

Sunday Sermon

7/21/24

Series: Christ our Hope

Passage: 1 Thess. 4:9-18

Title: Hope in the Coming of the Lord

Good morning, Church! Good to be back with all of you. Please turn in your bibles this morning to 1 Thess. 4. We will be reading verses 9-18 as we continue in our series "Christ our Hope." Our passage this morning is such a beautiful passage. So hope filled. So encouraging. Used at so many funerals to bring assurance and comfort to those in grief. So I'm going to let God's Word speak for itself this morning and just read it. So I encourage you to open your bibles and read it for yourself as I read it aloud. 1 Thess. 4:9-18.

**(Read and Pray)**

The goal of the message this morning, plain and simple, is to take the truth of the return of Christ and to encourage you with it. You don't have to wonder. My goal is that I would encourage you and then that you would leave here and be able to encourage one another and others with these words. So turn to your neighbor and say, "this is going to be encouraging."

Alright, this is going to be encouraging today. That's the goal that we're going for. The title of the message is: *Hope in the Coming of the Lord*.

Jesus Christ is coming again, make a note of it. And listen, Jesus Christ coming again is the greatest hope of every Christian. If you could get a healthy Christian, a strong Christian, a committed Christian, and you could autopsy their soul, you would diagnose that more than their thoughts about this year, more than their thoughts about the next decade, more than their thoughts about their earthly future, their greatest hope is that Jesus Christ is coming again.

Heb. 9:28, ***"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."***

This is the great hope of the church. This is the great hope of every Christ follower.

***"Why are you cast down, oh my soul? Hope in God!"*** – Ps. 42:11

Christians who are sullen or filled with fear as they think about the future, haven't grasped the reality of this understanding as the core of their faith.

We need to understand it. Listen team hope: Jesus Christ is coming again! It's the greatest hope we have.

I could get shot while preaching this message. I could get hit by a car walking out of church. I could get cancer and walk a long, hard road till death. I could live a long, relatively healthy life and die peacefully in my sleep. I don't particularly want all of those things. But that's not where my hope is set. The Christian *knows* that this world is not my home. And no matter what my life here on earth is like, one day Jesus Christ is coming again, and when he does I will be raised to new life, full life, complete life with him, forever.

And as we read about God's rapture of his church, Christ returning and reclaiming all Christians from earth, we must understand.

Look up here for a sec. Why must we understand? Because hope isn't magic. I'm not going to do a trick this morning. Hope isn't a motivational speech. Hope isn't, God help us, a preacher pep talk that doesn't affect your soul beyond Sunday afternoon. It's not that.

True hope is an anchoring to something real. A real promise anchored to the rock of God's Word. It is a confident assurance of the better thing that the King of Kings and Lords of Lords is holding for me in regard to my future.

And that hope we can take to the bank, church. All of what has been written by the Spirit of God in the Word of God is the creator of the universe's declaration about what is a certain future for every follower of Jesus Christ. Who here will say, "Amen!"

So let's get after it and be encouraged by God's Word this morning. Verse 9: "**Now concerning...**" Stop. Any time we see this phrase, Paul is shifting the subject a bit. We're talking about walking in a manner pleasing to the Lord. Paul just covered the area of sexual purity and holiness. Now we are shifting our focus to love.

He says, "Now concerning Philadelphia." Brotherly Love. We're all familiar with Philadelphia, PA – the city of brotherly love. Comes from this word in the Bible. He says, "No one needs to write to you about this." Why not, Paul? Seems like an important thing. He says, "Because you're already doing it." But why are they doing it? Look at this. He says, "Because you have been taught by God to love." I love that. The word is: "Theo – didak – toi" - taught by God" – I love that.

We have all been taught things by those around us. Some things stick, some don't. But when God teaches us something it hits a little differently, doesn't it? A profound truth that sinks a little deeper. A new conviction or understanding that cannot be shaken because we have been "theo – didak – toi" – taught by the Creator himself. But look at what they had been taught. We completely miss this in English, "to love." This "love" is the word "Agape."

In other words, you don't need to be instructed on how to do the brotherly love thing when you have been taught by God himself to do the agape thing, God-like love - a better, fuller kind of love.

Brotherly love is the love for one's fellow-man as a brother. You're part of the group, the family. You ever have a friend who is kind of an idiot, but you back him or her anyway? It's this fraternity mindset. Christians should have this family or fraternity mindset with one another, because we have in common God's Holy Spirit. We are part of his family. Loving one another warts and all.

But listen, that is hard enough to do with each other – those a part of God's family. Much more is to have this "brotherly love" toward those outside the church – with those who are not in the fraternity.

Paul is saying that the Thessalonian church knew how to do the Philadelphia thing because they had been taught by God what his kind of love was. Pure, unconditional, faithful, sacrificial, and always hope filled.

And he exhorts them, ***"Keep going after that more and more."*** AND in doing so remember to ***"to hold your peace, attend to your affairs, and continue to work hard."*** Why is he saying this? Remember the context. The Thessalonian church is experiencing persecution and hardship at the hands of some who don't like them. And how the people of God act respond to it, tells those around, looking at them, a lot about who they are and who their God is.

Those outside the church were looking at the church and asking "What's the deal here?" Who are these people? What's the uproar about? Much like they are today. And, in that, Paul is saying, "Hold your peace, work hard, and continue to love." Show people who you are, whose you are by your example – walk properly.

Listen, that is hard enough to do when people like you, but it is God-like to live that way even when people don't.

So the question becomes, "Why on earth would I do that?" Why would I care about those around me? Why would I love the unlovable? The undeserving? Why would I sacrifice anything of mine for the indifferent? For the hostile? YOLO! Why would I waste my life in concern for others?

Listen, church, we need to understand this. Answer: Because this world is not my home. My home is with Jesus, and my HOPE is set on HIM. - Not on my ability to get to a million dollars, not on my vacation at the lake, not on my Instagram followers. God says, "You think that's the best life? Jesus Christ is coming again. He is the greater thing. And

Christians need to renew their minds about that and understand. Christ is my life, so give me Jesus.

I told you this message is going to be encouraging. And we need to KNOW what is in store for those who have put their faith in Christ. That's why Paul says, "**We do not want you to be uninformed...**" That term he uses is the word from which we get our word 'agnostic.' So he's not saying that you know it and don't believe it. He's saying there's a lot of people, even Christians, that don't really understand that Jesus Christ is coming again.

Now skeptics will say, Christians have been saying that for 2,000 years. Well, they were saying that the Messiah would come for more than 4,000 years. And then He came. Didn't He? (That was a great spot for an amen.)

He's coming. "**I don't want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who have fallen asleep.**" Frequently in the Scriptures, sleep is euphemistic for death. The idea that, just as sleep is not permanent, for the Christian, death is not permanent is one of our great traditions. Therefore, we do not mourn as those who have no hope. We bury the body *IN* hope.

**"...that you may not grieve as others who have no hope."**

There's our word, hope. Grieving is not wrong. It's good. How many people here have loved ones that are in eternity?

It's okay to grieve, but we don't grieve like others who have no hope. I had an uncle who passed away several years ago. And in that, I was given the somber privilege of being one of the first to visit with my aunt still very fresh in her grief. They were not believers. And it marked me because I got to experience firsthand the raw grief of one who had no hope.

They were not Christians, and in death those without Christ see only a hopeless end. But we as the followers of Christ see beyond death to an endless hope. Do you see the difference?"

Paul isn't saying, "Don't grieve." When people leave us, and we face the prospect of the remainder of our earthly life without them, we grieve. The word is lu-pe-o. Soul pain. And that's ok.

But be encouraged, church, Jesus Christ is coming again. And one day, the skies are going to break open. He's going to return. Every question answered. Every wrong

righted, and we will be united with the Lord in the fullness of life, forever. As surely as God declares it in his scriptures, it will come to pass. Put your hope there, right there.

Maybe you're with me in this, but there are times in my life when I get a little distracted, you know? Often I think we are caught thinking, "I hope he doesn't come at the wrong time. I hope he doesn't come before I get married. I hope he doesn't come before I have everything the way I want it. Listen, don't trade your hope for the lesser thing.

Instead, we need to take all of our eggs and put in the biblical hope basket. Knowing: I'm not in charge. I'm not in control. I don't dictate what's happening. He's in control. He's in control. Jesus Christ is Lord – Master and Savior. That's all that I need. That's *all* that I need. You can have this world. You can have it.

That's fun to say that. Come on, **say it.**

You can have it. You can have this world. Just give me Jesus. That's where hope is found. In that you lead your family. In that we love those around us.

And in believing this, we certainly pray and work for the people around us to be saved, but listen, here it is, don't put your hope at risk for anything.

When I was a campus minister at the University of Rochester, I was called into the director of the interfaith chapel's office because she was offended I shared the gospel with her. And in my conversation with her I asked her why she couldn't put her faith in Jesus. Just straight up, you like Jesus, why can't you do it. And she told me that she couldn't do it because if she believed Christianity, it would mean that her husband, who had died because of a drug overdose and wasn't a Christian, wouldn't be with her in eternity. Um...what? She was willing to trade her eternal hope, for the lesser thing. Actually, for a straight up lie. What can you possibly gain from that?

Listen, Jesus Christ is coming again. That's truth. This is the greatest hope of every Christian. Understand it. Yes, we grieve, but not like people who have hope no hope. You say, how do I maintain this hope?"

Look at verse 14: "**For since we believe...**" There it is, "we believe."

1) Understand it. 2) Believe it. It's not yours until your faith is exercised toward it.

Here's the thing about faith: I really can't say very much about you by what I see. It's what's inside you that counts, because that's where faith resides. And I can preach on hope till I'm horse, and I'm doing it. But if there's not faith in your heart, embracing it as your anchoring reality, you won't live like our Father wants us to live - with confident expectation of better things ahead. Because of Christ.

***“Since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.”***

If Jesus Christ conquered sin and death to offer salvation freely to all of those who believe, do you think that God will then abandon those that he has saved in the end? Surely not.

***“For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord...”*** God’s Word is unapologetic in its teaching. And Paul is telling the church, thus says the Lord! This word that I’m declaring to you comes straight from the mouth of God. Got it? This must be fairly important.

***“For this, we declare to you by a word from the Lord that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord...”*** I hope that's us. How many people could take a total pass on the whole death experience?

I will not be in heaven going, bummer, I didn't get to die. Everybody with me on that? Right, so, “Lord, it would be super awesome if we could be that group.”

But either way, his grace is sufficient, amen? ***“That we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”***

Now pay attention, ok? Because we don’t want to blow this. I don’t want someone from PCC flying up there ahead of all the dead people, and Jesus has to be like, “Get back in line. Get back in line.”

How awesome will that day be? That is our hope. The Lord will descend, the dead in Christ will rise, then those who are alive will join the party, to meet with the Lord and (look at what it says, ***“So we will always be with the Lord.”***) The greatest longing for every heart is the longing for the lover of their soul, their Creator. And when Christ returns, we will be with him forever.

And in that I’ll close with this. How do I get that confidence? Well, confidence is only born of experience. I would not expect that a baby Christian would have the same kind of hope that a person who's been following the Lord for a long time would have.

I have some people in my life that I know if they say they'll be somewhere. They'll be there. I have confidence in them because I've walked with them, and over time they've proven themselves time and again to be faithful and reliable.

The same is true of God.

I once read this book about God's promises called "*Always True.*" God has made all these promises to us. And when you're a baby Christian, you hear a promise and think, "Well, that's what it says. It would be awesome if that was true."

But after you've walked a while with the Lord, putting your full weight down on his promises, he proves himself to be true. And I have never been disappointed with his faithfulness to do what he says he will do.

Sometimes I wish he'd tell me what he's doing. Sometimes I wish he'd do it sooner. Sometimes I wish he'd do it different, but always afterwards, I find out that his ways are best. As we close, here's a little secret verse, a little secret verse for us this week:

Jeremiah 1:12, do you know it? In Jeremiah 1:12 the Lord himself says, "***I am watching over my word to perform it.***" Isn't that great?

Don't you think God knows what he said in his word? Don't you think he knows the promises he made? Don't you think he knows that he said his son is coming again?

And what are the chances that the God who spoke and the worlds were formed isn't going to make sure that everything he said happens? Whether I see it or don't, whether I feel it or don't, God today, today, God is watching over his word to perform it. Jesus Christ is coming again.

And if you are one of His sons and daughters, because you've turned from your sin and embraced Christ by faith, this is your future. This is your reality. And this is your hope. So be encouraged church, this world is not our home.



**CHRIST OUR HOPE**

***“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.”***

- Heb. 9:28



***Jesus Christ is coming again!***

***“Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another.”***

**- 1 Thess. 4:9**

***“Now concerning (philadelphia) you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another.”***

**- 1 Thess. 4:9**

***“Now concerning (philadelphia) you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another.”***

**- 1 Thess. 4:9**

***“Now concerning (philadelphia) you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to (agape) one another.”***

**- 1 Thess. 4:9**

***“But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, and to hold your peace, and to tend to your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.”***

**- 1 Thess. 4:10-12**

***“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who have fallen asleep that you may not grieve as others who have no hope.”***

**- 1 Thess. 4:13**

***“For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.”***

**- 1 Thess. 4:14**

***“For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not proceed those who have fallen asleep.”***

**- 1 Thess. 4:15**

***“For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air...”***

***1 Thess. 4:16-17a***

***“...SO WE WILL ALWAYS BE WITH THE LORD.  
Therefore encourage one another with these  
words.”***

***1 Thess. 4:17b-18***

*“I am watching over my word to perform it.”*

**- Jer. 1:12**