

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

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Hope – Revelation of Hope

Campus Pastors

Joel Schmidgall - In 1817, Sir David Brewster reinvented what the ancient Greeks had discovered, a long metal cylinder with little shards of colored glass in the tip that many of us know is the kaleidoscope from our childhood. I held this up for our third child to look through this week and her first reaction was "Whoa, Dad, that's cool." Then with a twist of the cylinder, I got a, "Whoa, there's red, no green, there's different colors and shapes and everything coming out of it, Dad." And she discovered what many of us know in a kaleidoscope that it reflects light and is a revelation of endless variety of colors and design. When Jesus came into the world, he came to a people that were desperate for revelation, they were desperate for hope. They had gone 400 years without hearing from God. Then Mary and Joseph were visited by the angels and the shepherds and Magi received the revelation of Christ and Simeon and Anna had been waiting expectantly in prayer at the temple and Jesus arrived. He didn't just bring hope with them. He was and he is hope. He's a revelation to every person that encounters him. To one a revelation of hope brought confirmation to another joy to another redemption, he was fulfillment of prophecies of old, he was the embodiment of comfort in the now. But what we found in the Incarnation is that he is the God who reveals his presence in any and all circumstances. So today, we want to talk about a revelation of hope, but not through one glance at one moment in the Scripture. Instead, we're going to have each campus pastor turn the kaleidoscope to reveal new revelation of hope that comes only in Jesus. Here we go.

Marion Mason - It's great to be with you today. This year, I've really needed God's revelation of hope. Anyone else with me? Maybe feeling a little uncertain or perplexed or even anxious. In these moments I'm grateful that God reveals his presence in any and all circumstances and what a year of circumstances. I'm so thankful for the confirmation that comes from God's revelation of hope. That is through the person of Jesus Christ and the power of God's Spirit, that our value to him is verified, substantiated and validated. We matter to God, you matter to God. During this Christmas season, we are reminded that he loves us that he sees us and that he is Emmanuel, God with us. Even in the midst of these extraordinary challenges as we mourn the loss of routine and job and relationships and even loved ones the Christmas story for me, has been a great reminder that God's revelation of hope brings confirmation and that confirmation brings us an understanding that we matter to God.

In Luke chapter one verse 26 we find Mary a young teenager who is a virgin that is engaged to be married to Joseph. Mary is visited by the angel Gabriel sent by the Lord to tell her that she is going to give birth to Jesus the Savior of the world. Can you imagine the fear the anxiety, the worry that she must have felt? Even after the angel told her not to be afraid consider all the questions and uncertainty that must have consumed her. Have you felt a little fear, anxiety, worry had questions or experienced uncertainty lately? Man I know I have and I've needed to be reminded of my value to God. In the

Christmas story, the angel reminded Mary of her value to God. *"You have found favor with God,"* he said. The angel went on to tell her that Jesus will eternally reign and that the Holy Spirit is going to overshadow her and bring forth the miracle pregnancy and the birth of Jesus. The angel shared with her that her cousin Elizabeth, who was advanced in years, and to that moment in time was unable to get pregnant that Elizabeth would be with a child. But Mary visited Elizabeth, sure enough; Elizabeth was with child and that child John the Baptist actually jumped around in Elizabeth's womb. And she proclaimed to Mary you are blessed among women, blessed is the child you will bear. After giving birth to Jesus in Luke chapter two, Mary is visited by the shepherds and as they began to tell everyone about the birth of Christ and to celebrate she, Mary, treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Can you imagine the peace and courage that Mary felt when all of this took place? When the things that were said to her actually were confirmed? There's something about things being confirmed that provides a great sense of peace and courage. For me today, I reflect on those low moments during this season, or those moments where I felt a little uncertain or even a little worried. And maybe it was a reminder from a friend or a powerful sermon from God's word, or even a testimony of perseverance from my own life or even some of your lives. It's in these moments when God's overwhelming presence reminds me that he loves me, that he sees me, that he's with me, that he never will leave me nor forsake me. God also loves you, he sees you, and he's with you. It might not be through a visit from an angel or a miracle pregnancy. But I strongly believe that God is confirming his care for each one of us every single day, that even in the midst of these extraordinary, extremely challenging times, remember, you matter to God. May the revelation of hope, bring you confirmation. May the confirmation of knowing that God loves you that he sees you, and that he's with you, bring you peace and courage to walk into the uncertainty that tomorrow may bring. God bless you.

If you were to describe 2020 with three words, what would they be? It was a question that I asked our Lincoln community a few weeks ago, as we were kind of reflecting on the year as we're in Advent, and we're in this waiting season. It also includes looking back and I almost invite you to hit the pause button and take a moment and begin just sketching down some words. And as I began to think about it, and began to see different responses, I saw the full range from despair, to pain, awareness, to illumination, inspiration, literally the full experience within our community. And I think that's the power of community actually as oftentimes we because of individualizing it we carry our own words when we're intended to carry words collectively. But one of the words that I think describes that full on experience of 2020 is the word joy. And that word may surprise you. And some of you might say, "No, joy's not the right word." But hear me out here.

Dave Schmidgall - In the first century, if you were to ask Mary, a word to describe the first century that she was living in, my guess is it would be very similar; oppression from a Roman Empire 80% taxes, witnessing a kind of oppression that would blow your mind and yet at the same time being told by the angel Gabriel, that, *"Fear not, I hold good news that will cause great joy from what's within her."* And

it's that full experience. And my guess is, we probably have an impoverished view of what joy actually means. I tend to associate it with happiness. But I think a more complex understanding of joy in the scriptures is like train tracks. Think of it this way; one side is feelings of sadness and difficulty and pain and with what you see in the world, how can you not. And the other side is happiness, and the feelings that you get when you meet somebody for the first time in COVID or a sunrise, sunset. It's both alongside each other. It's this complex combination of both feelings and experiences. And what makes joy emerge is when God undergirds it and holds these things together. This is the power of the Advent it's to say God with us, in both train tracks.

And so my invitation to you just like Mary who held and ponder joy in her heart is for you to equally choose joy in this season, to allow God to hold all of it, this full dynamic range of this year, and to say, God, I trust you, I give my praise to you and I have a quiet conviction in you. So choose joy, because happiness alone is not enough.

Jenni Clayville- I love what pastor Dave had to say, happiness comes and goes and joy is something that we can choose. But what if our lives feel empty and void of any joy left to pull from? The last time all the campus pastors gave a sermon together was just at the beginning of COVID-19. And I remember sharing with you how overwhelmed and anxious I was at the time with our new systems of schooling from home while working from home and parenting from home and trying to find our new normal while stuck inside the four walls at home. But we all thought it would just be a short term thing and we'd be back to normal in a couple months. Well, nine months later, we've all lost more than we all anticipated back then. In May, my sister's long journey with infertility ended with the birth of their son. My nephew Lennox is now six months old, and I've not gotten to hold him or celebrate the birth of his life with my sister in person. I mean, my 99 year old grandmother is still in quarantine in her nursing home and has only gotten to wave at us through windows. So we've all experienced these losses in this season. I mean, best case scenario, we've lost our sense of time, our understanding of normalcy and maybe some mental capacity, or in my case, it's like 90%, of oatmeal brain at this point. So but many more of us have lost our sense of community, and connections in relationships, maybe even with our family, or within our marriages. Some of us have lost our jobs we've lost loved ones to eternity and we couldn't even travel to go celebrate their lives with our family. The loss is great, and the hope feels so far away.

But in Luke 1:68, we read about Zechariah regaining his voice after being struck mute because of his mistrust in God. And in his first words, out of this season of silence, he begins with a prophecy to encourage this birthday announcement over a son who will become John the Baptist. And he says, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people." In other words, Zechariah sees his own son's birth as an opportunity to praise God for something very specific - redemption. In Greek redemption is *exagorazo*, it literally means to take something off the market. And the idea is that a redemption is the price you pay to save something. You literally buy it away from the market and bring it into safety. Redemption is the act of making something better. And in this season,

we remember the beautiful baby Jesus that was born into this world so that he could redeem each and every one of us at the cross. The hiccup for us is we want to see everything restored right now.

We don't understand the timeline God works in so maybe we can't see out that far. But we can learn to sit and receive in the season were given just as Zechariah did. On that first Christmas no one really knew what was coming. But because Zechariah doubted, he was put into a season of silence, where he then allowed the Lord to prep him not only to understand but to eventually prophesied the birth of his own son, meaning that God was in the process of redeeming Israel. Zechariah knew that God was the Redeemer but do we? So as we mourn a Christmas season, that doesn't look like past Christmases; let's sit in the stillness, just like Zechariah did with anticipation of what's to come. Let's remember that our Savior has been here, he has seen this, he knows us. And we can trust that our God has already redeemed all of this. And because of that, the revelation of hope is just around the corner.

Jon Vaughn - NCC family, let's not bypass these real moments of loss and mourning that Pastor Jenni just shared, it's okay to feel it. But here's the good news, we don't have to experience these moments alone. We have the indwelling presence of the God of hope with us, and all around us. On this side of heaven there are ways we relate to Jesus, that we wont on the other side of heaven. Think about it, there's no pain or tears or pandemics, thank God. So these real emotions in the here and now are opportunities to trigger us into healthy emotional pathways toward actually enjoying the kind of hope.

Speaking of pathways. When I was a kid, we lived on a farm and I had 30 first cousins that live in the same county. We would create paths to the woods to fun destinations, creeks, ponds, neighborhood pools, we enjoyed the process of creating pathways toward the unknown, there is hope that we will discover something new to enjoy. Winter was the best time to create new paths since the trees became bear. In order to create a physical path, you'd have to walk it several times until it gains traction. Eventually, it's easier to arrive at the destination that has always been there for us to enjoy. Similar to creating pathways through the woods like we did as children I want to encourage us this weekend to create some healthy, emotional pathways into the presence of Jesus through Isaiah's fulfillment of hope. Isaiah 9:6 through 7 reads, *"For to us a child is born, to us Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government of peace, there will be no end. On the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth to forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts, we'll do this."* Come on. That's a hope from joy together.

So let me ask you a question. How much are you really enjoying God, right now? Let's be honest, we're often overwhelmed with content and we don't actually enjoy the God behind the content. There's often an experience gap in which we know about hope, versus how we practice hope. This weekend, I just want to share with you a quick practice that's been helpful to me to enjoy the revelation of hope. Some of you may be familiar with this. There's an acronym used in the mental health field known as a PATH

that is often used to help people move from negative emotions and healthy ways. I personally enjoy and find helpful to participate with the Holy Spirit in evidence based mental health practices as part of my discipleship Jesus. Now, the Holy Spirit is key in taking it beyond just another self help exercise. Don't get me wrong, self help has its benefits but we are the beloved people call to the abundant life, not just self help.

I'm often triggered into this practice by an emotion of being overwhelmed or anxiety itself. The first step in PATH is the P-pause moment. And real time, it's difficult not to react out of an emotion. This takes some intentional practice at first or even better accountability from a friend or spouse. In the pause, I bring the memory of the words and the psalmist that says, "Be still and know that I am God." The pause helps me center for a moment into God's presence all around us and in dwelling within us.

I then A-acknowledge how I really feel that there is often a disconnect between what I know about God and how I feel in that moment.

I then T-think about what I need or what I feel like I'm lacking. During Advent I think about Isaiah's description of having a Wonderful Counselor and it's guiding me through this season. I think about having a mighty God who isn't lacking in strength and has authority over all things at all times. I think about an everlasting Father who loves me more than I love my children and speaks his identity over my life. I think about the prince of Shalom, who is restoring all things, including you and I.

Then I asked for H-help from the Holy Spirit toward practicing hope, and what Jesus has fulfilled and enjoy God in the midst of challenging times and hard emotions. It's in the prayer for help that I'm often amazed how God brings the manifestation of the request. I'm learning that God is never lacking in anything. It's often my participation as a disciple of Jesus that is lacking. So in this uncomfortable 2020 Advent season may we abide in the great Comforter, and practice hope that has been filled by Jesus.

Robb Schmidgall - Matthew 1:23 *"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear son and they shall call his name Immanuel, which means God with us."* When you turn the kaleidoscope to Joseph in this story, we find that our revelation of hope brings comfort. It's what we all want and strain to attain comfort in our innermost soul. And so some of us try and find it by controlling our circumstances, controlling what's on the outside, so that we can experience peace and comfort inside. Others of us throw all expectations out the window and all sense of control away so as to not be disappointed and in doing so think we'll find peace and comfort inside us. Now Joseph, Scripture says was a just man. Other translations use the word righteous. It's the same word used of Noah when it says Noah was a righteous man in a wicked generation. And we always see Joseph as this upstanding guy, right? Joseph was just trying to manage aka control his circumstances. He was gonna divorce quietly, not embarrass Mary, such a good guy. But what we often overlook is that even being righteous and acting in good intent, he still missed it. He was handling the situation wrong. And so the angel appears to him and says, *"Do not*

be afraid to take Mary as your wife.” Afraid - fear is a baseline issue that we all struggle with. And a loss of hope is a product of fear.

Here's the thing, what followed was not a revelation of circumstances that were about to change for Joseph. In fact, circumstances were about to get crazier. The reality was that this great hope of the world would be covered in the chaos of a baby's cry, wrapped in the blankets of loss of control, resting on the barn floor hay of hardship, and surrounded by the rustic feeding trough of an uncertain future. But this revelation was Emmanuel, God with us.

The Revelation of hope that is found in Jesus is God with us, present here, now, where you are, he is there and where he is, there is comfort. Acknowledging his present-ness is the baseline for purpose in your living.

I often do things and ask God to be with me and to bless what I'm doing like Joseph. But the order is to become aware of God with us and then trust the story he is writing through your life. What part of your life makes you most anxious? What are you trying to control? Or what are you ignoring in giving up control? Can I tell you something today? God is with you. You are going to be okay. In fact, stop what you're doing for a second stop typing, texting, writing, talking, walking, what are you doing? Stop for just a second and listen. We are going to be okay. God is with us, God with us. The warmth of hope that fills your soul right now is a revelation of comfort that God is with us. But it's not enough to get that revelation in your heart or even in your head. You see the revelation only becomes a reality when we live from it. This revelation in this story ends in verse 25, saying so Joseph did as the angel of the LORD commanded him. Start with God with us, then, live your best life in the story he is writing through you. That is the revelation of hope that brings comfort.

Lyle Tard - When we stop and fully receive the revelation of hope from God, this peace that surpasses all understanding it tells us that it's going to be okay, and we start to believe it. Can you believe what we've seen through this kaleidoscope of hope today? As we've turned this kaleidoscope of hope, we've seen a revelation of confirmation that provides peace and courage to face challenges and uncertainties that tomorrow may bring, a revelation of joy that we should continuously choose because happiness isn't enough - a revelation of redemption, the act of making something better and sitting in stillness like Zechariah. We saw a revelation of fulfillment that creates mental and emotional pathways towards the wholesomeness of the season, and a revelation of comfort that isn't just felt but it comes as we obey what God commands us to do, as Joseph did. As we pull our eyes away from this kaleidoscope of hope, what do we realize? Looking into the face of the world we live in, and the reality of our circumstances, we can clearly see that He is a God who reveals His presence in every and all circumstances, not just the circumstances that feed our flesh, or comfort or security, but a revelation of hope that is showcased in each moment, whether it be joy, or pain. This revelation of hope isn't a feeling. It's a state of being. It's fully understanding that you and I have a secret weapon, according to Colossians 1:27 that Christ lives in us the hope of glory, and that hope is a gift. That gift began with his birth. That gift continues as we

allow him to be all that he is in us now. And that gift is the promise of his soon and coming return. This revelation of hope is the reason why we celebrate Advent.