

Sunday Gathering Liturgy

From Fear—Into Hope,
Matthew 2:13-23 - Bradley
Bell

December 26, 2021

Advent: From Darkness—Into
Light

Length in mins

0:00 Call to Worship - Psalm 130:1-2, 5, 7

As you can see this morning, our church has a tradition of lighting Advent candles as a way of tangibly picturing the light of Jesus Christ coming into the darkness of our world. We have been lighting them a bit differently this year in order to flow with our sermon series titled “From Darkness—Into Light”. The candle that is lit today actually represents the theme of hope, because the subject of today’s sermon is “From Fear—Into Hope”.

But you may be here this morning, and let’s be honest, the hope ain’t flowing. After the past two years, and with the rise of a new Covid variant, perhaps familiar old fears and anxieties are starting to weigh down your shoulders again. Maybe this Christmas it seems like everyone else is merry and bright, except you. You know what—we’re glad you’re here, and on behalf of Christ we invite you to cast all your anxieties on him who cares for you.

So let’s begin with the words of hope from the psalmist:

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord!
O Lord, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my pleas for mercy!

Take a moment and voice your fears to the Lord. What are you carrying that he is inviting you to lay down?

Now give voice to this with me:

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;

O Israel, hope in the Lord!
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with him is plentiful redemption. Psalm 130:1-2, 5, 7

0:00 *Christ Our Hope In Life And Death* [Default Arrangement in F]

0:00 Confession - John 14:27; 2 Timothy 1:7

When we say “From Fear—Into Hope,” what does that mean? What does that look like? How does it apply to us? If we are to move from darkness into light, then we need to confess the power that our fears have over us, in order to find hope in a strong and kind Savior. One of our members is now going to share what that has looked like for her:

We moved to Louisville in June 2017 with no jobs and no home of our own. It was easy to be swayed into the fear of unknown as newlyweds in a new city. Look forward 2 months to August 2017 and when my health began deteriorating I blamed stress and the move. I was admitted to the ICU and was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes. A disease that requires a life time of medication and insulin shots. Again, fear set in as I learned a completely new way of life. This time Deep fear set in again during 2020 as someone now associated with the “high risk” category. In late 2020 I found out I was pregnant with our first child and couldn’t have been more excited. However, being pregnant, on top of high risk, in the COVID era came with a lot of fear. Feb 2021 we lost our baby and again deep fear set in along with our grief. I felt the Lord closer in the coming weeks than I have in my entire life. He consistently asked me if I trusted him and I would find myself repeating “I trust you” out loud in response. Moving forward to May 2021 I found out I was expecting our second child. As you may have guessed fear set in. COVID, pregnancy after loss, and being high risk pregnancy consumed me in the early weeks. Looking ahead at being a new parent in 2022 I admit I am quite fearful. You may be thinking why is she going into these details? I want to share that we do not have to sit in this fear. We were just reminded of the hope Christ brings as we celebrate the advent season. We can list out every bad thing we’ve been through without hope. But as I’ve listed these events for you I can think of every way the Lord has used them. I’ll spare you those extra details today. I’ve always struggled with immediately running to fear and what I can do to fix it. Despite this I am thankful the Lord comforts me and consoles me as the good father He is. 2 Timothy 1:7 says “For God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power, love, and sound mind.” God doesn’t bring confusion, fear, or anxiety. But in those moments he invites us to trust him and look back at how he has carried us in the past. The cool thing is when we can’t bring ourselves to remember he places people in our lives to help us. I’m thankful to not stay in those moments and be reminded the Lord has set us free from our fear.

Now church, hear this testimony affirmed by the words of Jesus himself:

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. John 14:27

Let’s respond by confessing this truth together from 2 Timothy 1:7:

For God has not given us a spirit of fear
but of power, love, and sound mind. 2 Timothy 1:7

Amen.

0:00 *Baby Son* [Default Arrangement in B]

0:00 *O Little Town of Bethlehem* [Norton Hall Arrangement in E]

0:00 Sermon - Matthew 2:13-23

0:00 Communion - 1 Corinthians 11:23-28

0:00 *Behold the Christ (Sojourn)* [Default in D]

3:00 *Now Why This Fear* [Default Arrangement in A: In A]

**Length
in mins**

0:00 Announcements & Benediction - Matthew 24:35

You may be seated. Thank you for joining us in today's gathering! We hope that you have experienced the welcome of Jesus.

1) Giving & Visitors

This year we have a goal of raising \$5,000 for global missions, which will be divided among all our distributed members.

Another goal is to sell out our MCT prayer calendars. They are \$10 each. This is great opportunity to help us fulfill our commitment to pray for the members we have distributed among the nations.

2) MCT Anniversary Celebration - Speaking of MCT, on January 9th we will be having a Sending Sunday to celebrate 10 years of Missionary Care Team! This will include a Sunday evening all-FG event from 4-6 PM that will involve snacks, kids activities, and commemoration of all our distributed members and their nations of service over the years.

We begin each gathering with a call to worship and we end with a benediction which simply is a reminder that we are blessed to be a blessing. I invite you to hold out your hands as a posture of receiving this blessing:

Church, heaven and earth will pass away, but God's word stands. Though the world is crumbling away, may you stand firm in the midst of it, holding out the hope that has calmed your fears, removed your hostility, and sealed your victory forever. (based on Matthew 24:35)

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Let's say this together: We are sent.

3:00