

Introduction:

- History of “Hallmark’. The Hallmark is a distinguishing mark that establishes quality and excellence of a thing. Hallmarks are a guarantee of certain purity or fineness of the metal as determined by formal metal (assay) testing. Jesus bore the Hallmark of heaven. So each Sunday until Christmas Eve will be looking at the Hallmark of Christ. Last week we saw the hallmark: Jesus Son of God!
- Today we will look at Christ the Hallmark of Christmas, The Authenticity of Hope! Jesus is HOPE made manifest. Jesus came to a world without hope and His entrance into it lit up lives everywhere!
- Hope is a life force! Without hope people begin to die inside. Our greatest hope comes from knowing Jesus, the Word. John 6:63 *“My words are spirit and they are life.”*
- Christmas is a season that instills hope in God’s people because we see God in action. We hear God declaring and demonstrating His love for all of us!
- My texts for today are:
 - *“All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God is with us’).”* (Isaiah 7:14, NLT) ; Is 9:1-7 ; Is 11:1-5
 - These great scriptures that we find in Isaiah, were given at one of Israel’s darkest time. Ahaz had left the word of God. Burnt his first son in the fire to the God of Molech. He make treaties with wicked nations and encourages the people to sin. So these scriptures are comfort to Judah. They are scriptures that we find at the birth of Christ. Just as Isaiah was giving them to Israel to create hope for a nation, at the birth of Christ they come again, in the fullness of time creating hope for us all. (Gal.4)

I. When Hope Fades**A. What causes hope to fade?**

1. When we lose our purpose. When the ‘why’ we are alive no longer burns in the heart. When the dream appears to be dead we lose hope. For some, these unmet expectations are like pulling the plug out of a boat. It won’t sink fast but over time it will sink.
2. When we lose relationships/connections. Anyone who has gone through divorce, separation, death of loved one, move to new city, etc. We are not created to do life alone. When we experience loss over time we have a tendency to lose hope. Ie. Job lost his children, job lost his finances, job lost his home, job lost his health. And Job is without hope. *“My days are over. My hopes have disappeared. My heart’s desires are broken.”* (Job 17:11, NLT) *“Where then is my hope? Can anyone find it?”* (Job 17:15, NLT)
3. When we lose our vision. When you are over come by life and cannot see a way out you have opportunity to lose hope. The job is challenging, marriage is challenging, kids are challenging, finances are challenging or you are single saying job is challenging, my looks are challenging, bills are challenging, its challenging being alone. ‘I don’t want to be alone in life’ These are real emotions and scary at times. When you can’t see a way out you begin lose hope.
4. When we lose our way. When you are so deep into a challenge that you cant figure out what to do or how to it loss of hope sets in.
5. When we live as victims. We we look constantly at ourselves saying poor me, my poor life, why me? why me? why me? You will lose hope in that place.
6. When we get burnt out. Tired, nothing ever changes, working to no avail, nothing seems to be working. The fire of hope slowly dies and you just exist in a lifeless way.

7. When we give up on God. *“Some sat in darkness and deepest gloom, imprisoned in iron chains of misery. They rebelled against the words of God, scorning the counsel of the Most High.”* (Psalm 107:10–11, NLT)
- B. George Bailey, *Its a Wonderful Life*: IE. Film clip :
1. Have you ever felt hopeless like George Bailey? What should be an incredibly joyous time, Christmas, has only compounded all the poor circumstances of life for George.
 - a) His life hasn’t turned out the way he was hoping.
 - b) Other people’s lives have gotten in the way of what he really wanted to do.
 - c) He is working a job that he never really wanted to do, but was kind of thrust upon him when his father passed away and his brother got married.
 - d) Now, the economy is tanking, his business is under investigation, and he is missing funds that could end up putting him in jail.
 - e) He has a bunch of kids relying on him, his house is not what he hoped for, and the pressures of life have completely overwhelmed him.
 - f) In the scene we just watched, he turns to the Lord and instead of his circumstances improving, he gets punched in the face.
 2. He feels like there is no hope at all and the world would be better without him. Don’t go there!
- C. When you begin losing hope you lose faith. Because faith is the substance of things hoped for.
1. We have hope because we keep God in sight! God sent His son as a baby in Bethlehem. Babies give us hope! But a this baby is Jesus and the man would give hope because God would literally be in the sight of the people.

II. Christ the Hallmark of Hope in Christmas

- A. Lets look at all the hope that comes with the Christ of Christmas
1. Elizabeth and Zacharias are barren. Old and barren they have lived their lives under the shame of barrenness. But God was not done writing their story! They stayed connected to each and to God. They continued to serve faithfully. And angel comes and they conceive not just a baby but a forerunner to the Messiah! A hallmark of hope to them!
 2. Shepherds on a hill side. Shepherds of Jesus day for the most part did not have a good reputation. They were considered ‘low lifes’. They were not trusted. This ‘dark’ reputation followed them everywhere. Then POW!!! Angels surround them and tell them about Jesus the savior, messiah, Lord (Lk 2:8-14). They are filled with hope and they go and they find the Christ. They start telling everyone what just happened. They became spreaders of that hallmark called hope!
 3. Anna, she is fasting and praying in the temple. She is a widow-no son, very poor, crying out daily for messiah to come. She sees baby Jesus and is filled with hope as she prophesies about Messiah! And tells everyone about the child, Messiah!
- B. Christ the Hallmark of Christmas give us the hallmark of hope!
1. All who put their faith in him are filled with the light of the Gospel, of the glory of Christ the Son of God. Don’t lose hope and do not abandon faith. Believe!
 2. *“The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.”* (John 1:4–5, NLT)
 3. Luke 2:32 “Simeon is old and ready to die but He sees Jesus and His heart is made glad! And he prophesies that, *“Now the gentiles have hope for they shall see the light too!*
 4. *Zacharias prophecy to his son John: “to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace.”* (Luke 1:79, NLT)

5. Jesus starts his ministry in Galilee: *“the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow, a light has shined.”*
(Matthew 4:16, NLT)

III. How Do I Keep Hope Alive?

- A. Keep your eye on the prize - Jesus!!! Ie. Peter was in a storm and it looked like they would all die. Then he saw Jesus and started walking on the water. Mt 14:28-32 When he took His eyes off Jesus he began to sink, his hope began to fade. Keep your eyes on the Word. Ie. 1 Sam 30:6 David on his worse day. Lost everything and his men are ready to kill him encourages himself in the Lord. Keep your eye on the prize! Jesus.
1. Jesus came to give us light in this dark world...hope!
- B. Make a decision to stand! This is powerful! Stand for what is right! Stand for the cause. When you make a decision to stand it empowers you! Ie. Movie The Lone Survivor - in the movie four navy seals are taking on about 200 terrorists. They are bloody, shot up, surrounded nowhere to turn. There is no escape. Their motto: We are never out of the fight! Ie. Winston Churchill at the start of WWII England is suffering constant defeat. Their country is being bombed. He gave a two minute speech saying they would never surrender but fight to the last man. It took one year for England to agree with him but his decision to stand gave the nation courage. *“Hope does not make a bad idea better, but it can make a great idea possible!”* Carey Nieuwhof
- C. Get a vision bigger than the problem. This is what Isaiah was doing in our texts today. He was giving the leadership of the nation and the nation itself a vision for what God was doing. Ahaz was a wicked king that sold out the nation of Judah to the devil. The people understood how wicked a king he was. So when Isaiah prophesies our texts they were words of hope and comfort. When the angels and wise men started quoting them they were decrying a vision bigger than the problems the people were facing. What are you seeing?
1. John 6:63, *my words are Spirit and they are life!*
2. *“I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark.”* (John 12:46, NLT)
3. *“Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, “I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.”* (John 8:12, NLT)
- D. Keep the right people around you. Keep people around you who will continually point you to the “Higher Realm” of living. Find people who live out of the Word of God and not out of their doubts. Do not listen to the doubters, negative ones.

Conclusion:

- A Civil War Era, corked glass vial, less than 2" in length, containing a mysterious coded note sat undisturbed on a shelf of the Museum of the Confederacy since 1896. Catherine M. Wright, the museum's collections manager, could no longer keep her curiosity at bay. With the help of a local art conservator, a retired CIA code breaker, and a Navy cryptologist, the vial has now been safely opened and its cryptic message deciphered. Dated July 4, 1863, the message was sent from a Confederate commander in response to a plea for assistance from Lt. General John C. Pemberton. Pemberton was doing his best to defend the besieged city of Vicksburg, Mississippi, against the press of Northern troops. Should the city be lost, it would mean the beginning of the end of the War for the South. Ms. Wright summarized the message of the note sent to General Pemberton with

these ominous words, "I can't help you. I have no troops, I have no supplies, I have no way to get over there." On that very day Pemberton surrendered to Grant's army. **Application:** How hopeless Pemberton's troops must have felt to discover that no help was coming. Having tried their hardest, they could not withstand the crush of the opposing forces. The fact is, we are, each one of us, souls under seige. We need help. We need relief. Without it we are doomed. But instead of saying, "I can't help you," God said, "nothing can separate you from My love" (Romans 8:39). Instead of saying, "I have no troops," God said, "I have a Son" (Hebrews 1:5). Instead of saying, "I have no way to get there," God sent His Son into the world so that those who put their trust in Him, "should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). A crowning mark of our God is that He is the Hallmark of hope!

- Impart hope to the hopeless.