

Sermon Title: **“HOPE: Be Ready!”**

Bible: **Isaiah 2:1-5 & Matthew 24:36-44**

When: on the 1st Sunday of Advent, November 27th, 2022

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

Opening Prayer

O Lord, we are waiting. We are waiting for your coming. Please guide us to be ready! 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

Today is the first Sunday of Advent! It is the very beginning of Advent. Then what is Advent? The word “Advent” means “coming” in Latin. Who was coming? The baby Jesus was coming. God wanted to be with us on the earth. God became a human being just like us. This is called incarnation. We celebrate Jesus Christ’s incarnation! Actually, there is another coming. Who is coming? Our resurrected Jesus Christ will come again. In our communion liturgy, we proclaim the mystery of faith; “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.” So, Advent is a season of not only celebrating our Baby Jesus, but also expecting the second coming of Jesus Christ. We are waiting and hoping for the coming of Jesus Christ.

Traditionally, we light the advent candles. The candles also have meanings. Hope, peace, and love in the purple candles; joy in the pink candle, and the white Christ candle in the center. Where our Lord is, there is hope, peace, joy, and love.

2. The coming of the Son of Man

What does it look like the coming of the Son of Man? As we celebrate the coming of the Baby Jesus, it might not be like what we expect. When God became a human just like us, Jesus Christ was at the lowest place. The Baby Jesus was born neither in a palace nor in a temple. The Baby Jesus was not born in a house, either. The Baby Jesus was born in a stable, in the lowest and the last place we would expect. We might expect that Jesus would be born surrounded by the power of the world. Many people misunderstood the coming of the Son of Man, because Jesus' way is different from our ways.

In today's scripture reading of Isaiah, in the days of the Lord, there is peace among all the nations. There are no more swords, no more spears, no more war. However, we hear the heartbreaking news of gun violence and war here and there almost every day. Is there hope? Can we imagine or expect this peace in the book of Isaiah chapter 2? It is very difficult to see any hope! Where is the hope?

3. Who is Jesus Christ?

Ironically, we can see the hope in our baby Jesus Christ. Jesus is God, but Jesus came to us as a human being, a fragile and vulnerable one. Maybe God is all powerful, but Jesus was weak and vulnerable. Maybe God has all knowledge and all wisdom, but Jesus decided not to know everything. Even Jesus does not know what day the Lord is coming. It is all because of us. Jesus wanted to be with us, who are vulnerable, fragile, and weak. Jesus came to us to be with us, in our daily lives, in our joys, and in our sadness, and in our suffering. Even though

Jesus is God, Jesus denied Godself for us. Almighty and everlasting God made God's own time and room for us through Jesus Christ. As God is with us, we can see a hope in this darkness. We can take one more step for peace. We can have joy, even in our suffering. We can love each other as who we are. That's because our Lord, Jesus Christ, is with us!

4. Be Ready!

During this season of Advent, I hope for us to be ready for Jesus' way. As God made a time and a room for us through Jesus Christ, we can make a time and a room for others during this season. Many of our church members do this in our normal lives. Here are some examples.

With our prayer requests in the bulletin, we can have a time to pray for others. With our hearts, read the prayer requests in your mind or aloud. You might want to give a call, send a card, or a text or an email.

Our church plans to have Poinsettia dedications this year. We all have our loved ones on the earth and in heaven. With our love and hope, it is a time to honor and remember our loved ones. On behalf of the church, as a pastor, I plan to deliver some poinsettias to our home-bound church members.

Our church also plans to give Christmas gifts to low-income families. Gilroy School District Union staff helps us to find some families. Our Christmas gift project team will contact the families and make a gift list. When the gift list is ready, it will be on the Christmas tree in the fellowship hall.

Last Sunday, we had David Cox, Executive Director of St. Joseph's Family Center, as our

guest speaker. St. Joseph's Family Center is a local non-profit organization for the homeless and low-income families. One hundred percent of our Christmas Eve offering will be donated to St. Joseph's Family Center. The Christmas offering envelopes will be provided, and we will make our Gilroy community a place of love and care together!

We do not know when our resurrected Jesus will come again. Even Jesus does not know when. But what we know is that we can be ready. Why does God want us to be ready? I believe that God could save the world regardless of our help. But God decided to work together with us, because God needs our hands and feet. As we need God, God needs us. God is our hope. To God, we are the hope for this world! So, let us be ready! God wants to use us! God is the hope, and we are the hope!

Closing Prayer

O Lord, God made a time and a room for us through Jesus Christ. Actually, God made Godself for us through Jesus Christ. That way, God was with us, God is with us, and God will be with us. As God is with us, please help us to be for others and with others during this Advent. This way, we will be ready for your coming. Thank you so much for being with us!

In Jesus' name, Amen.