



Recently, I was watching a video where someone was defending Satan, saying that according to the Bible, Satan wanted to give humanity knowledge – whereas God wanted to keep knowledge from humanity. You might feel as surprised as I to hear someone defending Satan as though he’s the generous one and that he’s *for* humanity. But as I listened to this person, I thought about Satan’s deceptive tactics. He always speaks in half-truths (i.e. – deception). What was Satan really wanting people to experience? He wanted them to eat from the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. It’s not simply that Satan wanted people to grow in knowledge. The word for knowledge here includes the idea of intimate awareness even through experience. And so, the point is that once Adam and Eve ate from this tree, they would then have to live in a world where good and evil exists, and with evil comes confusion of all sorts. We have to live in a world where we feel and experience and even act out in broken sinful ways, and we’ll have to navigate this brokenness. This will breed confusion and tension and pain.

We all feel this, don’t we? This is what Satan wanted. And humanity has been plunged into this brokenness ever since. Yet God has not rejected humanity. He comes to us in our confusion and comes alongside us to acknowledge this pain. In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon acknowledges this confusion. He tries to find hope in money, women, power, building a name for himself, work. Yet, he admits that no matter what he does, there’s always the reality that these things will fade away. So, he begins his sermon of Ecclesiastes by saying that everything is vanity and chasing after the wind. In other words, the things of this life all fade away. Just like you might try to breathe into the cold air and you see your breathe disappear, so it is with the things of this life. At some point in time, it all disappears.

So, Solomon asks, “What’s the point of living?” The brokenness of everything – living intimately in this world of good and evil – leads to confusion. And one of Solomon’s illustrations is particularly helpful to us, I think. He uses the phrase “under the sun” many times in the book. The idea is that we are bound in this brokenness. We can only see what we can see: this physical world. Yet, this physical world is on the fast-track to death. This phrase “under the sun” gives humanity this idea that unless someone above the sun gives us greater knowledge, we won’t know how to live in this broken system. Hence, at the end of the sermon, Solomon says that God is the answer! In knowing, loving, and serving him, we can trust that even our actions in this world will matter for eternity.

How can Solomon say that? Well, it’s because God has the whole perspective. Again, we who live under the sun can only see what’s under the sun. We’re limited. Let me use a different illustration that was given to me by a preacher years ago. Have you ever seen a beautiful rug and then looked underneath it? That rug goes through a loom. If you are watching the loom from above, you can see how that rug is being put together. You can see the colors coming together to create shapes and pictures. But if you are under the loom, that rug looks like a mess. You might judge the person running the loom, thinking they have no idea what they’re doing. There’s knots under the loom. The colors don’t seem to match. It’s not

pretty. You might perceive something, but it's not clear. Yet, it's not the maker of the loom that's wrong; our perspective is off. We live in a world where the experience of good and evil are together.

But God, not giving up on humanity and his creation, promised that he would weave this broken world into a more glorious plan. This was the message from the beginning after Adam and Eve sinned. We have been working through the book of Genesis, and it wasn't long ago that we were in Genesis 3 where God promised to Eve a child that would crush the serpent. A child who would reverse the curse on this world and bring a new world. From that point on, this promise propelled and encouraged people who trusted God. They were hoping for this promised child. And they lived in this broken world, trusting that there was a renewal to come. That's why Adam named Eve "the mother of all living" because even though she sinned against the Lord, Adam knew that through her the serpent crusher would come and kill death! Moving from Adam and Eve, we have Noah who trusted the Lord and hoped in him. Then we get to Abraham and God promises that from him all the nations of the earth will be blessed. The serpent-crusher promise will funnel through Abraham's lineage. And so, in Romans 4:18, we read of Abraham, **"¹⁸ In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, 'So shall your offspring be.'"**¹ In hope, he believed against hope. What does that mean? Well, we know that God ordained for Abraham to wait decades for a child from Sarah. By the time God gave Abraham and Sarah a child, it was impossible for them to have a child. If he evaluated his life on the basis of what he could see, he'd give up. Living under the sun, under the loom, he'd say God had done things wrong. It doesn't make sense. Yet, Abraham believed God's promise. He had hope not in what he could see. He hoped in God's promise. And it wasn't simply the promise to him, but the promise God had for the world. There would be a day God would restore all things. So, Abraham eventually refused to trust in what he or Sarah could do. His hope rested in the Lord.

For me, studying Abraham has been such a tremendous blessing to my own heart. I hope it has been for you, too, because it's not that Abraham has been impressive. Instead, I've seen such an amazing faithfulness and goodness from the Lord. He grew Abraham's faith. He persisted in teaching Abraham. And he's good in all the waiting. Therefore, he's worthy of my hope and trust.

This is what Solomon gets at in Ecclesiastes. Our hope has to rest above the sun, above the loom. Now, when I use the word "hope," that might be confusing. If I say, "put your hope in the Lord," what does that mean? In our day, the word "hope" has more of a meaning of feeling an intense desire for something, but it may or may not happen. Like, "I hope I get a certain present for Christmas," or, "I hope that this weekend will be stress-free," or, "I hope that none of our children get sick during our vacation." Is that what the Bible means when it says, "Put your hope in the Lord?" Like, "We hope the Lord will show his goodness, but he may not?" No.

You see, if we just like for this world and what we can see, our hope can only be like that. We will hope in money, popularity, being a good parent; but we'll have to admit those things can all fail us. I'm reminded of Solomon's words in Proverbs 11:7, where he says, **"When the wicked dies, his hope will perish. . ."**² And in Proverbs 10:28, he wrote, **"²⁸ The hope of the righteous brings joy, but the expectation of the wicked will perish."**³ In Hebrew poetry, there's parallelism that helps to define words. The words "hope" and "expectation" are tied together. There's an anticipation and expectation for something. That's what "hope" means. And Solomon says that the expectation of those who do not trust and follow the Lord will

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 4:18.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Pr 11:7.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Pr 10:28.

die. Why? Because they're just living for this world and themselves. But the expectation and anticipation of the righteous brings joy. Why? Because they receive it.

But this leads me to a question for all of us: **Where is your hope anchored?** And then a second question: **Why?** In other words, what's your reason for your hope being anchored in that? Practically speaking, your daily, weekly, monthly, yearly hopes could be in your plans and your life and what you do. The things of this earth are your tangible hopes. And they are your hopes because you can see them. You think you can control them, and you feel safe when you are managing them all well. But, like Solomon said, those hopes will die. But what if your hope is anchored above the sun? Now, even with that, I want to ask "Why?" Sometimes people will say they hope in the Lord, but they really mean, "I hope in the Lord to give me what I want here." So, they expect and anticipate the Lord to get them out of debt or give them a good family or to make them successful. That's not hoping in the Lord. That's using the Lord to give you hopes under the sun. Where is your hope *anchored*?

Now, why do I say all of this today? Because this Sunday of Advent focuses on the biblical theme of hope, and how our hope truly is fulfilled through Jesus himself. But how? How can Jesus himself be the hope every single human needs? For the next few moments, we will see how the Scriptures reveal to us that **Humanity's hope is in a gracious relationship with God, living in his goodness forever – and Jesus alone gives us this.** To put it more simply, we were made for a person and a place: Jesus is that person. Heaven is that place. I say it this way because again, we're so prone to put our hope in things we can taste, touch, and see. But all these things fade away. Even with all the excitement of Christmas, and your anticipation for getting certain things; I guarantee by next Christmas you will forget much, most or all of the presents you get this year. I don't know about you, but I don't want a hope that dies and fades away. That's not secure. I don't want what Satan could give me: knowledge of good and evil. I want what only God can give. I want a hope that carries me through storms, trials, even death. I want a hope that finds eternal joy at the end of the path!

This is what we see throughout the Scriptures. As I said earlier, God promised hope to Adam and Eve. He promised it to Abraham. And the Old Testament writers understood it. **In Job's experience** of pain and suffering, he said this, ¹⁵ **Though he slay me, I will hope in him. . .**⁴ How can Job say that? Because he knows he can't evaluate God on the basis of what he can see. God is above the loom! Job trusts the goodness of God, and a little later he says, ²⁵ **For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. ²⁶ And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God. . .**⁵ Where is Job's hope? His Redeemer and in a land that is free from death. To put another way, his hope is in being home with the Lord. The One who is at that point allowing and ordaining these trials in his life will be seen with Job's eyes someday and Job will experience a joy like no other in God himself.

Listen carefully, this belief of Job's is all of grace. His hope doesn't rest ultimately in his pain in this life going away. His children aren't going to come back from the death. His friends aren't magically going to stop being more sympathetic. His hope is anchored. So, whatever comes, by the Lord's mercies he can endure because his *hope* is anchored.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Job 13:15.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Job 19:25–26.

This is also the mindset of **King David**, as we read his songs in the Psalms like 33:22 that says, **“Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you.”**⁶ Or 42:5: **Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation ⁶ and my God. ⁷** Then in 71:5, he wrote, **“For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth.”**⁸ And 130:7, we read, **“O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption.”**⁹

What do we hear from King David? When we’re cast down in this life, our hope is in God himself. Why? Because he is our salvation. He loves us, and there is plentiful redemption (immense salvation and a reverse of the curse). Yes, our circumstances today may be deeply painful, and may look like a bunch of knots that make no sense, but everything in this life is temporary, and there is a God who loves and cares for you. Where is your hope? Is your hope just in the circumstances or in God himself?

I want to turn to two other Old Testament examples of hope: **Isaiah and Jeremiah**. Both of them were prophets who endured suffering. Jeremiah probably the worst because he saw God’s punishment on Israel for their rebellion over the centuries, and Israel was taken away in exile to Babylon. Listen to the words of these men. Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 8:17, **“¹⁷ I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him.”**¹⁰ The Lord, the master weaver, is hiding his face (punishing Jacob and things are very confusing to the people living in this good and evil world). Yet, Isaiah hopes in the Lord. He anticipates and expects the Lord as his treasure and prize. These are similar words from Jeremiah. In his poetry of Lamentations, Jeremiah spends 99% of this book weeping and wailing over the horrors that Israel is experiencing. But right at the center of his writing, we read these words, **“²¹ But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: ²² The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; ²³ they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ²⁴ “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.” ²⁵ The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. ²⁶ It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.**¹¹

When Jeremiah said that the Lord is his portion, he was saying that the Lord is all he needs. If he has the Lord, even if his whole world is crumbling down, he has everything. Can you say that, Ventura? The “therefore” of Jeremiah is so important. He says because the Lord is his portion, he’s going to live like it. He’s going to anticipate and expect all of his satisfaction being fulfilled in the Lord himself. Then in verse 25, he knows this involves waiting. Someday, God will reveal all of his goodness to Jeremiah. But Jeremiah’s hope is anchored in the Lord himself.

All of these verses on hope emphasize that **Humanity’s hope is in a gracious relationship with God, living in his goodness forever**. But there’s a very important line that I added to this earlier: **and Jesus alone gives us this**. When I say Jesus alone gives this, you could think, “Wait a second. How could Jesus alone give this if you’ve read from the Old Testament and Jesus hadn’t come and lived as a human yet?” It’s because the saints of the Old Testament were looking for God to fulfill his promise of the serpent-crusher. With longing the saints of old anticipated God fulfilling this promise. Through patriarchs, judges, kings, and prophets; they knew they got closer and closer. But then there was silence. For four hundred years, no prophet. No word from the Lord.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 33:22.

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 42:5–6.

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 71:5.

⁹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 130:7.

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Is 8:17.

¹¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), La 3:21–26.

Then, in relative obscurity, in a little town called Bethlehem, “. . . in [its] dark streets shineth//The everlasting Light//The hopes and fears of all the years//Are met in thee tonight” (O Little Town of Bethlehem). What if God, who made promises, never sent Jesus. That means he would be a liar, and Satan would be the good one. But God’s promises are always yes. And so, Jesus came. Hope has come! Gracious relationship and eternal home with the Lord in his goodness await all who turn to him. We have been given hope. Hope has come. Do you believe this?

Many people did not believe this in Jesus’ day. I think of Jesus, when he confronted the religious leaders and said: **There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope.** ⁴⁶ **For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me.**¹² When Jesus says they set their hope on Moses, he means that they set their trust in the Law. Yet, they failed to see what Moses was pointing to. I’ve used this illustration in the past, but it might be helpful here. When you’re with an infant and you point, all they stare at is your finger. But your finger is pointing to something. At some point in time, the child gets this. With the religious leaders in Jesus’ day, they were staring at Moses’ finger – not at who Moses was pointing to. Moses spoke of the Messiah. That includes Genesis through Deuteronomy. And then in each Old Testament writing, the authors point to the hope of Israel. Jeremiah speaks of a day when God will change people’s hearts. Isaiah speaks of a Suffering Servant who is the Conquering King. It’s on him that we should place our hope because it’s through him alone that God’s mercy comes to us and promises a new creation where there will be no more knowledge of good and evil. And so, we read in Matthew 12:21 that Jesus fulfills Isaiah’s prophecy: ¹⁸ **“Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. . . .”** ²⁰ **a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory;** ²¹ **and in his name the Gentiles will hope.”**¹³

The promise to Adam and Eve, to Abraham, to Israel, to King David, to the world; is fulfilled in Jesus because Jesus will not crush bruised reeds – people broken by their own sinfulness and sinful world. Instead, he will be crushed – and all who turn to him will be forgiven and reconciled to God. And all of us have the eternal hope of the saints through the ages. We have a hope anchored in God. And that’s what the author of Hebrews says in 6:19: ¹⁹ **We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,** ²⁰ **where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf. . . .**¹⁴

Meaning, we’re anchored above the sun because of the Son. Now we can live under the loom knowing that God is weaving together a glorious plan beyond our comprehension for all eternity future. So, when you think about Christmas. Think about all that Jesus coming to this earth 2,000 years ago means. It means we have eternal hope. God keeps his promises. And this eternal hope also ought to anchor you in your daily living today – and give you anticipation and expectation for the future!

We can share in the hope that the apostle Paul stated in Romans 8:22 and following: ²² **For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.** ²³ **And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.** ²⁴ **For in this hope we were saved.** ¹⁵ Someday, we will

¹² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jn 5:45–46.

¹³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 12:18, 20-21.

¹⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 6:19–20.

¹⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 8:22–24.

be with our loving father. Someday! And so, Paul says later in Romans: ¹² **Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.** ¹⁶ Knowing Jesus and all we have in him, rejoice in hope and be patient in trials and pray always! Jesus is our hope!

Oh, I hope you see that Jesus coming 2,000 years ago changes everything! Christmas isn't just a time for presents that pass away and fade from memory. Christmas is about the greatest hope for the world. A hope that affects our past, present, and future. And because God fulfilled his promise 2,000 years ago; we can be assured, he will fulfill his promise to restore all things in the future. And so, take heed to the apostle Peter's words where he anchors our hope once again in Jesus and what we have in the future: **preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.** ¹⁷ Hope affects how we live and follow the Lord today. And, isn't that essentially what Solomon was saying thousands of years ago? If we only have hope in this life, it's all vanity. But God gives meaning to all. Knowing that God is weaving all things together for our eternal good reminds us of the goodness of our God and the true fixed hope we have, and so it's true what we read in Proverbs 10: the hope of the righteous brings joy! Jesus is our hope. Jesus is our joy.

Humanity's hope is in a gracious relationship with God, living in his goodness forever – and Jesus alone gives us this. Praise the Lord for the assured hope we have in Jesus through his Advent in the past, that anchors us in the present for a joyous eternity future.

¹⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 12:11–12.

¹⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Pe 1:13.