

Sermon for December 15, 2024 – Advent 3

Psalm 130 (EHV)

**Theme: My soul waits for the LORD**

- 1) With repentance
- 2) In joyful hope

*<sup>1</sup>Out of the depths I have called to you, O LORD. <sup>2</sup>Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to the sound of my cry for mercy. <sup>3</sup>If you, LORD, kept a record of guilt, O Lord, who could stand? <sup>4</sup>But with you there is pardon, so you are feared. <sup>5</sup>I wait for the LORD. My soul waits, and in his word I have put my hope. <sup>6</sup>My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning. <sup>7</sup>Israel, wait confidently for the LORD, because with the LORD there is mercy. With him there is abundant redemption. <sup>8</sup>So he himself will redeem Israel from all its guilt.*

One year, I took my family into a neighbourhood that advertised beautiful Christmas light displays. Although many were impressive, I left feeling sad. Why? Because despite the cheerful images, comedy, and sentimental greetings, only a few displays celebrated Jesus's birth.

To the world, Christmas is merely a feel-good holiday. People play sentimental music, decorate their homes, bake special treats, and set up visual displays to evoke happiness through the senses. But does such celebrating bring genuine happiness? Briefly, perhaps, but it doesn't last. Once Christmas is over, people return to their routines, unchanged by the holidays' celebrations that lack actual substance or meaning. None of the world's holiday traditions address the fundamental root of all of humanity's problems: our broken relationship with God caused by sin.

Do you long for genuine joy, peace, and hope this Christmas season that will endure forever? Then, prepare for Christmas by examining yourself under the light of God's Law. What will you discover? If you're honest, you'll realize you haven't met God's standards and deserve His eternal condemnation.

"But pastor," you might be thinking, "I thought you were going to show us the path to true joy this Christmas, not shame, sorrow, and fear." But I am showing you that path. The first step to receiving God's gift of everlasting hope and peace is acknowledging how messed up we are. Why? Because it is only after we recognize our profound need for a Saviour we will turn to Him for mercy. Christmas is all about God sending His Son into the world to save us from our sins. Therefore, the more we comprehend and confess our sinful condition, the sweeter and more joyous Christmas becomes.

Our Psalm for this morning reflects a heart that's spent time contemplating upon God's Law and yearns for the salvation God promised. Let us, therefore, prepare for Christmas by reflecting on this Psalm, guided by the theme: **My soul waits for the LORD** 1) with repentance 2) and in joyful hope.

## Part One: With repentance

Our Psalm begins: <sup>1</sup>*Out of the depths I have called to you, O LORD.*

What specific sins make you feel you are in an inescapable pit? Do you struggle with alcohol abuse? How about greed or lust? Do you find yourself easily lashing out at others in anger? How about gossiping or holding a grudge? How many people have you ignored because you just didn't have the desire to talk to them, help them, or encourage them with Christ? How many times haven't you put something ahead of worshipping Jesus? How often haven't you knowingly and willfully done something God's Word commanded you not to do, or not done what His Word commanded you to do?

The Bible clearly states that we deserve eternal punishment in hell for every sin we commit. Doesn't that fact make you want to cry out to God with the Psalmist: <sup>2</sup>*Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to the sound of my cry for mercy.*

It is good to seek God's mercy because He promises to be merciful to everyone who repentantly cries out to Him, as the Bible says: *The sacrifices God wants are a broken spirit. A broken and crushed heart, O God, you will not despise.*<sup>i</sup> And again: *I am merciful, declares the LORD. I will not be angry forever.*<sup>ii</sup>

We certainly thank God that He is merciful. Why? Because, as our Psalm confesses: <sup>3</sup>*If you, LORD, kept a record of guilt, O Lord, who could stand?*

Imagine how horrible it would be if the LORD kept a record of all your sins with no promise of *forgiveness*. Imagine how many sins would be counted against you in just one day: the lustful thought you had over the good-looking man or woman you saw in an online ad, the rage you felt towards a co-worker who hurt your feelings, the juicy gossip you participated in when you spoke poorly about a fellow Christian, coveting the things your friends have but you don't.... if God kept a record of all these sins and the countless more we commit before Him every day, how could we ever hope to be saved?

<sup>4</sup>*But,* the Psalmist says, *“with you there is pardon, so you are feared.”* Yes, praise the Lord for His forgiving love! Without it, we would surely be lost. God's undeserved love for sinners is the heart and core of Christmas, for which reason He sent His Son, Jesus, into the world as our Saviour. You see, God could not simply forget about our sins. His justice demanded that they all be paid for in full. So, what did God do to redeem us? He sent His Son to take on human flesh and blood to save us. And how would His Son accomplish this? By perfectly obeying God's Law on our behalf and enduring the great punishment our sins had earned.

Let me illustrate this with an example: Imagine you're an engineer tasked with building a highly expensive and delicate piece of equipment with another engineer. Unfortunately, you are clumsy and tend to break things. The other engineer does an exceptional job. Your boss enters the room and sees two objects: one flawless and the other broken. Before you can even speak, the other engineer declares, “That broken one belongs to me. The good one is his.” Your boss punishes your coworker for your incompetence while you receive recognition for his masterpiece.

This is somewhat like how Jesus saved us. He took on our sinful work as his own and was punished for it. He offered us his perfect keeping of God's Law as our own so that we could be rewarded. That is God's incredible gift of forgiveness that He offers all people, but that is only received through faith.

When we truly contemplate the punishment we deserve because of our sins and the fact that God willingly sent Jesus to endure it for us, Christmas becomes more than just a feel-good holiday filled with empty wishes. Christmas is about God sending his Son to pay for the sins of all people to reconcile humanity to God. No wonder the angels sang about God's peace and goodwill towards all! To truly prepare for Christmas, we need to cry out from the depths of our sins in repentance — trusting in God's merciful promise to forgive us. When we think about the lengths to which God went to forgive us, we can't help but revere him. We can't help but long for His coming again in joyful hope.

### Part Two: In joyful hope

Our Psalm continues: *<sup>5</sup>I wait for the LORD. My soul waits, and in his word I have put my hope.* The thought of the LORD's forgiving love gave the Psalmist's life new purpose and meaning. He looked forward to the LORD's deliverance from all earthly sin and sorrow, meditating on the promises God had made in His word to accomplish this.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: The Bible tells you that Jesus forgave all your sins and encourages you to take heart while living in this sin-cursed world. Why? Because Jesus is coming again soon to grant us relief by delivering us into a perfect paradise where there will be no more sin, sorrow, pain or death. There will only be joy, peace, perfection and love forever. He is coming to reunite us to Himself in righteousness. Don't these truths stir your desire for His swift return, as expressed by the Psalmist: *<sup>6</sup>My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.*

Throughout history, night has always been a time of terror, especially in the ancient world. Why? Because thieves, robbers, murderers, and bandits were most active during the night. Imagine being a nighttime sentry tasked with the duty of warning and protecting. Every little shadow or bump would cause you anxiety because you knew that real danger lurked in the darkness. Oh, how you would yearn for the morning sun to dispel the darkness!

This is our hope for the coming Day of the LORD. He has made us watchmen on this sin-cursed earth. Many dangers hide in the shadows, tempting us into sin and causing us misery to make us doubt God's love. These facts compel us to long for the LORD's final and complete deliverance from sin's curse. And since nothing can change the fact that Jesus was born on Christmas to save us from sin, we can be confident that He will keep His promise to return at the end of time to deliver us from this evil world, as our Psalm concludes:

*<sup>7</sup>Israel, wait confidently for the LORD, because with the LORD there is mercy. With him there is abundant redemption.* The "Israel" the Psalmist encourages in our text is symbolic of all of

God's people throughout history, including you! Whenever despair overwhelms you due to your sins or the evils of this world, put your hope in the Lord. He has sent Jesus to forgive you. Trust in the Lord and know that *he himself will redeem Israel from all its guilt*. He is coming again soon to deliver you to His side in paradise. Nothing can separate you from the love the LORD has for you in Christ. May this truth fill you with joy as you live your life to His glory in the peace of His forgiving love.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: My soul eagerly awaits the Lord with repentance and joyful hope. I pray that yours does, too. When our souls eagerly wait for the Lord in repentance and faith, we will certainly be prepared to celebrate both Christmas and Christ's second coming at the end of time. Our celebration will not end with this year's Christmas season when the rest of the world takes down its decorations. Instead, it will continue indefinitely as we joyfully reflect the light of God's love to those around us through our words and actions, sharing with them the hope we have in Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Psalm 51:17 EHV

<sup>ii</sup> Jeremiah 3:12 EHV