

Christmas... HOPE

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Preacher: Tobin Miller

[0 : 00] Merry Christmas. Wow, that's much better than how's it going. Everybody usually, oh, oh, oh. Merry Christmas, better. Hey, so I figure I have about eight minutes before the kids attack me for the candy canes, okay?

And so I just wanted to share with you a little bit about what we've been praying about, what we think the meaning of Christmas is about as we look at it and approach it this Christmas season. If you are the first time at Watermark, family, we're excited that you're here. My name is Tobin. I'm one of the teaching pastors here. What you see is what you get, chaos, raw, controlled, family together, and it's like that every Sunday.

So if you don't have a church, please come join us. We need more chaos. You know, I love Christmas. There's something about Christmas in this season.

It's an amazing adjective, isn't it, Christmas? Because whenever you put Christmas in front of something, it just makes it better. Or Christmas music, Christmas decorations, Christmas smells, seeing the kids' faces are amazing to me.

[1 : 07] Christmas food, just putting food in front of Christmas probably adds 10 pounds to Christmas food that we're going to eat this year. So we're going to have a scale next week, and we're going to weigh everybody to see how we've scaled, how much food we've gained and weight we've gained in that time.

But, you know, the amazing thing as I think about this season is that all over the world, in thousands of languages, in amazing different countries, people are coming together, and they're worshipping the birth of a baby boy born in Bethlehem.

A baby boy who would one day bring hope to all mankind. The story my kiddos just read there is the story of the first Christmas.

And if you listen to that story, or if you read it again in your bulletin, what you're going to see is that there's this incredible contrast between fear and hope. Fear and hope.

The contrast we see in the shepherds' lives, and when the shepherds see the angels, or whenever anybody meets God, or hears God, or is approached by God throughout all of Scripture, what you see is this incredible amount of fear in them.

[2 : 19] But then the words of the angels bring this comfort of hope. Now, I've been a pastor for almost 30 years now. And one of my jobs as a pastor is to counsel people like you.

And I have the incredible privilege of coming into people's lives and to see what kind of things they struggle with. And what I realize is that all of us struggle with fear. Every one of us struggle with fear.

I mean, the Bible says over 350 times, do not fear. And so when I read that in Scripture, what I realize is that we as humans must have something within our DNA that makes us fear.

I mean, we fear failure. We fear rejection. We fear rejection by the people we love and by those people that we value. We fear the future.

We fear being alone. We fear insignificance. And what I've seen is a pastor that almost all of us fear, probably every one of us fears death.

[3 : 21] And the Bible says that this struggle with fear that we all have began because of a broken relationship. The other passage in your bulletin is the passage of Genesis. And it talks about this beginning time.

It talks about our parents. And at this moment when our parents decide to live life on their own, we see that this relationship with God is broken and fear comes into us.

And fear didn't just come into Adam and Eve, but it came into all of their children. And so the Bible would say right now, you and I, we have fear in our DNA. And the scripture passage in the bulletin

shows us immediately that Adam and Eve knew something was wrong.

The minute they decided to go away from God, they knew something was wrong. They knew that the relationship was broken. And the response was to hide, to cover their fears, to hide themselves, to make it look like they are not in trouble.

And we see in the passage that when God comes to talk to them in the garden, their only response to a holy, loving God is to hide, to hide themselves from him.

[4 : 28] Because they fear. Today, psychiatrists, psychologists, sociologists will tell you that we live in an age of fear. In no other time perhaps in history is fear driven people?

Is it controlled people? Has it advertised people? I was reading an amazing article yesterday in the financial magazine. And it said in America there's actually what they call a Smith and Wesson index.

Now Smith and Wesson is a gun company in America. Now that's one of the reasons Americans are crazy. We have guns. And I know everybody else looks at us like, what are you doing? But what economists do is they measure the income of this company.

And they can determine how well a society, American society, is doing by the sales of Smith and Wesson guns. And the economists said that the sales are driven by fear and worry.

And whenever people feel more fearful and more worried, they buy things to protect themselves. They buy things that they need. It's one of the greatest ploys for advertising, right?

[5 : 32] You buy things because you're afraid you're not going to get it. You're not going to have it and somebody else is going to have it. And one of the things I've realized after 30 years and 51 years of living my life is that every one of us in here are great experts at hiding our fears.

Every one of us in here do things to cover our fears so that the people around us don't see that we're fearful. Sometimes we use our jobs. Sometimes we use our jobs to cover our fears.

Sometimes we use our gifting. Sometimes we use our talents. Sometimes we use our intellect.

Sometimes we use and hide behind our culture and our families. Some of us hide behind relationships. Some of us hide behind our education.

Some of us hide behind our health. Some of us hide behind our wealth. Some of us hide behind our good looks. Some of us hide behind our good works. but what I've seen through 30 years of living

with people is that all of us have different techniques to hide our fear what kind of techniques do you use what is it in your life that you use to hide your fear because there's a sense that if we don't hide

it people are going to see that we're not together people are going to see that we're not perfect

people are going to see that we're not who we want them to be and fear enters into our life recently I was talking to a friend they're not in this church I asked them permission to share this before I

shared it and we're talking about these things in our life and I always consider this person a mover and shaker in Hong Kong and we're talking about life and fears and values and goals and they said

this to me they said you know I'm an imposter I'm an imposter I'm a fake they said that Hong Kong was all about covering yourself looking nice outwardly it didn't matter what was going on inwardly

as long as you look nicely outwardly and this person said that as I did that I realized that I'm an imposter they said they realized that one day their greatest fear was that everything would unravel

they realized that one day everything is going to unravel and people are going to see them just as they are they feared their work and they realized that in their work they're not becoming as sharp

and they're not on the cutting edge and they're not bringing in as much money as they used to and they feared that one day people were going to see that they feared their relationships and they

realized they said to me that you know I'm spending Tobin

I'm spending more and more time talking to more and more people but these relationships mean nothing they're superficial and they don't help me and these people don't know me at all they said I

feared my family because they realized that their family portrays this image of what everybody in Hong Kong expects the family to look like and this person said to me that one day soon they

realized that all of this is going to unravel and people are going to look at them and they're going to realize that their life is not all together and their family is not all together and lastly they shared to

me they feared their body and their health because they had a couple tests that came back and they weren't very positive and they realized that no matter how hard they tried that they weren't

being able to keep their health up that age and time were causing things to deteriorate and they feared that people would see them not as they want to be seen but as they really are did you hear

what she said to me what they said to me they said their greatest fear is that people would see them not as they are not as they want to be seen but as they are after this time with her

[9 : 12] I thanked her and I sat there and I realized you know if we're honest we all struggle with these fears we all put things in our life to cover up our fears to make people think that we're perfect we have our act together and we all if we're honest and we've lived long enough we realize that no matter what we use our money our health our intellect our relationships our family whatever we use that ultimately these things are going to fail us and we're going to be surrounded by fear again C.S. Lewis the British author and philosopher said it this way he said the only way that you and I can experience ultimate true hope the only way that you and I can experience a hope without the possibility of fear without the possibility of failure is to place our hope in something that is infinite to place our hope in something that is infinite something that is unchanging something that is true so in verse 10 the angels come in and they say this amazing good news they say

God has sent us a savior in the original language it means rescuer God has sent us a rescuer and this person is going to come in and they're going to cover our fears and they're going to bring true hope this savior has come in and he's going to fix our relationship with God the one that was broken at the very beginning the one that has caused fear to enter into our DNA and that is what Christmas is all about Christmas is about God sending his son to save you Christmas is about God sending his son to save you from your fears from your doubts from your guilt and from your shame to forgive you your sins this is the season when I look at things that I am reminded that hope doesn't come from within me but hope comes from a God who draws near to us it's the difference in Christianity than every other religion in the world every other philosophy every other idea of thought every other thought every other philosophy every other religion is going to say if you want to get to God you need to do this you need to do this you need to do this you need to do this you need to be a good person and if you do all these things maybe God will say good you can come to me but Christianity says that's impossible because we're finite and God is infinite and the only way a finite broken person can come to a holy infinite God is if that God comes down and enters into our world and that is the meaning of Christmas

Christmas is about God saying I'm for you I love you I've come to earth to find you I've come to take away your fears I've come to give you hope I've come to give you a relationship with me Christmas reminds us when we look at this tree when we look at the nativity thing whenever we walk through this world and we see these decorations Christmas reminds us that it's about God coming to you to save you to bring you back to him it's not about you going to God but it's about God pursuing you and Christmas reminds me that ultimate hope ultimate reality is found in a little manger that one day is going to become a cross and at that cross God is going to make a way for you and I to come back to him so the passage we read says behold

I bring you good news of great joy which is for all the people behold I bring you great news of good joy which is for Tobin Sam Christina Annie Ed behold I bring you good news of great joy for today in the city of David has been born a rescuer has born a savior Jesus Christ my prayer for each one of us this Christmas day is that we wouldn't forget the words of the angels my prayers as we go out today and we're going to be hit by a million different things presents food relationships dinners that wherever we go wherever we see something that represents Christmas that we'd realize that this is a message of ultimate hope my hope is as you leave here you won't keep trying to build hope and forgiveness in yourself and in the stuff that you give get and give my hope is that as you leave here you'd realize that the only way that you can find hope is through a little baby named Jesus Christ who's born in a savior does that make sense that's the message of Christmas that's why we're here the message that Jeremy sang it talks about two births the first stanza he sung before the kids read the bible verse talks about a baby being born in Jerusalem in Bethlehem the second stanza talks about a baby being born in our heart our prayer is that you would understand both of these and realize that we've come to celebrate a baby being born in Bethlehem to bring us take away our fear and bring us hope but that you'd also understand that it doesn't stop in a manger but it stops with us inviting Christ into our life and receiving that lasting hope let's pray father father we thank you for this day we thank you for the message of the angels we thank you for the message of Christmas we thank you for the message of your son who came to remove our fears to bring us true and ultimate and lasting hope lord I know that there are some people in here who hear for the first time or they come once a year and they're going to leave here and chances are that many of them many of us will try to build hope cover our fear build significance by the attaining of things and I pray in these few moments that you would allow us to be honest that we'd realize that no matter what we gather around us no matter what kind of titles or wealth or money that it won't save our souls it won't bring

us ultimate hope it will never take away the fear of death but the only thing that can do that is your son who came and died to make our relationship right with you
I pray lord that they would accept that gift this Christmas season that they would have that second birth of that child in their heart and they would enter into this journey that we talk about called the Christian life and lord I pray for the rest of us who have been Christians and sometimes we just forget sometimes we've been busy we're on a journey and we become busy with life and kids and everything else and we walk by a Christmas tree or we walk by a manger and we think commercialism but the message of the tree the message of the manger the message of the baby is that we were lost and you sent your son to find us I pray that we would look at Christmas different as we understand these truths we love you we pray these things in your son Jesus name you