**Disappointment and Hope**

Based on [Matthew 11:2-10](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt11.2-10)

Preached on December 13, 2020

Third Sunday in Advent ~ Gaudete

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Today’s gospel lesson is about disappointment and its causes. That is the general theme, but the message is particularly applied to the first coming of the messiah, Jesus Christ. It appears that there was a spirit of disappointment spreading among believers. First, it appears that John the Baptist was beginning to have doubts and disappointments about Jesus’ performance as messiah. Second, the crowds, perhaps many of whom had gone to the river and been baptized by John there, were disappointed in him...that he who preached so boldly about the messiah, was in prison and apparently losing his struggle against the hypocrites.

There is no temptation that has befallen us that is not common to man. Many of us are disappointed to have heard last week that extended families are not allowed to gather for Christmas. Many were expecting that the initial restrictions were going to lead to a flattening of the curve. That didn’t happen; a spike happened and so now a disappointment. Now a new wave of restrictions will carry us into Christmas. If these don’t work to level things out, one would be tempted to send disciples to the government saying, “Are masks and social distancing our saviours from COVID, or shall we look for another.?”

Many people are disappointed at the outcome of the US presidential election. Each candidate was so certain of their victory that one side of supporters was set up for disappointment. And it was a close election, decided by small margins in swing states. President Trump has been ensuring people that he was the real winner-and that it will all come out in the wash. Tomorrow, the world will see who is elected in the electoral college. And it will be interesting to see, should the electors cast their ballots for Joe Biden, what believers of the President will say and do. Will they now go to him and say, “Are you the real winner of the election,” or shall we look for another? Will they finally give way to disappointment and lose hope.

Advent is the season of hope. Many people don’t dare to hope because they fear disappointment. If you don’t hope for anything, you can’t be disappointed...it makes sense. If you hope that COVID will go away after new restrictions and it doesn’t, you will be disappointed. If you hope that a certain party or candidate will win and then they don’t, you will be disappointed. So what is the answer? One is to give up on hope.

Such is the story of many people who have left the church, left the faith, left the promises of the scriptures. They had great hope in this world, but then unspeakable tragedy happened. Many men who came back from the world wars lost faith in God because what they experienced destroyed the hope they had in this world. Some people lose a child, or are betrayed by a loved one...and their hopeful plans for the future are suddenly gone with the wind. All that is left is disappointment and despair.

Jesus tells a parable about a man who built his house on the sand. And the wind and the storm crash upon it and the house falls. But another man builds his house on the rock and it withstands the wind and the rain through the storm, and prevails through it. What did the first man expect? He put his hope in something built on the sand...he set himself up for disappointment.

So too, John and his disciples had evidently set their hope on a messiah that would avenge the faithful against their oppressors...but Jesus Messiah didn’t come for revenge...and so they were disappointed, and wondered whether they should put their hope in another. The crowds who had followed John, saw his fiery sermons against the Pharisees and hypocrites and warning of the vengeance of God’s kingdom, was now gelded by the hypocrite, Herod, and in prison. Did they bet on the wrong horse?

Advent is a season of hope, but not of false hope. It is a season where believers are mindful and reminded of what that hope is founded upon. It is not a hope designed by men’s hearts. It is not a hope that we can beat COVID or that we can drain the swamp or that we will conquer the earth through faith. We will not conquer the earth, we will inherit it. The faithful meek will inherit the earth, in due time, in God’s time...where a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years but a day. A time that we cannot plan on, but a time we can hope in.

And that hope will not fail, because we did not decide for it. We did not make a plan for what we want our future to look like and then, hope and strive towards that goal. Sure we hope in that way too, but that hope is built on the sand of our human wants and desires. But the hope of our faith was not built by human hands. It was built on the rock of Golgotha, built with crossbeams of wood, built with a sinless sacrifice of the messiah upon it. That hope was not that he would conquer the cross, but that he would conquer the grave. And he has. And now that all things for our salvation have been built upon the rock of christ, the wind and the waves of the world will beat against it, will press against our hope to try and topple it, or try to get us to abandon the Hope in Christ and look for another. But that hope will not fail us, and for this reason, in the midst of the storm, we rejoice.

My hope is built on nothing less,

Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness,

No merit of my own I claim,

But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.

On Christ the solid rock, I stand

All other ground is sinking sand.