

Expecting Jesus

Luke 2.22-38

"As a Christian, the weeks running up to Christmas are a time to orient our hearts toward the hope of what's to come. Not an abstract hope in fanciful human goodness; not hope in a vague hallmark-sappy spirituality; not a bootstrapped hope in our own strength... Those who know ourselves to need a Physician should dang well look forward to enduring beauty and eventually fulfillment. That is, we hope in a real Deliverer – a rescuing God, born at a real time, in a real place. But the eternal city, with foundations and without cancer – is not yet." Bill Sasser, announcing his terminal cancer diagnosis this week.

"So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin **but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.**" Hebrews 9:28

"Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me **but also to all who have loved his appearing.**" 2 Timothy 4:8

"Set your hope fully on the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 1:13

Where does this kind of expectant hope come from?

I. Hope: A Christ-centered Expectancy Produced from the Scriptures. Luke 2.22-26

"Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it was revealed to him that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." Luke 2:25-26

The normal means by which the Holy Spirit grants to His people expectant hope is through the Scriptures. The Scriptures create expectant hope for the coming of the Christ.

"Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Isaiah 42:1,2

"Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted. But Zion will say, 'The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.' Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she will have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.'" Isaiah 49:13-15

"The Spirit of the Lord God himself is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor... and to comfort all those who mourn; to grant those who mourn in Zion – to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit..." Isaiah 61:1-4

"For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." Romans 15:4

"We see, in the case of Simeon, how God has a believing people even in the darkest times... It is a cheering thought that God never leaves Himself entirely without a witness. As small as His believing church may sometimes be, the gates of hell shall never completely prevail against it."
- JC Ryle

II. Hope: A Christ-Seeing Capacity By the Spirit of God. Luke 2:27-32

"And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him in his arms and blessed God and said, 'Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your Word; for my eyes have seen your salvation ..." Luke 2:27-32

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." Romans 15:13

Hope is miraculous.

Believing in Jesus as the Christ, whether you have little information from his life, or the whole record of his life, is only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit.

“The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.” John 1:9-13

“Jesus answered him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John 3:3

“The new birth is an act of God whereby he infuses spiritual life into spiritually dead sinners. It is this spiritual life that enables sinners to sense the danger they are in (i.e. the wrath of God) and to see the sufficiency of the Saviour to save them from sin.” Conrad Mbewe

“And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.” Ezekiel 36:26-27

New hearts are hearts that are produced by the gospel are filled with eager expectant hope anticipating the return of Jesus Christ.

III. Hope: A Cross-shaped Strategy for Kingdom Advancement. Luke 2:33-38

“And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, ‘Behold this child was appointed for the fall and the rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thought from many hearts may be revealed.’” Luke 2:33-35

God’s way of advancing His kingdom is not our way of advancing His kingdom. Suffering rather than strength advances His kingdom. Humility over hubris. The cross is the path to the crown.

“Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” Romans 5:3-5

Hope is not had by avoiding suffering but rather from seeing our sufferings will not be in vain. Hope sees not only the coming of God's kingdom after our suffering but advancing through our suffering.

Study Questions:

Opening / Orientation Questions

1. When you hear the word “**hope**,” what ideas or images most commonly come to mind in our culture? How do those differ from the kind of hope described in this lesson?
2. Bill Sasser distinguishes between vague optimism and hope in a “real Deliverer.” Why is that distinction so important for Christians, especially in seasons of suffering?
3. How does the New Testament describe believers as people who are **waiting** or **expecting** Jesus? Why is waiting such a central posture of the Christian life?

I. Hope: A Christ-Centered Expectancy Produced from the Scriptures (Luke 2:22–26)

4. How is Simeon described in Luke 2:25? What do these descriptions tell us about the kind of person God uses to cultivate hope?
5. What was Simeon *waiting for*, and how was this hope shaped by God’s promises rather than by circumstances?
6. According to Romans 15:4, what role do the Scriptures play in producing hope? How does this challenge the idea that hope is mainly a feeling?
7. Looking at the Isaiah passages quoted in the lesson, what themes of comfort and restoration stand out to you?
8. J.C. Ryle notes that God always preserves a believing remnant, even in dark times. How does this encourage you when the church or culture feels spiritually discouraging?
9. In practical terms, how can regular exposure to Scripture reorient our expectations toward Christ rather than toward temporary relief or success?

II. Hope: A Christ-Seeing Capacity by the Spirit of God (Luke 2:27–32)

10. What does Simeon’s response to seeing Jesus reveal about the relationship between **hope and peace**?
11. Why does the lesson emphasize that hope is *miraculous* rather than merely intellectual or emotional?
12. How do passages like John 3:3 and Ezekiel 36:26–27 explain our need for the Holy Spirit to truly “see” Jesus?

13. Why could Simeon recognize salvation in a helpless infant when others in Jerusalem could not?
14. How does the doctrine of the new birth deepen our gratitude for faith and guard us from pride?
15. Where have you seen evidence in your own life (or others') that hope increases as spiritual sight deepens?

III. Hope: A Cross-Shaped Strategy for Kingdom Advancement (Luke 2:33–38)

16. Simeon speaks both blessing and pain over Mary. What does this teach us about the cost of following Christ?
17. Why is it difficult for us to accept that suffering, rather than strength, is often God's chosen means of advancing His kingdom?
18. How does Romans 5:3–5 reshape our understanding of suffering and its relationship to hope?
19. In what ways can suffering *reveal the thoughts of hearts*, as Simeon foretold?
20. How does the idea that God's kingdom advances *through* suffering (not just after it) change how we endure hardship?

Personal Application & Reflection

21. Where are you currently tempted to place your hope in something other than Christ's appearing?
22. What practices help you cultivate an expectant, Scripture-shaped hope rather than a fragile, circumstance-based one?
23. How can our group encourage one another to wait well—for Christ's return, for unanswered prayers, or for redemption in painful situations?
24. What would it look like this Advent (or this season of life) to “**set your hope fully**” on the grace to be revealed in Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13)?

Closing Question (Optional)

25. Simeon was ready to depart in peace because he had seen Christ. What would need to change in your life for you to say the same with confidence and joy?