers” of poverty, fear, disease, and death. We should all be striving to “overflow with confident hope” as Paul describes in [Romans 15:13 \(NLT\)](#). That comes through engaging the presence of God, and we all have the opportunity to take Pastor Hurmon’s Advent Challenge to help us do that. 30 minutes each day of scriptural reading, praying, and reflection will be a significant step to opening us up to God’s story of loving redemption and our place in it!

KEY POINTS

- 1) **Christmas is a season of hope.** It’s easy to let the secular message take hold. But Christmas is not about giving presents, or being with family. These are important things, but they miss the point. The real message of Christmas is that God loves each of us. In fact, this is the moment that God’s unconditional, sacrificial, extravagant love came to life in the form of Jesus. This Son of Man came to die for us, to triumph over death, redeem the world, and offer us all eternal life.
- 2) **Hope resides in the presence and person of a living God.** If there is no God, then we are just animals on the surface of a small rock spinning through space. If there is no God, then it’s easy to focus on ourselves. We fixate on our story, our family, our community, and our politics. But this isn’t the case. There is a God, and we are a part of His story. Matthew reminds us of this by recounting all the generations up to Joseph and Mary in the first verses of Chapter 1. This helps us zoom out from the story of a pregnant, unmarried woman and her fiancé who wants to break off the engagement. Instead we see the evidence of a loving God, whose Son Jesus provides an access point for us to engage in God’s presence.
- 3) **We connect to hope by engaging the presence of God.** Christmas offers us a great reminder about God’s story and God’s love. Now we need to take some practical steps to engage with this loving God who wants nothing more than a relationship with us.
 - a) **Engage through stillness and quiet.** The Bible is full of examples where God speaks to people who make the space to hear Him. Everyone from Abraham to Jesus took time away from the concerns of the world to contemplate God.
 - b) **Engage through scriptures.** It’s not enough to pick up a few verses here and there. The Bible is the story of God’s plan for the world, and it contains profound truths. We need to internalize the scripture and look for ways to apply its message in our daily lives.
 - c) **Engage through the unexplained.** Joseph was stuck in a situation that made no sense. How did his fiancée get pregnant? What should he do as a righteous, God-fearing man? He decided to break off the engagement but then changed his mind after “an angel of the Lord” appeared. Joseph didn’t try to explain the situation anymore. He just trusted God.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - 2021 has been a challenging year for all of us. There are “hope killers” in many forms that threaten to steal our joy and even our faith. Christmas is the perfect season to fight back. We have the chance to relearn the significance of Jesus’ birth, and the larger story of redemption. We can place our stories within God’s story, and allow hope to flow back into our lives. What level is your “hope gauge” right now? Are you full of hope or struggling with hope? Why?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Even though it’s been a tough time for all of us, God has still been at work. Reflect back over the last few months or, if necessary, the last few years. Ask yourself “What is the most recent experience of the presence of God in my life?”
- 3) **DO** - Pastor Hurmon wants all of us to take advantage of the next 14 days. That’s how long we have until Christmas, and it’s the perfect opportunity to engage the presence of God. Take the Advent Challenge by investing 30 minutes each day until Christmas doing the following: read one chapter from Luke, starting with chapter 1; pray to God to reveal a message for you that day; reflect on what you heard back. Then on Christmas Day the Hamiltons will share a devotional that will bless you and your family.