

NBC Devotional  
December 9, 2020  
Not Likely - Most Likely

The Advent Season is portrayed as a season of Hope. Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament words says, hope – in the Greek *elpis*' (el-peece) means a positive, pleasurable expectation or a confident expectation, an expectation that comes from faith and confidence in the Word of God.

Years ago, I read these words: **Hope in Scripture is the positive expectation that God is always going to act in accordance with His will which is for our good and His glory!**

Hope is such a critical component of the Christian life. It is an outlook toward the future that says, this is not all there is... there is more... there is real, abundant and eternal life to come. God's people look beyond the present circumstances to the intervention of God who will make all things right.

Paul wrote: I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope, we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But, if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. **Romans 8:18-25 (NIV)**

The absence of hope is hopelessness. It is the absence of any good, profitable, positive or good outcome. Covid-19 has seemed to usher in a sort of hopelessness at this time. There is confusion between science and politics. Experts cannot seem to agree on how we are to respond. Should we lock down or should we continue on with our lives as best we can while protecting the most vulnerable? I suppose time will tell what actually is true and not so true about our response to the pandemic.

There are those who seem to think that Thanksgiving and Christmas are only going to make matters worse! Yet it seems to me that if ever there was a time when we needed Christmas: it is NOW! If ever there was a time when we needed hope it is now. Our political climate is so divided that even the hope of a vaccine is in dispute. When hopelessness is the thinking of the day, it is hard to even recognize any hopeful possibilities!

Most of my childhood years were spent growing up on the farm with my grandparents. I used to hear them, and others of their generation use two phrases when speaking of things to come. If they thought something good was going to come about, and someone asked them what they thought, I would hear them say, "Most likely." Now that was not 100% positive, but at least it allowed for the possibility of something good to happen. On the other hand, if there was a negative expectation, or very little hope, I would hear them say, "Not likely." Both of these terms

seem to allow for some middle ground when it came to expectations. But the Scripture does not leave us in “middle ground territory.” God’s word offers us positive assurance.

Here we are in the Advent Season... a time of great hope. Why? Because the long-awaited coming of the Messiah took place about 2,000 years ago. Christ, the Messiah, came to earth and took on flesh, to walk among us as our Savior and Lord. It was a long-awaited fulfillment of a promise from God. The ancients were commended for their patient expectation and hope... believing in a fulfillment that did not come in their lifetime, but believing none the less that in God’s timing it would happen.

We have this same hope about Christ’s second coming, when He comes as King of Kings and Lord of Lords to complete our redemption and take us home to be with him in the eternal life for which we place our hope.

Peter writes: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. **Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 1 Peter 1:3-9 (NIV) (emphasis mine)**

Coming to us as Suffering Servant and Savior Jesus says of Himself:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." **Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)**

The writer to the Hebrews tells us:

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. **Hebrews 4:14-16 (NIV)**

**Did you catch that?** Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy *and* find grace to help us in our time of need.

Are we going to cancel Christmas? “Not likely.” Should we live in this pandemic with a sense of fear and hopelessness that would rob us of the hope of this Advent Season. “Not likely.” Or rather is say, “Definitely not!”

It is most likely that we who belong to Christ will raise up a voice of hope in our testimonies, our lifestyles and our expectations. Let us take all of this to the Lord, and lay it at the foot of the throne, where we will discover anew that God will answer the prayer of the Apostle Paul who wrote to the Roman Christians these encouraging words of positive expectations:

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Romans 15:13 (NIV)**

Let us sing: “Joy to the Word” the Lord is come... and He is “Coming Again!”

Let us proclaim that the most powerful vaccine of all has come with a cure for the sins of all mankind: “There is power in the blood of Jesus.” Let us sing of the “Peace, Peace Glorious Peace, that has come down from the Father above.” And let us overflow with the hope that we have since we are living in the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is not likely that the hopelessness of many will be dispelled *unless* the people of God share the hope that is ours in Christ. It is most likely going to happen if we, the Church, hold fast to the Advent hope that is ours in Christ and share that hope with the world!

The Christmas message has not changed. It is all about love, joy, peace and hope. Let us proclaim with a loud voice, “Merry Christmas!”

I remind you of the positive expectation that Paul shared with the Christians in Rome: This from the Message by Peterson:

May the God of hope fill you up with joy, fill you up with peace, so that your believing lives, filled with the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit, will brim over with hope! **Romans 15:13 (MSG)**

It is most likely to happen if we believe it and share it with our world.

Let us at NBC decide: It will happen because we are committed to sharing the hope we have in Christ with our world!

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