

A Christmas Hope

A Sermon in Song

Presented at the
Quaker Avenue church of Christ

December 14, 2015

- I. Well it's that time of year again. Christmas. The season of hope. As the song says, "It's the most wonderful time of the year." What an honor it is that we can gather this morning in the name of Jesus and celebrate this season of love and peace and hope.
- II. Especially hope. For these last few years have been difficult ones for planet Earth. Our world is more troubled than it has been in a long time with threats of terror and daily reports of bloodshed and war. Hope these days is a little harder to hold on to.
- III. Which is all the more reason why this season is so important. Christmas reminds us that hope is not something we can create ourselves, hope is a gift from God and on that first Christmas, hope came into this world wrapped up as a little baby.
- IV. When that baby came into the world, it was **also** a time when people struggled to hold on to hope. God's people lived in fear, their country occupied by a cruel Roman government. They had little hope that life would change for the better any time soon. Many began to wonder if their God had forgotten them.
 - I. Still... they hung on to hope because God had promised them a savior, Emmanuel.
 - II And so they waited...
 - III and they hoped...
 - IV Longing for the day when he would come.

O Come O Come Emmanuel (team)

I. *“Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee O Israel.”* For years and years and years, God’s people sang that song hoping against hope that one day he would come.

II. The prophets were certain that a deliverer was coming.

III. *To us a child is born, a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.*

IV *And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

I So, where was this prince who would deliver God’s people. Isaiah’s prophecy was over 500 years old! Surely many began to doubt such a prince would ever come.

II. Then one night,

III. One very holy night,

IV. He came.

O Holy Night (solo & team or maybe congregation)

- III. In most respects, it was an ordinary night, no different from the thousands of nights that had preceded it in those Judean hills.
- IV. The people of Bethlehem went about their normal routines, mothers putting the children to bed, fathers coming in from a hard day's work in the fields.
- III Of course there was one difference. The crowd.
- IV Bethlehem that night was filled with strangers, packing every room and spilling over into the streets.
- III Strangers ordered to go to Bethlehem so the Roman rulers could count them.
- IV For them, it was a frustrating night, one more irritating reminder they were held captive by another nation.
- III This crowd of strangers saw nothing especially good that could happen to them that night in Bethlehem.
- II. But... the angels knew better.
- I For one of the strangers that would arrive in Bethlehem this night, came not by the command of an emperor, but by the compassion of a creator.
- II. Angels watched in wonder and awe that night as God became a man.
- III. As God became a baby!
- I. While the townsfolk of Bethlehem slept, unaware, Heaven's hope would be delivered into this world

To Us a Child of Hope is Born (congregation)

- I. *A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—*
- II *The Spirit of wisdom and of understanding*
- III *The Spirit of counsel and of power*
- IV *The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord*
- III. *Righteousness will be his belt; faithfulness the sash around his waist.*
- II. *In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.*
- I. *Out of mankind grows a rose, innocent and lovely and lying in a manger,
With tender petal and smooth stem unbroken.
But soon surrounded with thorns, to be plucked and to die
And as it's spilt petals fall dead to the ground, the hope of new life blossoms.*
- IV *A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse...*

Lo How a Rose 'Ere Blooming (team)

- I. Oh Father, Our God, You guide us in Your truth and teach us as we hope in You. We worship you for who you are.
- II We praise you for sending your perfect Son, Jesus Christ, down from the splendor of heaven to bring His light to our dark planet.
- III We thank you, Father, for the amazing Hope that fills us and changes us when we worship you.
- IV Help us to bring that Hope to a desperate world that needs to know You. A world that is lost without you. In the name of the one who is our hope,

I, II,

III, IV Amen.

Of the Father's Love Begotten (team, chant or plainsong)

- I. And so, The Christmas hope comes to this world in the form of a baby, born in a small village, in a remote part of the world, to poor, unimpressive parents.
- II. His arrival foretold by prophets on earth and stars in the heavens,
- III Celebrated by angels, wise men and shepherds
- IV And largely unnoticed by the rest of the world.
- III. At a time of political oppression and social unrest, God announces to all who are able to hear, “*Peace on Earth, Goodwill to Men.*”
- II. But the loudest shout in Bethlehem is only a faint whisper in Jerusalem and goes completely unheard in Rome.
- I. And so it often seems today. For God’s good news continues to be announced and celebrated and unnoticed as mankind’s persistent lust for war and hatred seems to eclipse God’s offer of peace and goodwill.
- II. But like every eclipse, such dark moments in history are, well, momentary. In time the light returns and we regain the perspective of hope.

I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day (team)

- II News of the baby born in Bethlehem may not have made the headlines around the world on that first Christmas day, nevertheless, that birth changed the world forever.
- III. For that birth unleashed in the hearts of people a rigorous and resilient hope which has overcome the despair and doubt in every generation.
- IV For this Christmas hope is not based on the unreliable promises of men, but on the undeniable word of God.

I. *Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. Psalm 62, verse 5.*

II *But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. Isaiah chapter 40, verse 31.*

III *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful Hebrews chapter 6, verse 19 and chapter 10, verse 23.*

IV *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. 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 3.*

I. Well it's that time of year again. Christmas. the season of hope. And we gather this morning in the name of Jesus to celebrate the love and the peace and the hope which is ours in Christ Jesus. He is the only hope this world has. There is no other hope, for there is no other Lord.

My Hope is Build on Nothing Less (congregation)