

**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2022**

**Glynde Lutheran Church**

**Sermon on Galatians 4:4-7**

**Theme: “God’s Christmas gift: Given so that you may have hope!”  
“Thank God for our hope”**

---

***Introduction:***

Have you put in your requests for Christmas presents, yet!? What do you hope to get? Can I tell you about what I hope to get for Christmas....

I hope Father Christmas is listening.... I would like to get a Mac Book Pro, one which is worth some \$5,000. Then I would have a top of range computer, *instead of my bottom of the range Mac Book....*

We hope for a lot of things in life, don't we? But unfortunately, many of the things that we hope for are just that: *things hoped for*. We would like to have them, but realistically we know that our hope for them is just wishful thinking.

My hope this Christmas is that someone actually gives me a Mac Book Pro computer, but realistically I know that this hope of mine for Christmas is just wishful thinking....

It is wishful thinking based on nothing concrete, nothing except the dreams of my imagination.

It is important to hope, though, and to dream. Otherwise the future can be 'pretty' bleak.... I'd like you to do a little exercise with me, as we start thinking about the hope that we have as Christians for the future, and about whether this hope is based on anything concrete, or is just the dreams of our imagination....

Imagine with me that you are not a Christian. Most of us, maybe all of us, here this morning are Christians I know, but imagine with me that you are not a Christian and that you live in a part of the world where there is little knowledge of God, and no knowledge of Jesus, God's Son, who was born for us. What would you be hoping for, so far as your life and your future are concerned?

If we are thinking seriously about life and our future, surely we would be

hoping that *our life will have meaning and purpose*. Surely we would be hoping that there is more to life than just endless routine, and inevitable heartaches and troubles.... That there is SomeOne out there who is control (*cf. meaninglessness, boredom, despair*).

No more than that, we would be hoping that there is SomeOne out there who values me and who cares for me and who loves me (*cf. loneliness*).

That there is SomeOne out there who is willing to turn a blind eye to what I have done to hurt others, or who will let the good things that I do make up for the bad things that I have done... (*cf. guilt, shame*).

And if we were thinking seriously about our life, wouldn't we be hoping too that our life doesn't end in death: that there is something more than the grave awaiting me, that there is something special in store for me after I die (*cf. fear of death*).

But would these hopes of ours be any more than wishful thinking, *any different than my hope for a Mac Book Pro computer for Christmas?* No, our hopes would simply be wishful hopes, hopes based not on anything concrete but simply on the dreams of our imagination.

The birth of Jesus, God's Son, though changes all this. When we become aware of Jesus, our hopes for our life and for our future are modified and changed, sure, but more importantly our hopes are given substance.

In the light of Jesus' words and actions, we can have hopes for the future that are not based on dreams of our imagination, but are rather based on concrete realities.

Jesus, God's Son, spoke of God as being a loving Father, a loving Father whose most fervent desire is that each of us live in a relationship with him now as His forgiven children, and that we continue this relationship with him after we die *in a wonderful new place that God has in store for us*. Jesus told us that God loves and values and cares for each one of us, regardless of who we are and what we have done.

And Jesus spoke of God's willingness to forgive us, *yes forgive us*. Remember in the dream that we had *when we imagined that we were not Christians and that we hadn't heard anything about Jesus....* Remember, we dreamed that there is SomeOne out there who is willing to turn a blind

eye to what we have done to hurt others, or who will let the good things that we do make up for the bad things that we have done....

Well, Jesus told of us of a God who goes one better than all this. Jesus, God's Son, told us that God is a God of grace and mercy, a God who is willing *to forgive and to forget* what we have done to hurt others, *at no cost to us* (cf. *Jesus' parable of the lost son*).

There is a cost, but not for us. Jesus told us that the cost would be his and God's, that this is why God, his Father, sent him to be born on this earth: to suffer and to die for us all, and to take on himself the blame and the judgement that we deserve from God.

Jesus spoke, too, of the wonderful future that is in store for us who receive the forgiveness that God freely offers. Jesus said that he would come again at the Last Day and take us all home to be with him forever in God's house (*John 14:1-3*). We will be given new bodies, like Jesus' resurrection body, and taken home to be with Jesus forever (*1 Thess. 4; 1 Cor. 15*).

All that we hoped for in our imagination, all that we dreamed would happen, *and much more*, will happen, Jesus said.

And, most importantly, God has confirmed for us that what Jesus said is true: by giving Jesus the power to work various miracles, and then supremely by raising Jesus from the dead on the third day after his death.

My hope for a Mac Book Pro computer for Christmas is nothing more than wishful thinking. But our hope for the future, *of life now with meaning and purpose and of eternal life with God after we die*, is not based on wishful thinking. It is based rather on concrete realities: the words and actions of Jesus, God's Son, *who God sent to this earth to be born for us*.

### **Conclusion:**

My favourite carol is the one that we are going to sing next. It is a carol written by Charles Wesley, entitled *Hark! the herald angels sing*. I like it, because it is a great statement of our faith *and our hope* as Christians.

Charles Wesley takes us in our imagination back to the birth of Jesus, and as he has us listen to the angels singing and as he has us look at the baby Jesus, he sums up in his carol our faith and our hope as Christians.

Because I have been speaking about our hope as Christians this morning, let me finish by reading to you that great last verse of this carol....

**Hail, the heaven-born Prince of peace!**

**Hail, the sun of righteousness!**

**Light and life to all He brings,**

**Risen with healing in his wings.**

**Mild He lays His glory by,**

**Born that man no more may die,**

**Born to raise the sons of earth,**

**Born to give them second birth.**

***Hark! the herald angels sing,***

***Glory to the new-born King.***