

A New Hope

Scripture: Isaiah 43: 14-21

Date: November 29, 2020

LESS HOPE

Star Wars is a movie that to some is just one giant commercial but the Star Wars story IS compelling. Released in the late 1970's and through the 1980's when culture was in fear of nuclear war and economic failures it resonated through its story of an evil empire reigning over much of the galaxy and little hope that anyone can reject much less resist the Empire.

The story itself shows a time of darkness, a time of despair and a time of hopelessness yet the narrative of Star Wars is filled with lines of hope. The first movie – A New Hope – speaks of how *Obi Wan – your my only hope*. The second to last movie – The Last Jedi – speaks of how *Hope is like the sun - if you only believe it when you see it you'll never make it through the night*.

The saga throughout the history of the bible has similar patterns where Israel is held in Egypt as slaves - crying out to God to rescue them. Israel is captured and taken to Babylon as slaves - crying out to God to rescue them. Yet over the coming decades – there was less and less hope that God would rescue them

Hopelessness today is running rampant as well. Covid 19 is a pandemic with only a little understanding of its beginnings, its treatment or its cure. We've had to readjust our living that has challenged our understanding of normal with social distancing, sanitizing and face masks everywhere.

It has diminished our connections with others and even ourselves as people are finding less and less purpose to their lives as jobs transition and as relationships come and go and options to move forward become less opportunities than requirements. We ask ourselves questions like: What am I to do with my life? Who am I in this life?

What was true for us in our jobs and relationships has become less certain - but spiritually as well. People who have grown up in the church - raised in the bible and worship and prayer – now struggle if it's really true because of all uncertainty in the world in them and around them.

As a result we live in a world that is increasingly filled with discouragement & despair, with doubt & denial. A world that is filled with less and less hope that life will endure now and get better for tomorrow.

HELP – FROM CHRIST

Despite all the quotes on hope from Princess Leia and despite the light sabres of Luke Skywalker in all nine – yes nine – movies. Hope – as Luke Skywalker – points out in the last Jedi - is not found in the order of the Jedi Knight. There is no earthly power sufficient to give adequate hope in all the darkness in which we live.

As we journey through Advent we are reminded that it is a journey to Christmas. A journey to the Christ – a place where hope is born. In Matthew 11 the disciples of John the Baptist come to Jesus and as their leader – John – is now imprisoned and no longer leading them. They come to Jesus and ask – Are YOU the ONE? Or should they look for another. They are hungry for hope – for help – and ask the only One to whom we can seek and find – hope.

JESUS - ROLE

Jesus ultimately for us – and them – is the answer of hope in their discouragement & despair. In the doubt & denial, in the chaos and confusion, in this land of less and less hope – God speaks as one who is familiar with our lives and our circumstances.

In Isaiah 43 God reminds Israel – and us – that He is THE Holy One – vs. 14, THE Lord – vs. 15 and the Creator of Israel (the people I formed vs. 20).

JESUS - RELATIONAL

But God speaks as one who is familiar with the people themselves as He reminds Israel of His covenant – His relationship - with them. You are MY people – (vs. 21), You are MY chosen vs. 20-21. I am Your King - I am Your Holy One - I am Your King, Your Redeemer. (vs. 14-15)

JESUS – REDEMPTION

And the God who speaks truth – also acts truth. A God who created from His image – an image that was good. A God who – time and time again – reached out with forgiveness, redemption and restoration. He is the redeemer – the reconciler – the restorer (vs. 14)

JESUS - REWARD

That redemption now points Israel – and us – forward. To forget the WAY things were accomplished by God so that they could remember the ONE who accomplished them. God declares that He is doing a new thing – not a new thing in terms of redemption – but a new hope that a full rescue / a redemption is permanent once for all. To accomplish this God resets the vision of Israel by not looking to the past – temporary – temporal methods but to fix eyes on Jesus – the author and the perfecter of faith

HOPEFULL

This new thing is that Christ will reside within us guides us and directs us into a greater and greater hope. Isaiah 43 speaks of the hope found in the redemption of God. There will be roads in the wasteland giving direction in life (vs. 19). There will be streams in the desert filling the basic needs of life – vs. 19. There will be animals proclaiming His name – vs. 21

This hope might not happen in our expectations or in our assumptions. But it does not disappoint as Romans 5: 3-5 assures us. In fact, it blesses us as Romans 15: 13 confirms to us. It guides us through life as Psalm 33: 18-22, Psalm 130 5-7, Isaiah 40: 31, Lamentations 3: 21-23 all attest to.

In this broken and sin filled world – there will always be darkness. But we can take hope in the truth that God's light still shines giving us a glimpse of His coming - in this world and in the world yet to come

A New Hope is more than a 40-year-old movie (or a church plant here in Calgary years ago). It is a timeless truth coming at Christmas and yet also here and now in Advent. A hope that is present for us each and every day – by God's grace and for God's glory.

AMEN