

November Teaching Theme: Amos/Advent

讲员 Speaker: Pastor William R. Horne / Pastor Linghui Peter Tian

题目 Topic: The Tension of Christian Hope / 西面的颂歌

经文 Scripture: Psalm 130 / Luke 2:25-35

Monthly Theme: This week is the first week of Advent season for the Western Church. Advent Season is the beginning of the Church Liturgical Calendar year. “Advent” simply means “coming” or “arrival” and is a season of expectation and preparation for the coming of Christ. And we as Christians celebrate three phases, so to say, of the coming of Christ: (1) Jesus birth in Bethlehem just over 2000 years ago, (2) the coming of Christ into our lives, when we place our trust in and give our allegiance to King Jesus, and (3) the second coming of Christ, when he returns to fully establish the Kingdom of God and make all things right. Traditionally in the four Sundays of Advent, the church meditates on these four ideas: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. This week we are examining Christian Hope.

十一月 **November:** 先知書: 阿摩司書 **Prophetic Book: Amos**

November 7th – 阿摩司書 1-2: 致萬國與以色列的預示 Amos 1-2: A Message to the Nations

November 14th - 阿摩司書 3-6 致以色列與其領導的預示 Amos 3-6: Injustice and Idolatry

November 21st - 阿摩司書 7-9: 阿摩司的異象上帝對以色列的省判 Amos 7-9: Judgment & Hope

November 28th – 對將臨君王的盼望 Hope of the Coming King (將臨節 Advent)

Resources:

[Sermon Video](#) (Pastor Will - English Service)

[Sermon Slides](#) (Pastor Will - English Service)

[Sermon Video](#) (Pastor Tian - Chinese Service)

[Sermon Slides](#) (Pastor Tian - Chinese Service)

[Bible Project Advent Series: Hope](#) (English)

[Bible Project Advent Series: Hope](#) 盼望 - Hope【字义研读】 (Chinese)

Primary Claim: Christian Hope is a call to live in the tension of Lament & Praise. (Pastor Will)

Discussion Questions (Pastor William R. Horne / Pastor Linghui Peter Tian):

Pastor Will:

- (1) Read Psalm 130 together. What observations do you make, and what stands out to you? How would you summarize the passage?
- (2) The Psalms express every emotion known to the human experience and then trust these emotions with God. Similarly, the book of Psalms consists of both Psalms of Lament and Psalms of Praise. What does this tell us about God and human emotion?
- (3) Christian Hope models the Psalms in being forward-looking, moving from Lament to Praise. (Similar to the progression in Psalm 130). What does it look like to live in the tension of lament and praise while keeping our eyes “forward-looking”?
- (4) The Psalmist in Psalm 130 is so confident in God’s character that even as she waits for God’s response to her despair, she can confidentially call the community also to put their

hope in God. Why can we confidently put our hope and wait on God? What keeps us from putting our hope confidently in God?

Pastor Tian:

- (1) Read Luke 2:25-35 together. What observations do you make, and what stands out to you? How would you summarize the passage?
- (2) 在当时耶路撒冷有许多人，为什么圣灵单单将祂的启示告诉西面？There were many people in Jerusalem at that time. Why did the Holy Spirit only tell Simeon his revelation?
- (3) 在生活上，西面与同时代的人有哪些不同？这对今天的我们有哪些提醒和帮助？In life, what is the difference between Simeon and his contemporaries? What reminders and help does this have for us today?
- (4) 在西面的时代持守对主耶稣基督（弥赛亚）降生的盼望，是否容易？在等候的过程之中，西面是如何做的？从中你学到了什么？Is it easy to hold on to the hope of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ (Messiah) in the age of Simeon? While waiting, how did Simeon do? What have you learned from it?

Important Notes (Pastor William R. Horne):

Notes on Hope: **The Key to Christian Hope is being rooted in God himself.** *Watch the Bible Project Video.*

Notes on Psalms: The book of Psalms consists of 150 Hebrew Poems. Many different authors wrote these poems over a long span of history. At some point after Israel's exile to Babylon, these poems were collected together and purposely arranged to communicate a message - inviting us into God's grand story through poetry and prayer. Some of these Psalms were sung by a temple choir, but it is far more than a hymnbook but more of a prayer book. The book of Psalms teaches us how to pray and acts as a mirror to our soul.

One of the features you will notice as you read through the 150 Psalms is, though some of these Psalms were written in response to specific historical events - they are most often composed in the first person, inviting the reader to become the "I" of the psalm. As a result, the Psalms express emotions for the reader they may not even know they felt. As Dr. Tremper Longman so beautifully puts it, "One looks into a physical mirror to see how one is doing on the outside; when one reads a psalm like a mirror, identifying with the psalmist, then one discovers how one is doing on the inside."

The Book of Psalms is divided into 5 Larger Sections (Book 1, Book 2, ...), all ending with "May the LORD God of Israel be Blessed Forever, Amen and Amen." Psalms 1 & 2 act as an Introduction giving us the key themes and backdrop for the Psalms. The book's background is the long-awaited hope for the Messianic King to arrive and establish the Kingdom of God. Through this Messianic King, we are empowered to live a transformed life as the Torah called us to live. Psalm 146-150 acts as a Conclusion with five Psalms of Praise. Each poem begins and ends with the well-known Hebrew word "Hallelu-Yah," a command to give the highest praise to "Yah," which is the shortened form of Yahweh. Overall, the Psalms can be divided into two large categories of Psalms: "Psalms of Lament" and "Psalms of Praise."

Notes on Q1:

You can outline Psalm 130 in this way:

A. "Out of the Depths" (V. 1-2)

- The Psalmist starts in a place of lament - "Out of the depths." At this point, we do not know the specific nature of the Psalmist lament, but he is coming to God from a place of anguish. The Hebrew word translated "depths" is most often connected with the waters or sea, which was figuratively used in Hebrew to symbolize chaos and destruction. The Psalmist is drowning, engulfed in a deathlike situation - crying out from "the depths." What is evident in these first two verses is that in these places of lament and chaos, self-help tactics are of no good. **Instead, the Psalmist recognizes God is the only one who can give answers to her pain.** Notice, the first person use of "I" in the Psalm invites us as readers to use the Psalm to express our emotions.

B. "A Forgiving God" (V. 3-4)

- Now, we find out the nature of the Psalmist lament - in this case, it is the guilt of sin. Amid the guilt and potential consequences of this sin, the Psalmist appeals to God's record of granting forgiveness throughout history. In lament, the Psalmist can take great comfort in God's character. God is a forgiving God, slow to anger, and abounding in loyal love. The Psalmist goes so far as to say, if God did remember and keep a record of our sin, none of us could survive. Thus, our very existence is a testament to God's unending grace and willingness to forgive. This also clarifies that the character of God giving humanity unmerited grace and pardon is not simply a New Testament idea, but this is who God has always been. **God's grace transcends human sinfulness.** Forgiveness, according to the Psalmist, leads to or brings about "reverence" for the Lord.

C. "Waiting on the God of Loyal Love" (V. 5-6)

- This portion of the Psalm perhaps captures the posture of Christian hope most profoundly. Though the Psalmist is currently in despair and has yet to taste the fullness of God's forgiveness - she eagerly waits and longs for God's response. Like the night watchman waits and looks for the rising of the sun, the Psalmist waits for God's answer, knowing it will come just as the sun rises every morning. **As you can see, Christian hope is not "positive thinking" or "optimism," but it is clinging to a person and a promise that will not fail.** The sun will rise in the morning. Darkness will give way to light. And God will not fail to be God - the loving, forgiving God who will one day make all things right. The night may seem endless, but morning is certain and its time is determined. Joy comes in the morning. Wait on the Lord.

D. "Hope in the God of Redemption" (V. 7-8)

- The Psalmist, now moved by her hope amid lament, leads her to address the whole community of God's people. The Psalmist hope is so assured in who God is that the psalm presupposes the awaited response from God did come - and from this place, the Psalmist can call Israel, the community of God's people, also to put their hope in the Lord. The Psalmist again roots this hope in God's very character. **"With the Lord is unfailing love"** - here is the crucial Hebrew word we have previously talked about *Hesed* - which we translate God's "loyal love," his "steadfast love," his "loving faithfulness." God's loyal love will grant us deliverance and reverse the suffering of God's people. He will forgive us from sin and empower us to live a transformed life. **"With him is full redemption."** - here, the Psalmist is taking us far beyond their situation to the

grand story of how God will bring about redemption for all of creation. “Full redemption” is a tangible and visible deliverance from the effects of evil and sin. We must not be quick to over-spiritualize this idea. Certainly, redemption involves freedom from the impact of our sins in the spiritual sense, but this also has in mind God’s liberating all of creation from the effect of evil. That there would be complete, comprehensive restoration and renewal of God’s world, including redemption from all of our sin and iniquities. This is a big vision and the ultimate hope to which the Christian life looks. This is Christian Hope.

Notes on Q2: The model of the Psalms shows us that our emotions should not be ignored and are often the correct response to a situation. For example, lament is a right response to the suffering and evil we see in the world and our lives. To live with hope does not mean you ignore pain or the bad things we experience, but Christian hope calls us to acknowledge and grieve these realities rightly. **To lament is an act of faith that God is the only one who can do something about our pain.** However, not all of our emotions stem from the proper response to a situation; sometimes, we do not see the situation clearly. Thus, like the Psalmist, we are called to trust our emotions with God and allow the Holy Spirit to grant us clarity in them. God cares for us holistically - walking with us through the ups and down, in the valleys and on the mountains. And he meets us in all our emotions - the good, bad, and the ugly. That is beautiful good news!

Notes on Q3: Christian Hope lives in this space between Lament and Praise. Lamenting evil in our world and lives while Praising God for the beauty we see and the fullness of beauty He will bring about. Christian Hope sees and moves in the same progression as the book of Psalms - from Lament to Praise. The Christian life is always forward-looking to the day King Jesus brings about full redemption for all of creation - when evil and its effects will be no more. This forward-looking life is what gives way to praise even amid great lament. The Psalter empowers the Christian to walk in the fullness of Christian Hope - the tension between lament and praise, giving way to a day when it will be endless praise.

To live within this tension means we recognize and spend appropriate time in grief and lament while simultaneously looking ahead in hope to the day God will do away, once and for all, evil, death, and suffering. We cannot fall for the temptation to live as cynics in endless lament, nor can we fall for the temptation to ignore pain, evil, and suffering, acting overly triumphal. That tension is Christian Hope. As Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.” We grieve with hope.

Notes on Q4: As the Psalmist does in Psalm 130, we ground our hope for redemption in God’s character. We have seen God’s unmerited grace and forgiveness throughout history, so we can be confident God will forgive. We have seen God’s unfailing loyal love go to generations, so we can be assured God’s love still overflows for us. We know that God has promised to bring about full redemption; thus, we can be confident that things will one day be made right. Christian hope is not “positive thinking” or “optimism,” but it is clinging to a person and a promise that will not fail. The sun will rise in the morning. Darkness will give way to light. And God will not fail to be God.