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Where Is the Hope?

By The Rev. Rachel Rickenbaker

“Where is the hope?”

I recently saw someone comment on a friend’s Facebook post, asking honest questions about her concern at the state of our world. She further stated, “When do you start to ask yourself where all the prayers are going when no help comes?”

We have entered the season of Advent, and I always think of this season, more than anything, as a season of hope. We often think of it as a time of preparation for Christmas, and the lines can easily get blurred between the secularization of the season and the true preparation for our Lord’s return. We get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the season, and before we know it, Advent has come and gone.

It is true that much in our world is out of our hands. We see unjust and unfair things happening everyday. Our hearts cry out for those in poverty, children dying from hunger, and all those who suffer from senseless violence.

Things are not so different from what the Israelites faced over two thousand years ago. They, too, were feeling the weight of the world, the bondage of oppression, and the longing for hope and light. It was into that darkness and longing that the Messiah came. God-in-the-flesh came among them, lifted their burdens, and broke through the shroud of darkness.

Yet, we are far removed from that time, and we may feel that in light of our current state of the world, God is far from our reach. We may feel like the weight of the world is on our shoulders. We may, like the woman who asked the questions on the Facebook post, wonder, "Can our prayers even be heard? Is anyone listening? Where is the hope?"

Our hope is in the God who brings good news. The good news is not that the burden of the world is ours to bear. It is not that Christ's work on the cross is incomplete, and that it is up to us to finish it. That is not good news.

The good news is that Jesus broke through the darkness, broke through the powers of oppression, injustice, sin, evil, and death, and brought forth His Kingdom. By his life, death, and Resurrection, Jesus overcame those things that are not of his Kingdom. He did that for us; he did that out of his love for us.

Christ's Kingdom is here, and yet, it is not fully experienced in our time and place yet. We don't see its full effects yet. So, in this season of Advent, we are reminded that we wait and prepare and long for the time when Christ returns, and when his Kingdom of justice and mercy and peace will prevail.

We are told in the Book of Revelation, that when Christ returns

"No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 22:3-5).

Then, Jesus says, "Look, I am coming soon!" (Revelation 22:7)

We put our faith and hope in a God whose justice is already breaking in, even if we can't always see it. God's work at restoring and renewing all things is taking place even now. Even in the midst of our hurting world. God's love and mercy continues to break through. May God open our eyes and hearts to see God's work taking place all around us.

I invite you to take a moment to read these words below based on Revelation 22 and listen to this beautiful [anthem](#) by Paul Manz. I pray your Advent is a time of peace, longing, joy, and hope in the Lord who promises to return, and to return soon.

"E'en So, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come"

Peace be to you and grace from Him
Who freed us from our sins,
Who loved us all and shed his blood
That we might saved be.
Sing Holy, Holy to our Lord,
The Lord, Almighty God,
Who was and is and is to come;
Sing Holy, Holy Lord!
Rejoice in heaven, all ye that dwell therein,
Rejoice on earth, ye saints below,
For Christ is coming, is coming soon,
For Christ is coming soon!
E'en so, Lord Jesus, quickly come,
And night shall be no more;
They need no light nor lamp, nor sun,
For Christ will be their All!