

Christmas 2024
The True Savior
Isaiah 9:6-7
Luke 2:1-7

In the Book of 1 Corinthians chapter 13, we are told that, as Christians, we are given three very special gifts from our Lord. The three gifts are “faith, hope and love”. And all three of these special gifts are so very precious and so very needful to us, especially the gift of love.

And I agree with our Lord that Love is by far the greatest of His gifts to us. But folks, for me, and probably for most all of us, the gift of “hope” is also really, really precious and so very, very needful. Without hope, I don’t know how I would cope with all of the many circumstances and emotional heartbreaks that I encounter within my days.

We each hope for so many, many things, especially those things that are most important to us, matters involving our families, our friendships, our health, our jobs, and on and on.

But unfortunately, over these many years that I have lived and especially as I have come to know and to depend upon the Lord for all those things that I hope for, I have found that as I observe myself and others, my family, my friends and especially the world of people all around me, “hope” seems often to manifest itself in ways that are probably not always what our Lord intends when He speaks about those special gifts of “faith, hope and love”.

And that’s because we so often seem not to know what we are to do with those special gifts, to whom and in whom we should place our faith, our hope and our love, in whom we should rely, and that is especially with the gift of hope, “in what”, and especially “in whom” should we place our “hope”.

So many people seem mostly to just “hope”, hope perhaps that some random occurrences might take place that will bring about some thing or some opportunity or even some person that they are hoping for. And because of that, unfortunately, they seem to place their “hopes” in the wrong things and in the wrong people.

And that has been especially evident as I have observed the people and the events of this recent political election season. The fervor, the fear, the dread, the anxiety, the anger, has been at such a fever pitch as I have never seen taking place before. And that has been true no matter which of the political sides you might have been aligned with.

And "hope" has been at the center of it all, people all over our nation and even our world, hoping that the people who would win in this election would bring them the "hoped for" opportunities and programs and freedoms that they want to take place. And those "hoped for" opportunities and programs and freedoms that they want to take place are widely varied and contentious between the supporters of those things "hoped for".

And yes, our nation has been in travail for many years, dramatic changes having taken place within our culture, changes that have mystified and confused many of the ordinary common folk, dramatic changes especially in matters of morality and virtue.

No, we as a nation have never been truly righteous. But Wow! Wow! Have we proven that we can still go much further downhill in matters of morality and utter sinfulness.

And while most of the people within our nation are probably not truly Christian, and would not call themselves "born again believers", most of our people still do want to hold to what is commonly known as Judeo Christian ethics. And many, many wanting desperately to somehow fit their political and moral beliefs and standards into those Judeo Christian principles and ethics.

But that is such a hard thing to do when the prevailing social and cultural beliefs and standards are so far astray from those principles and ethics.

And as the people of our nation entered the voting booths to make the choices they wanted to make, strong divisions had to take place.

And as we mentioned a moment ago, most of us will agree, this political season, its candidates and its platforms have truly been the most divisive and the most revealing of any other time that most of us have ever experienced. It certainly has been for me.

And again yes, some of the division has centered around the usual differences in basic political beliefs between the two major political parties. But much, much more than political beliefs, like never before, the lines of division have been focused upon strongly held beliefs and standards involving basic morality, “basic morality”, with many people furiously demanding that all moral barriers be removed, especially the barriers involving sexual identity, homosexuality, transgenderism, and the destruction of the lives of unborn babies.

And folks, I must confess to you that I have been completely baffled by many of those strongly held beliefs and standards, how so many, many people can have the abhorrent and twisted beliefs that they hold to.

Now a question before we go much further . . . what does politics and considerations about morality have to do with this matter of “Hope” and with this Christmas season and with the birth of that little Baby who was born two thousand years ago in that little town of Bethlehem there in the nation of Israel? The simplest answer is, “it actually has everything to do with that Little One.” “Everything!”

Regarding the election, I can recall so much of the talk about “hope” that was spoken during the months leading up to the day of election, words of hope about how each of the political candidates would somehow “fix” the prevailing illnesses within our culture and the world dilemmas.

While I very intentionally avoided listening to most of the political rhetoric being spouted out from the candidates and their many surrogates, being a conservative Christian believer, I was still sometimes drawn to listen to one or more of the speakers who would say things that were along my own particular manner of thinking.

But as I would listen, I would have to continually remind myself that I must not place my “hope” in any of those political voices, that none of these candidates would truly be able to do the things that they were promising to do and to “fix” all the many problems taking place within our culture. And especially, none of these candidates would be our “Savior”, the ultimate fixer of our political and cultural problems and dilemmas.

And I recall that just a few days before the election, I gave a devotional to a gathering of Christian friends about how our “hope” in this election was not to

be that we would be electing a "savior" for our nation. We would be electing a "president", a "president", and that was all. A "president"! And he or she would not be a "savior", and he or she would not even be a kind of "pastor" to us.

The real reality was that we were simply electing a political leader to lead our nation's government and that is all. But in our doing that, we would do it with the sincere hope that his or her leadership would be a leadership that would be in submission to the guidance of the "Real Savior", the "Real Leader" of our nation, the "Lord Jesus".

And folks, for each one of us, we must constantly remind ourselves that our "Real Savior", our "Real Leader", the "Lord Jesus" is the One that we must turn our hearts too, the One, the "only One" in which we must place our "hope", our "trust", our "faith" and our "love".

And praise be to God, He has given us these days of our Christmas season to be a yearly reminder of the "One", the only One" in whom we must place our "hope".

I especially love the way God words that truth to us in the Book of Isaiah chapter 9. There, God clearly tells us in whom we are to place our hope and trust as the Leader of our government. Listen to those words,

⁶ For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:

(and listen) And the government (our government) (the government of this nation and every nation on the earth) shall be upon his shoulder:

And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, From henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

Oh dear Christian, these words are telling us about the Lord Jesus, yes, as a Child to be born, but also a Child who would grow to be a leader like no other leader that would ever be.

And no, this Leader would not at all be like the foolish sounding men and women that we have been listening to over the past several months, each spouting out words that they think we want to hear. No, not at all. Those

leaders were all filled with rhetoric, foolish promises about bringing us a better nation and a better world.

But this Leader that is spoken about here in these words of scripture is different, so very different. This leader would never make promises He could not keep. No, this Leader would be able to simply speak and by His voice, make all the things that He promised to come into being.

He did that once before when He created the world and everything in it. He simply spoke and it came into being and in a perfect condition.

And oh dear Christian, even better, and so much better, this Leader would not just live somewhere in some big capitol city and rule and guide us from afar. No, this Leader would not only rule our government, He would also be intimate and personal to each one of us.

Our Lord Jesus would be our intimate and personal counselor, our Mighty God, our Everlasting Father and our Prince of Peace, bringing us a peace of mind and heart that this world and the provisions of this world cannot give.

And His promise is that His government and His peace over us will increase and increase and never end. It will just keep getting better and better. And not only for this lifetime, but forever and ever. Verse 7,

⁷ Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, From henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:7)

And may I interpose a question to each of us about all of these promises that our Lord has made to us. The question is "Do you believe this?" "Do you truly believe this?"

The last words of this passage here in Isaiah chapter 9 make a simple but very profound promise to us. Here, God said to us,

⁷ The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:7)

Folks, this is God making this promise to us. Not some politician. Not some foolish political surrogate, some "talking head" ranting on some television program. No, this is our loving God who is making these promises to us. Our All Powerful

Mighty God! And as these words here in the Book of Isaiah promise us, “The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

And when will our Lord bring all of this into being? Unfortunately, He will not be the One who will occupy the Whitehouse beginning January 20th of next year. His visible rule will come later, especially within the days of the Millennial Kingdom.

But please do believe and trust that our Lord will surely begin even now, in these present days. We must not place a misguided “hope” in those newly elected politicians, hoping that they will randomly pass some laws and make some Executive Orders that will put things aright in our country.

No! Our “hope” is to be in Christ our Lord and the things that He will do as He reaches into the minds and into the hearts of those newly elected political leaders, the President, the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives, to guide and to direct their thoughts and their decisions and to cause them to bring about all the many blessings that He intends for us to receive.

Can you capture the vision for what I just said? While the Lord Jesus will not be inaugurated as President on January 20th, we can fully trust that He will intimately involve Himself within the minds and hearts of these new leaders and He will direct their thoughts and decisions and cause them to bring about the blessings that He wants us to have.

As these words of Isaiah chapter 9 tell us, the government, our government is on His shoulders . . . His shoulders . . . to do with as He sees fit. And so, yes, our Lord really will reach into the minds and hearts of those men and women and cause them to do things that they would not otherwise do, bringing about a “plan” that our Lord has already put into place.

May I say this again! Our “hope” must be in Christ and Christ alone, the One, the only One through whom and to whom and for whom all things must take place. Our “hope” must be in the Lord Jesus.

Now, lest I spend too much of our study time talking about the events of our modern political circus, may we turn and spend the next few minutes talking about the actual events of the very best Christmas that we have ever known,

that first Christmas when the "True Leader", the "Very Best Leader" was born into our world.

And yes, I know that you've heard these words so many, many times, but please listen again. These are such sweet and precious words. These words are about that Child that the Prophet Isaiah spoke about when he said,

⁶ For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:

And the government (our government) (the government of this nation and every nation on the earth) shall be upon his shoulder:

And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)

Listen to these words that tell us about the birth of this blessed Child that Isaiah told us about, these words given to us in Luke chapter 1, beginning in verse 26,

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary.

²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her,

"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

³⁵ And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸ And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:26-38)

And then also in Luke chapter 2 we read about the journey that Mary and her betrothed husband Joseph took as they Journeyed back to his hometown of Bethlehem where the Lord Jesus was to be born. Listen to those precious words!

¹ In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7)

Each year as we preachers and teachers of God's word read and rejoice in these precious words about the birth of the Lord Jesus, we feel obligated to remind those who will listen that this event, this season of the year is not just about family gatherings and gift-giving. That yes, it is that, and that is so very important and good.

But in amongst all of our excitement and celebration and gift giving and receiving, we need always to remember that these days, and this event that we are celebrating is first about the birth of our Savior and our Lord, Jesus, the Christ. The "Real Leader" who would, who has, and who will continue to lead our "government", and "of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end."

A question that should, and probably will, come to each of our minds as we ponder all that has taken place over the recent weeks, especially those things involving the political system. What do we do with the vast difference that we will surely see taking place between what our Lord promises us here in these words we've been studying and the actual events themselves.

As we mentioned a moment ago, unfortunately, we will not see our Lord ascending to the position of leadership in our Whitehouse come January 20th. We will instead see a "man", a mere "man" assuming that position of leadership. And no, he will not be able to "fix" all of the problems that are taking place in our nation and in our world.

While most of us tried to make the best choices we could make during this election process, we really must understand and accept that no earthly leader

that we would ever elect will ever be a “savior” to us. There is only one “Real Leader”, only “One Savior”.

With all of this being true, what must you and I now do with the choices that we have made. We must daily, and often many times during each day, pray for those leaders that we have elected, the President, the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives, asking God's Holy Spirit to enter into the hearts, the souls and the minds of each one of them, guiding and directing their thoughts and their behaviors to do the righteous and Godly things that God Himself would do to bring about these promises that are given to us here in these words of Isaiah where he said,

6. . . And the government (our government) (the government of this nation) shall be upon his shoulder: (the shoulder of the Lord Jesus) And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)

One final thought . . . a caution . . . we may not always like the things that our new leaders might do. But if we are going to truly believe, and trust, that the Lord Jesus is influencing those leader's minds to do the things they do, then even when we might not like the decisions they make, our Lord Jesus is still God and is Lord over all that takes place. And because of that, we need to trust, trust, trust . . . trust the Lord Jesus that He is governing us rightly. Those words about the Lord Jesus again,

6. . . And the government (our government) (the government of this nation) shall be upon his shoulder: And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)

Pray with me.