



Love came at

CHRISTMAS

Unto you is born ... a Savior. LUKE 2:11

"...As we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ"

December 2022

*"I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope." Psalm 130:5*

Can you imagine how different the Christmas story might have been if Mary and Joseph didn't have hope? Hope allows us to bend beyond our circumstances. When our hearts are crushed Hope gives us new life and the ability to breathe again. Hope creates room in our hearts for something more beyond ourselves. Mary and Joseph's faithfulness was a channel of hope through which God accomplished something bigger than the both of them. Mary and Joseph endured a variety of trials and hardships, to find encouragement and hold onto the hope of a coming Messiah, a baby boy named Jesus. Hope is the key, because that's why we're joyful in the first place. We know that with Jesus and with his message, something better than what we have is coming.

Like Mary and Joseph, we must learn to hope. Real-life is filled with unexpected turns and unforeseen problems. There was doubt, trust issues, complications, and instability. But with hope in God, Mary and Joseph were determined with a living hope because God called them to raise the Son of God.

For some of us, this Christmas season may be strained by busyness, relational strife, limited finances, loneliness, or the pain of loss and grief. If this is you, your hearts may feel a sense of gloominess and despair during these dark days of Advent. *And we should feel no shame for this.* We do not live in a world free from pain and struggle. And God does not promise us a path free from the realities of loss and grief. But, true Christmas hope is not a flimsy hope dependent on the sparkle (or lack thereof) in our current circumstances; instead, it is a hope grounded in the assurance of a Savior who came, dwelt among us, redeemed us from sin, and who will soon come again to make all things new.

The Christ of Christmas means hope—to the person out of work, to the struggling single mother, to the dying believer. Even if you're just trudging your way through the disappointments of life, if you have Jesus, you have hope. And he is not a false hope, a childish fairy tale that we wish will have a happy ending. When Jesus rose from the dead, that ended the argument. Period. Our hope in him is rock-solid and real.

Hope has to do with trust and confidence. It's resting our heart on God, fully trusting that he will care for us and give us true happiness and salvation. Hope is eager expectation and anticipation of what is sure to come—an active, faith-infused hope, waiting for God to fulfill His promises.

So, if you are struggling this Christmas, know that you are not alone. In fact, you are in good company. In the days before Jesus' first Advent, the psalmist found himself in a pit of darkness and despair. We don't know the details of his pain or affliction, but we do know that he trusted God enough to cry out to him in his suffering and to expect with hope that God would hear his prayer and respond.

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Wayne and Jeanine Allen