**Living in the light of his appearing – Sermon – Hope – Dec 1, 2013**

1. **Introduction**

Certain things that happen to a person can be really transformational – they can truly change your life, the way you live – your perspective on life, the way you think, and what you do with your life from then on

Have you even had any of these kinds of transformational events?

The birth of a child

The death of a child (as we will here next week)

The loss of a job

Getting a new job

Getting cancer

Getting healed from cancer

Getting spared from a real life threatening experience – a car crash, a fire, a plane crash, or, for our veterans, getting saved in the midst of a deadly wartime battle.

Getting saved from their sins is to some, a radical event that brings about a radical change.

Usually we think of a person that had been involved in a really bad life – of drugs, alcohol, violence – that radically changed when they got saved.

Because to them, their salvation brought them hope from despair – the hope of a better life – the hope of being made right with God, being forgiven from the really bad stuff they had done, the hope of being truly loved, valued, cared for, - and given a hope for an eternal future that will be even better – better by far

**Meeting Christ can have this kind of radical effect**

It did for the apostle Paul, as we will see today

Christ appeared to Paul

The word Advent – means appearing – coming

The Christmas season is called the season of advent – the season of his appearing, his coming.

Christ’s coming did radically change things – it radically changed the world

The world was truly never the same after Jesus came

But it’s been long enough ago that most people don’t know the radical change his appearing brought.

Unless they too, like Paul, have a true encounter with Christ

I mean a real encounter with Christ

Where Christ appears to them – where **they see him as He really is** – as see the true **hope** that He offers to bring – to their personal lives – the hope that can radically change your life.

**To see him as He really is – not through the disguise of man-made watered-down religion.**

**To see him as He really is – not like any other man you have ever met**

**To see true love, nothing false, no pretense**

**To see one who cannot lie, whose promises you can trust**

**To come face to face with the creator of the universe - and discover that he knows your name, that he loves you, that he wants to be with you**

This is what happened to Paul when Christ appeared to him

Paul was religious. Even zealous. He studied religion.

And, he thought he was practicing it, when he went around persecuting those whom he thought were a threat to his religion – whom he thought were defaming – blaspheming his religion.

And as he was doing this – Christ appeared to him

He had an encounter with the real Christ – and it radically changed his life

The book of Acts records this story – several times – for eventually Paul, himself, was arrested – persecuted, for believing in Christ so much that he shared what he believed with others

His arrest came after he had preached the Gospel throughout all of Asia Minor – Berea, Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus, Phillipi, Greece, Galatia, Colosse, - all those places that we read about in his letters in the New Testament.

He, like Jesus, was arrested by his own – Jews, like him, who saw him as a threat to their religion.

The book of Acts records the story of him being first arrested in Jerusalem, and taken to Caesarea and put in prison for 2 years because the Roman governor Felix couldn’t come up with a real charge outside of the religious charge against him

Then, when Felix was replaced by Festus, the Jewish leaders again tried to have Paul killed, so they asked Festus to bring him to trial, which he did – and because he again could find nothing worthy of death, Festus told the king – king Agrippa about him, and Agrippa wanted to hear Paul for himself.

This is the story I would like to read to you to bring out Paul’s message of hope.

**Acts 26:1-29 (NIV)**
1  Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense:
2  "King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews,
3  and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.

4  "The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem.
5  They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee.
6  And now it is because of my **hope** in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today.
7  This is the promise our twelve tribes are **hoping** to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day **and night. O king, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me.
8  Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?**9  "I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth.
10  And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.
11  Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.
12  "On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.
13  About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions.
14  We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'
15  "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' "'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied.
16  'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you.
17  I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them
**18  to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'**19  "So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven.
20  First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles **also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.**21  That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me.
22  But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen--
**23  that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles."**

24  At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane."
25  "I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable.
26  The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner.
27  King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do."
28  Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"
**29  Paul replied, "Short time or long--I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."**

Paul was a man that truly believed in the hope of which he spoke.

If you were to follow his path leading up to this trial, you would see that it was no easy road to travel.

But he believed so strongly in Jesus that he was compelled to live it and share **it**

What was **it?**

**What was Paul’s hope that he preached?**

**Romans 5:1-11 (NIV)**
1  Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
2  through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.
3  Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;
4  perseverance, character; and character, hope.
5  And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.
6  You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.
7  Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die.
8  But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
9  Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!
10  For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!
11  Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Peace with God

Forgiveness

Right relationship with the creator of the universe, our maker.

Who loves us, and will pour his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit

Why? Because we deserve it? Because we have been so good – and God, like Santa, has checked his list and said, John, he’s been pretty good, so I’ll pour my love into Him

No

Because Jesus paid our debt – to reconcile us with God

Reconcile =

Jesus came to do this

Today we begin to think about his advent – his coming

Jesus has come

The work is done

It is finished

The price has been paid

The offer can be made – has been made, is being made

The offer of right relationship with God

The offer of the ability to feel his love

To know it

And to know the hope that it brings

Paul wrote

**Ephesians 1:17-23 (NIV)**
17  I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.
18  I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

The hope of an eternity at peace with God – an eternity filled with every good thing, and no bad thing.

This hope will not be fully realized in this current world

Yet we also have hope while we are journeying through this world to fairer worlds on high

Jesus is alive and He promises to be with you – through your suffering – until the day when he removes all suffering – forever.

If you want to smile through your tears, if you want to rejoice through times of suffering, just keep reminding yourself that what you're going through isn't the end of the story...

it's simply the rough journey that leads to the right destination...

He gives a sure basis for **hope**. He has promised to return to earth to receive His own ([1Th 1:10](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1Th%201.10)-[note](http://www.preceptaustin.org/1_thessalonians_110.htm#1:10)).

Until then, we have His supernatural help through the indwelling Holy Spirit ([1Th 1:5](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1Th%201.5)-[note](http://www.preceptaustin.org/1_thessalonians_15-7.htm#1:5)) Who gives us the desire and the power to be diligent in our Christian walk, working out our salvation in fear and trembling ([Php 2:12](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Php%202.12), [13](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Php%202.13)-see notes [Php 2:12](http://www.preceptaustin.org/philippians_212-18.htm#2:12); [13](http://www.preceptaustin.org/philippians_213.htm#2:13), [Ezek 36:27](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Ezek%2036.27))

But those who **wait** (**[Qavah](http://studylight.org/lex/heb/view.cgi?number=06960" \o "wait or look for w eager expectation (hope & confidence) =await, look for patiently, hope, be confident, trust, be enduring. Waiting w steadfast endurance is a great expression of faith.)**)  for the Lord [who expect, look for, and **hope** in Him] shall change and renew their strength and power (idea of Hebrew word "gain new" = substitute or exchange their strength for His strength). They shall lift their wings and mount up [close to God] as eagles [mount up to the sun]. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint or become tired. ([Isaiah 40:31](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Isaiah%2040.31)-[note](http://www.preceptaustin.org/isaiah_4031_commentary.htm), Amplified Version).

**the Spirit’s present blessings are “firstfruits.”**

Christ in you, the **hope** of glory.

Joy looks upward, peace looks inward, hope looks forward.

We may call this a "fact" (prophecy of Jesus' Second Coming) because of its certainty.

**Prophecy is history written beforehand**.

In the coming of the Lord is the hope of the world.

We are to live and work in the light of this glorious day.

Of his appearing again

Conclusion

Living in the light of Christ’s appearing

What would you do different if he would appear to you?

Today – he wants to – appear to you

To appear personally

To call your name

To tell you he knows you

He knows your situation

He cares

He will be with you

He will walk with you

Through it all

On your journey

Marching to Zion

To an eternity that is far beyond anything you have ever experienced

Brought about by a man that is different than anyone you have ever met

Meet Jesus anew today

See him as he is

Not through the guise of watered down religion

Arise and shine for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you

Come and be filled with His Spirit – that times of refreshing may come

Come and receive a new revelation of Christ Jesus

Come as you are – but expect to be changed.

To be given a new hope

**Romans 8:18-39 (NIV)**
18  I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.
19  The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.
20  For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope
21  that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.
22  We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.
23  Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.
24  For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?
25  But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.
26  In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.
27  And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.
28  And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.
29  For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.
30  And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.
31  What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?
32  He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?
33  Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.
34  Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.
35  Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?
36  As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."
37  No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.
38  For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,
39  neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.