

The Hope of Heaven

THE HOPE OF HEAVEN: "THE HOPE OF TOMORROW"

Welcome back to our Christmas Advent series entitled The Hope of Heaven. And each week in this four week series, we're preparing ourselves for the coming of Jesus. And that's what advent means, the COMING or the ARRIVAL, the showing up of an especially important person. And that's who . . . Jesus.

³ "Later, Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives. His disciples came to him privately and said, 'Tell us, when will all this happen? What sign will signal your return and the end of the world?' ⁴Jesus told them, 'Don't let anyone mislead you, ⁵for many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah.' They will deceive many. ⁶And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but don't panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won't follow immediately. ⁷Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in many parts of the world. ⁸But all this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come,'" (Matthew 24:3-7).

You may be thinking, "Eh, week three is not a traditional advent scripture reading for Christmas." And you're right. These words of Jesus are at the end of his time on earth spoken to his 12 close followers, his disciples, at the Mount of Olives. Jesus enters Jerusalem on a Donkey on Palm Sunday, clears the temple on a Monday, and this is Tuesday, where he speaks on the other mount of Olives overseeing Jerusalem and speaks about this future event of how the end will come when he comes back again, this time not as a baby, but as our King!

Read the rest of Matthew 24 to hear what Jesus has to say about his 2nd coming. Let me pick up what Jesus says at the end of his long teaching in v. 30 when he says this.

³⁰ "And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹And he will send out his angels with the mighty blast of a trumpet, and they will gather his chosen ones from all over the world from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven," (Matthew 24:30-31).

Jesus will come back again! Do you believe that? Well, if Jesus came the first time after 700 years after the prophet Isaiah foretold his first coming, it's been 2000 plus years since these words of Jesus were spoken. Let me read again, v. 7

"Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in many parts of the world. ⁸But all this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come," (Matthew 24:7).

Over the course of history, had plenny wars, famines, and earthquakes. We even had a volcanic eruption on Mauna Loa! And Jesus says all these are birth pains, labor pains, and when these events happen, then he'll come back again.



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What does Jesus mean by birth pains? Now I know for some, the topic of giving birth is sensitive as not all women who want to become pregnant can conceive. But for those who have given birth, how was your birth pains? Small kine pain or big time ouchy? Or did you give in to the epidural shot?

And you husbands who were a part of supporting your wives through this process, how was it from your perspective? More respect for your wives, yes! Appreciate all she went through, don't you!

Jesus is using this picture of how things in this age before this 2nd coming will be. Yes, there will be moments of peace, non pain, before the labor pains start, but when they start, you know ladies, they get more intense and closer together until baby comes.

My first experience was with my son. Drs had to induce Gayle cuz Clarke wasn't growing no more and he needed to come out, so we went in, and the process was long, 48 hours. So when it was our 2nd one, I figured, I get time for do some big boy kine shopping cuz no sense just wait around. And in those days, 25 years ago, I neva carry cell phone. So when I came back to the hospital relaxed to check on how the labor was going, I wasn't prepared for my welcome. My wife, with a look that could kill screamed, "where were you!" "shopping for baby, actually I was checking out a computer store" my water broke and you weren't here! That's my story.

And it's will be like this before Jesus comes back again. Moments of waiting, some intense times in our world, and then he'll come back again!

I think we closer than ever when Jesus come back again, don't you think? 2000 plus years already!

He'll come back cuz our world, look at us environmentally, how can this world sustain all these people? We are closer than ever to nuclear war and wiping out each other, with one push of a button! Not a feel good topic for this Christmas season. But that's the good news of Jesus! Good news? Well, after all those labor pains, hard times, intense difficulties, Jesus comes back! That's a fact JACK!

So reflect with me on a personal level. You may be experiencing moments of peace in your lives now (moments between those intense pains of labor), for others you may be in some intense labor right now! And that pain is so intense. And I know some of your pains, for some it's a physical ailment or news of some bad diagnosis, workplace woes, money mess (hard times to make ends meet), you like buy a house/car, but no can afford one, maybe it's the pain of not knowing the future, for many the most painful labor you are going through is a relational one, head butting with your spouse, kids, someone in your family? And this labor pain is the worst, right? In fact, that's one of the top reasons people check out the church, cuz their labor pains so intense, they desperate to try God. It's like they come and tell God, just give me one epidural shot to take away the pain.

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OG DISCUSSION/PERSONAL REFLECTION Q1: *What has been some of your most intense pains in your life? How did you deal with those pains? Positively or negatively? Alone? With Others? Did you allow God into that pain?*

But many times, God doesn't take away the pain. Like we heard last week, sometimes, he allows us to go through the pain, with the promise of being with us through it all. And maybe you or someone you know is going through something painful right now. And you don't see the HOPE FOR TOMORROW!

Let me give you some perspective on your pain. And these are not my words, it's the words of James, Jesus' brother, half brother.

² "Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. ³For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. ⁴So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing (James 1:2 - 4 NLT)

James is not saying when troubles come your way it's great joy! When troubles come our way, we're bummed out, right, and we don't expect these hard times to come. It throws us off, doesn't it! What James is saying is it's an opportunity for great joy, why? That trouble, hard time is what God uses in our lives to build our hope muscle? Huh, HOPE MUSCLE? How is our hope muscle strengthened? Not when no mo troubles. It's when we go through hard times, we have a chance to trust God in what we are going through. And as we do so, we'll have something of great value in our lives! Endurance! Adversity is not a bad thing! It's a good thing. Surely, not at the moment, but it can strengthen our HOPE IN GOD MUSCLE that he's got us, that we can hold to the promise that he'll be with us. How's your HOPE MUSCLE? Weak, flabby, or STRONG?

OG DISCUSSION/PERSONAL REFLECTION Q2: *Reflect upon your Hope Muscle. In what areas do you need your Hope Muscle to be stronger? Meditate on the truth of 1 Peter 4:12-13. How does knowing you can be partners with Jesus in your hard times strengthen your Hope Muscle?*

I can attest to the fact it has been in those most difficult times in my life that I've experienced the closeness of God the most. How about you? Peter says it like this,

¹² "Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. ¹³Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world (1 Peter 4:12 - 13 NLT).

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¹² "My frenz, no come bum out if you suffa plenny. Dass fo tes you guys how you stay inside. No tink you da ony one dat suffa plenny lidat. ¹³But you stay good inside cuz you suffa toged-da wit Christ. Den bumbye you goin come plenny good inside wen erybody see how awesome Christ stay (DGASB).

Let me ask you this? What will show us to be true followers of Jesus? Is it in the good times or when the "Excrement hits the oscillating cooling device"? Do you know what I mean? It's when everything seems to be going bad, there's intense pain, that's when we can show off our HOPE FOR TOMORROW MUSCLE.

And God wants to build that in us. All too often people, throw in the towel too quickly and don't build their HOPE FOR TOMORROW MUSCLE! Believe that God wants to build something of great value in your life.

You know what has produced the most suffering? Marriage! But that has developed my HOPE MUSCLE best. You know the rings, it starts out with the Engagement RING, Wedding RING, and then the third one, the SufferRING!

Now could you welcome up Marc Cabatbat to share about how his HOPE FOR TOMORROW Muscle has been strengthened through some of his hard times to encourage us not to give up HOPE!

Thank you Pastor Earl for bringing me up and thank you again congregation for allowing me to speak with you today. I think last time I was up here speaking doing impact moments and was the last time I was in Church! That's because I went "Bachi" myself and said my baby boy wasn't here yet so I just like Pastor Earl did thought had plenty time. But no our son Isaiah Hineni Cabatbat wanted out already so that night I left the Sat night service only to come home and that night Becky's water broke and it was go time!! So yes we are officially an Ohana of five with Becky and Isaiah doing well as me and our Ohana are so blessed.

I am not going to lie and say having another kid is easy since we had two already and those of you that said that it would be easy? Shame on you guys you when lie!! Kidding aside it has been a challenge as those who have more than two keikis know once you get the third and on you go from playing man on man defense to Zone defense. That's right you can't forget that you have the third like Becky and I. We were at the soccer game watching Amelia and Becky with baby next thing you know we totally lost track of Abby. I sus das why hard!



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However, was that fear displayed in the story of Jesus's Birth? No, it wasn't ...Jesus was born in a manger, Joseph and Mary had no worries about what would happen next, and everyone knew that came to witness his birth that the king of kings was born. His birth did not represent pain, suffering, or worry with anticipation of the future. His birth represented Hope. Hope then, now, and forever.

I think most of you already heard my testimony and how I was not the same man you see speaking to you today. After my first child was born, life got hard and I almost threw in the towel on my marriage. I at one point in my life had to make the difficult decision and look in the mirror and admit that I am a sinner and could not do it alone. I was even following the lord when I went through my valley and honestly what gave me Hope for Tomorrow was all of you my brother and sisters. This Church, community, relationships and our New Hope Ohana that were praying, contending and never giving up on me and my marriage. To all you ladies that were speaking life not death into Becky's life. I thank you right now!! God bless you godly women for fighting in the supernatural. I could feel Jesus through all of you and I know that you all did not give up on me.

"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus," (Romans 3:23-24 NIV).

That is right my brothers and sisters we all fall short of the glory of God. And what you witness now with my family and if you our story. I pray that my mess is my message and Becky's and I's test is our testimony for all of you to witness that there is Hope for tomorrow. Because the truth is without Jesus's love, grace, and mercy in my life none of what I shared with you and none of this. None of this would be possible. Now, we reaping the rewards of our perseverance and God has given me a beautiful perspective on my marriage and my family. To be honest, I wouldn't have appreciated my marriage in the way I do now, had not gone through that season in the valley. As I mentioned before, I was a Christian when I strayed away from my family. I needed to make the decision to submit to God, and deny myself...and that brought me back to my wife. Even as Christians, we fall, and the decision to pick up our cross and follow Jesus is a daily occurrence. For those of you who have been watching The Chosen series, there's a part where Mary Magdala fell back to her old habits. It was a controversial scene, because fans were questioning how a follower of Jesus could easily go back to their old ways. But for me, this scene hits home. We can fall time and time again (and most of us will) and when we return to Jesus in repentance, He welcomes us with open arms. He just wants our hearts. This clip provided me with the Hope of Jesus and the Hope for tomorrow.

"Chosen Video Clip"

OG DISCUSSION/PERSONAL REFLECTION Q3: From the way Jesus responded to Mary in the scene from Chosen, how can that give you a new hope for tomorrow in your life?