

Sermon Title: **“Hope - the Kingdom of God is Near”**

Bible: **Jeremiah 33:14-16 & Luke 21-25-36**

When: on 1st Sunday of Advent, November 28th, 2021

Where: about 30 people (plus YouTube live streaming viewers) at Gilroy UMC

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, you became a human being to be with us. We are celebrating your incarnation. We are also waiting for your coming. Let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.

1. Advent

The word “advent” derives from the Latin “adventus,” meaning “coming.” Who is coming? Jesus! Our Baby Jesus was coming. We are celebrating the incarnation of Jesus. Our God became a human being to live with us on earth. God knows our joys, our angers, our tears, and our laughs, because our Jesus was a human being, just like us. We are also waiting for another coming. As we proclaim the mystery of our faith at Communion, Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again. Our Lord, Jesus Christ will come again. This gives us hope, because we need Jesus!

2. The Kingdom of God is Near

The kingdom of God is near. Do you agree that the kingdom of God is near? When Jeremiah said, “The Lord is our righteousness,” it could be understood as “The Lord is our justice.”

When we see our world, can we find the Justice?

3. Already, and Not Completed Yet!

I interpret “The Kingdom of God is Near” as “The Kingdom of God is already here on earth, and not completed yet.” Let me talk about our Methodist history in regard to slavery. Even though our founder, John Wesley, was against slavery, it took a long time to abolish formal segregation in the United Methodist Church. I learned that in 1758, John Wesley baptized two black slaves, and one of the two was a woman. This was in 1758. More than 200 years later, in 1968, when the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church united to form the United Methodist Church, formal segregation ended. Before this, our African-American Methodists were segregated into a separate Central Jurisdiction. We could not worship together with our brothers and sisters who were African-Americans in the same place. Now we can freely and joyfully worship together with all of our African-American sisters and brothers in Christ. From 1758 to 1968, there were a lot of stories of suffering, pain, frustration--and some glimmers of light, and a hope.

As we recognized slavery as a sin, in 2021 we also recognize racism as a sin. United Methodists stand against racism. I do not know how long it will take. I do not know how much we have suffered together. But we, United Methodists, stand against racism, because

we have a hope. Our Lord is justice! The Kingdom of God is already here in us. And Our Lord, Jesus Christ will come again!!

4. To Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World

How much do we hope for God's Kingdom to come? Soon, and very soon, we are going to see the King! Soon, and very soon, right? But, I hope for us to remember Jesus' way on earth. We might think that Jesus made God's kingdom right away through the miracle of his almighty power. But very interestingly, or against what we might have expected, what Jesus did was to make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. For 3 years, Jesus made 12 disciples. Are these the only twelve? Is this a great twelve? During the whole of history, with the power of the Holy Spirit, our Lord is making disciples. Throughout history, God's justice and grace are upon us. We became disciples of Jesus Christ. We are disciples of Jesus Christ. Can you feel God's presence in us? The Kingdom of God is already in us. Can you feel God's justice and grace in us? Then, it is time for the transformation of the world. God's kingdom is not only for us, but also for this world. As we need God's justice and grace, this world also needs God's justice and grace. When we feel God's justice and grace, just let it overflow through us.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, thank you so much for the season of Advent. Thank you so much for calling us your people and your disciples. Please be with us and use us for your justice and your grace upon our community and the world. In Jesus' name. Amen.