

Osaka International Church
First Sunday of Advent
Title: The Blessed Hope

Pastor Daniel Ellrick
Scripture: Hebrews 1:1-8
Special Events: Lighting of the 1st Advent Candle "Hope"

Date: December 1st, 2013

Key Verse: Titus 2:13

I. Introduction

Good morning! Today is the first Sunday of the Advent season. In this season, many churches around the world focus on preparing for Christmas. Some use special decorations like our Advent Wreath. As we wait for Christmas day, a Scripture is read each week and a candle is lit to help us to think about the coming of Jesus at Christmas. These things are not necessary, but they can be helpful since they point to the promises of God and remind us of His goodness and love.

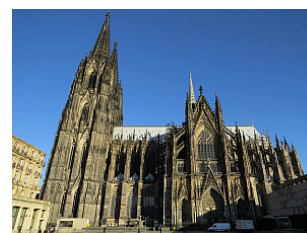
The first candle on our wreath is the candle of hope. The Scripture reading from Titus included these words, **(Titus 2:13), "while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."** What are we waiting for? We are waiting for the coming of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He is our blessed hope.



As **2 Corinthians 1:20**, tells us, **"For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God."** The Bible is full of wonderful promises from God. And, all of these promises of God are, "Yes," in Jesus. In the coming of Jesus, the promises of God are fulfilled. Amen? Amen!



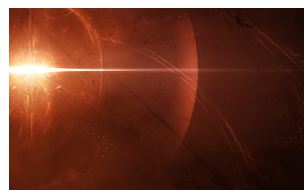
While Karen and I were in Germany, we visited this famous cathedral at Cologne (photo). It is a magnificent church, beautiful and majestic. But, at the same time, it is also a bit intimidating, even scary. To many people, God is like this - awesome, but also scary and unapproachable. But God did not wait for us to come to Him; in the person of Jesus, God came to us. As we prepare for Christmas this year, let's take time to reflect on who Jesus is. Jesus is God, Savior, and Lord, come to be with the people of His creation and even to give His life as a ransom for ours.



Outside of the church, many people think that the life of Jesus began two thousand years ago when He was born in Bethlehem. But the Bible teaches us that Jesus was alive before the creation of the world. Take a look at the words of Jesus' prayer in **John 17:24**, **"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world."** Before the creation of the world, the Father loved the Son. And the Holy Spirit was there as well. Before the world was created, the Trinity of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, existed in a circle of love, God in three persons, bound together by love.



God is love and His love is expressed in creation, especially in the creation of men and women, made in God's image, with the ability to love God and to love one another. **Titus 1:2** speaks of, **"a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time,"** This is an exciting verse. God promised eternal life, **"before the beginning of time."** Think about it. To whom did God make this promise? Before time began there weren't any people; there weren't any angels; there was no one except God. God made this promise to Himself. In other words, this promise to give the gift of eternal life to people who believe was made between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.



God does not lie. God does not break His promises. And, God's power and wisdom are absolute. So, our salvation was accomplished in the promise of God before God created the heavens and the earth, before the beginning of time. As **2 Timothy 1:9b** tells us, **"This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,"** The work of salvation was by Jesus at the cross two thousand years ago. And we receive our personal salvation when we believe in Jesus and trust in His promises. But in the promise of God, all of these things were already certain before time began.

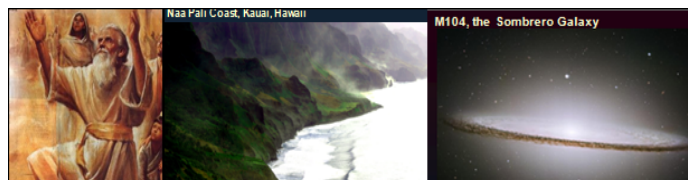
When we speak of the birth of Jesus Christ, we speak of the great miracle of the incarnation. When Jesus came into this world; He left the eternal throne of God and entered into time and space and became a child, born in a manger in the town of Bethlehem. **John 1:1** says, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”** And, **John 1:14a**, teaches us, **“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”** This is the Christmas story. God came to live in our world as a man; the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Let’s read today’s Scripture, Hebrews 1:1-8 and notice what it says about Jesus.

II. Scripture Hebrews 1:1-8 (NIV)

[1] In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, [2] but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. [3] The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. [4] So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. [5] For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"? [6] And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." [7] In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire." [8] But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.”

III. Teaching

The Bible affirms that God speaks in many ways. The Old Testament prophets spoke boldly of the Creator God and they gave many prophecies about the Messiah to come. The beauty of places like the Naa Pali Coast in Kauai, Hawaii, reveal God’s love for us and show how He delights in giving us joy. The wonder of the universe astounds us when we look out through our telescopes and see amazing things like the Sombrero Galaxy that point to the wisdom and power of God. All of these things teach us about God.



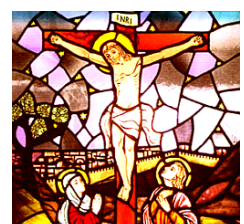
But the greatest revelation of God and His love is found in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, (Hebrews 1:2b), **“through whom he made the universe.”** When we read these words, we realize that the words of the psalmist in **Psalm 19:1** are also speaking of Jesus. **“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”** The stars and the galaxies were made by God through the Son; through Jesus.



Hebrews 1:3a declares, **“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being”** Do you want to know what God is like? Look at Jesus. **Colossians 2:9** agrees, saying, **“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.”** The story of Christmas is the story of God coming to be with His people.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul was teaching them about having an attitude of humility, but in doing so, Paul gave us another version of the Christmas story. **Philippians 2:5-8**, **“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!”**

God, in the person of the Son of God, made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant and dying on the cross for us, so that we might have eternal life. (**Hebrews 1:3b**) **“After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.”**



Who is Jesus? He is the King of Kings. He is the Messiah. He is Savior, Lord, Emmanuel, the Prince of Peace, the Light of the World, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Jesus is the Son of God and He became the Son of Man when He was born into this world on that first Christmas morning two thousand years ago. But long before that, before the beginning of time, Jesus is eternal and almighty God.



Two thousand years ago, when John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said **(John 1:29) “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”** Trust in Jesus and He will take away your sins and wash you clean. This Christmas season, let’s all remember that the baby in the manger, Jesus, is the Lamb of God who takes away our sins. Together with the apostle Thomas, let us look to the risen Jesus and make the good confession of faith, bowing down before Him and saying **(John 20:28) “My Lord and my God.”**



Jesus is Lord and God and He is worthy of all worship. He is worthy of our worship and the worship of the angels. In **Hebrews 1:6-8**, the writer declares, **“And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God's angels worship him.” In speaking of the angels he says, “He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire.” But about the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.”**



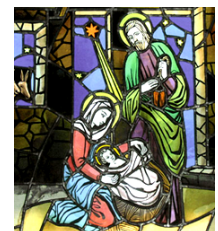
The author of Hebrews is very clear in proclaiming that Jesus is God. But he is not proclaiming something new; these last words are actually a quote from Psalm 45:6, where the psalmist spoke prophetically of the Messiah to come. Truly, Jesus is Messiah and Lord, God of all creation.

IV. Conclusion

Two thousand years ago, the people of Israel were waiting for the coming of the Messiah. But when He appeared, most of the Jews did not recognize Him because He came in humility. They expected that the Messiah would come as a conquering king and drive the Roman soldiers from their land. But God’s plan was different. Instead of coming in awesome power and authority, Jesus came in humility to give His life as a sacrifice to pay for our sins. You see, God knew that we did not need another powerful ruler. What we needed was forgiveness of our sins, because our sins prevent us from drawing close to God. In Jesus, God provides for our need. Jesus is our blessed hope. He came once two thousand years ago. And He will come again, to restore all things.

I think it is good for us to enjoy the beauty of the Christmas lights and the fun of Santa Claus and Christmas trees, but as we enjoy the season I pray that we will always remember that it is all about Jesus. Jesus is the One and Only Savior; Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

Let’s close with **Matthew 1:23**, **“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”--which means, “God with us.”**



V. Closing Prayer