**Series Road Map: Evergreen**

**Series Overview:** Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year… right? Well, not for everyone. Though we like to talk about how Christmas is magical, the reality for many is that it’s just a yearly reminder of everything they don’t have. Everything they have lost. But it’s not supposed to be like this. Christmas is so much more than a magical celebration, it is a reminder of the single greatest source of joy, peace, and hope the world has ever known. Let’s make this Christmas the most meaningful one yet!

**Week Overview:** It's hard not to feel hopeless at times. With everything bad going on in the world, it's no wonder that rates of depression and anxiety have skyrocketed in the recent past. But the world has always been messed up, so why are people feeling extra hopeless right now? The reality is, it's not because of our bad circumstances, it's because we have bad sources of hope. The truth is, there is only one true source of hope and it is Jesus Christ. And that is the good news of Christmas!

***Outline:***

**Grab the Room (Intro):** Story of the time you were excited for something and it ended up letting you down

**Tension (what’s the struggle):** What does it truly mean to have hope and where can we find true help?

**Text:** Is 9:2,6-7 ; Heb 6:19

**THP**: Hope is an anchor.

**Supporting Points:**

**Application (call to action)**:

*Red – Scripture*

*Blue – Personal Story*

*Green – Prop*

***THP/Main Points – Bold***

**Evergreen**

**December 2021**

**Northview Church**

**Script:**

Well it's hard to believe that Christmas is right around the corner! I hope you guys have done your Christmas shopping because there's not much time left. It's also hard to believe that we’re in the final week of our Christmas series, Evergreen. Remember, we're talking about how our faith is meant to be Evergreen, which means it can endure through even the most difficult seasons of life. Faith was never meant to be dependent on our circumstances, in fact faith is meant to be consistent regardless of our circumstances. We've been talking about how 3 of the biggest themes during Christmas time can help us to produce an evergreen faith: joy, peace, and hope. My prayer is that every single one of us can lean into our faith this Christmas and truly care for our souls. And I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that if we can increase our joy our peace and our hope, that this will happen! There's no better way to care for your soul then by asking for help from the one who created you. Tonight I really want to focus in on hope, but let me pray first...

 (pray)

Have you ever been super excited for something and then it ended up being a massive disappointment? (tell a personal story that illustrates this. Make this one light-hearted, because I want you to tell another one right afterwards that is heavier or more personal.)

 Some of you will be able to relate to me on this one... One of my all-time favorite restaurants, which I'll keep anonymous to spare their reputation, made me a big promise. You see, though I love this restaurant, they were always lacking in something really important. Let’s just say it's a form of liquid cheese that goes really well with things like chips, tacos, or burritos. In fact, their biggest competitor have an amazing form of this, and at times it was tempting to switch over simply because of this liquid cheese, though I knew for sure that the food was much better at my restaurant. That being said, my favorite restaurant made me a promise that they would make a liquid cheese that would go with my food. I was so excited. I remember them counting down the days on social media, and getting everyone excited for the big debut. Once this liquid cheese was introduced at my favorite restaurant, there wouldn't even be a temptation to go to their competitor anymore. Well... they introduced it, and I realized very quickly that they were probably better off never even trying.

 This happens all the time, doesn’t it? This is a funny example, but how many times in your life is it not very funny? We get so excited about things and we wait and we wait and we wait, but when it actually happens... we realize it wasn't really worth the wait, was it? Maybe it's that spot on the team you've been going for for a while, maybe it's the GPA you've been striving for for years, maybe you've had a goal that you've been going after for a long long time, or maybe it's the person you've always wanted to like you.

(Tell a heavier version of the above story. A time when you hoped in something, but it ended up disappointing you.)

 When I was in college, one of my biggest goals my junior and senior year was to qualify for the national Marathon. I knew I would have to run a faster half marathon than I had ever run before in order to hit the qualifying time, but I also thought it was possible. I worked my whole junior year after this goal, only to fall short. That motivated me for my senior year, and I went after it even harder my senior year. I remember the day of the qualifying race like it was yesterday. It was a beautiful morning, nice and cool, with almost no wind at all. I knew if I was going to hit the qualifying time, it was going to be that day. I started out my race and knew from the beginning it was going to be a good one. By mile 8 and 9 I was running well under the time I needed to qualify, and I felt amazing. A part of me worried that I wouldn't be able to finish as strong, but somehow I felt great all the way to the finish line and ran almost two minutes faster than I'd ever run before at this distance! That qualified me for the national race! But do you know what was crazy? Almost immediately after the race I started thinking about how it could have been better. How I could have run faster. Almost immediately I wanted more. This thing I've been going after for years, I finally got it, and it wasn't enough. I felt a whole range of emotions as I tried to figure out why I was disappointed after such an incredible race.

 Guys, all of these examples I can talk to you about are examples of hope. We all have them. It's the things that we look forward to or strive for that we think will give us meaning and purpose. We hope in the future things, thinking, “if I could just have that thing” or “if I could just get to that place”, or “if I could just perform at that level”, I WOULD FINALLY FEEL SATISFIED. And here's the thing, hope is one of the greatest feelings in the world... unless you realize the thing that you had hope for all along was really just a disappointment. We need a source of true hope, because true **hope is an anchor.** We see this in Hebrews 6:19 when the author says

 **19** We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.

It is meant to hold us steady when the waters of life try to knock us around. Just like a strong anchor will hold a boat steady and keep it from drifting our hope in Jesus acts as an anchor for our souls and keeps us from drifting away in life. The Christmas story offers us true hope. In fact, the Christmas story is one of the greatest manifestations of hope in all history.

 Did you realize that when Jesus was born, people were waiting for him? Jesus didn't just pop out of nowhere and tell whoever he met that they needed saving. No. people had been talking about Jesus for a long long time... they just didn't know his name yet. You see, from early on in the Old Testament... God told his people, the Israelites, that he would send a savior. He talked about how Abraham, whose family was the beginning of the Israelite Nation, would be a blessing to the whole world. Meaning that one of Abraham's descendants would save the world. One of Abraham's descendants would make a way for God and Mankind to be back in right relationship again. This was a promise made thousands of years before Jesus was born. the Israelite people had been hoping for a savior, holding onto that hope, for literally generations!

Let's pause for a second... Can you imagine that? Imagine waiting for Generations? I don't think any of us can. Let's be honest, our generation is terrible at waiting. We are in the time of instant gratification. We want our food to be microwaved so we don't have to wait. We need our Wi-Fi fast enough to ensure that we don't have to wait more than a second or two to get what we want. We love fast cars, fast food, and quick fixes to our problems. We hate to wait. But here's the problem, true hope requires waiting. Waiting is not a bad thing, if you're waiting for the right thing. And true hope provides an anchor for us to hold steady to as we wait, , because **hope is meant to be our anchor.**

I want to read you something that was written about Jesus, but it was written about 700 years before he arrived on Earth. Did you catch that? It was written about Jesus, but 700 years before he actually arrived. That's called prophecy, and it was written by the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah was telling the Israelite people of the hope they can have in the coming savior. Here is what he said :

The people walking in darkness

 have seen a great light;

on those living in the land of deep darkness

 a light has dawned. (Isaiah 9:2)

He goes on to say…

**6**

For to us a child is born,

 to us a son is given,

 and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called

 Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

 Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

**7**

Of the greatness of his government and peace

 there will be no end.

He will reign on David’s throne

 and over his kingdom,

establishing and upholding it

 with justice and righteousness

 from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the Lord Almighty

 will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

Sounds pretty familiar, right? This is the Christmas story! Isaiah is talking about the Christmas story literally 700 years before it actually happens! How cool is that?? Only problem? That's a lot of waiting. 700 years!! The Israelite people knew about the promise that Jesus was coming, but they had no idea how long they had to wait. This is where hope comes in. The only thing they could do was hold tight to the hope that Jesus was coming, and allow that hope to become their anchor in the waiting. Trusting that what Isaiah said was true, and that God would keep his promise. This was their anchor as they waited…

(really PREACH this part)

Guys, please do not miss this!! THIS is why Christmas is so incredible! Because God DID keep his promise. He always does! Jesus came down to earth. God, in the form of a man, was born as a baby in Bethlehem just as it was promised. He grew up to live for 33 years as a man. He helped the blind to see, the lame to walk, and raised people from the dead. He preached of the coming of the kingdom of God and even told people he would have to die for them to be in right relationship with God, but he promised that he would come back to life. And once again, God kept his promise! Jesus did die a criminal's death, but 3 days later he resurrected! Conquering sin and death for us and making a way for us to be in right relationship with Him again. God keeps his promises! Christmas is a reminder that God keeps his promises!

This is why hope in Jesus needs to be our anchor. He keeps his promises! He is consistent. He is good. He is in control. We can trust him! Do you need hope? Jesus is the only source of true hope. He will not disappoint you. He will not let you down. He can be trusted. What he says is true, and what he promises, he sees to completion.

Some of you need hope today. Hope that there is a bigger plan at work that what you see happening right in front of you. Hope that God has a plan for your life, even if you don’t know what that plan is yet. Hope that there is more to life than just the physical, and that there is more to life, even after death. I pray that this Christmas season is a reminder that you can put your hope in Jesus. I hope that Christmas reminds you, as it should, that God keeps his promises. There's going to be some waiting involved. There always is. It's not always going to seem like it's going to work out. Sometimes, before we see the light at the end of the tunnel, all we see is a dark tunnel. But we can choose to have hope. We can choose to believe that God will keep his promises, and I promise you that if you choose to believe this you will not be disappointed.

(I do not have a specific example, but if you would like to add-in a personal story of a season in your life that involved a lot of waiting, please share. These types of personal stories can be so powerful. Be sure to include how you saw God move/work in this time of waiting and how He came through, even if it was differently than you had imagined.)

I want to close by looking at the lyrics of one of the most famous Christmas songs of all time. It's called O Holy Night. This song is filled with HOPE. It paints a beautiful picture of the promises that Jesus has made to us. Promises of a future Kingdom that we can be a part of. Listen to these words from the verses of the song and let them fill you with hope:

O holy night, the stars are brightly shining,

It is the night of the dear Saviour’s birth;

Long lay the world in sin and error pining,

'Till he appeared and the soul felt its worth.

A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,

For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn;

“A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,” Wow. What a beautiful picture. This idea of hope in the midst of weariness is so relatable. Do you need a thrill of hope? Let’s jump to another verse

Truly He taught us to love one another;

His law is Love and His gospel is Peace;

Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother,

And in his name all oppression shall cease,

Sweet hymns of joy in grateful Chorus raise we;

Let all within us praise his Holy name!

I love this picture of what Jesus will do when he returns and sets everything right. It is in this future promise that we can find our hope. We’ve been waiting for almost 2,000 years now, but Jesus WILL make good on His promise!

Guys, this song is all about hope. It's praising God that he is in control and we can trust him. It paints a gorgeous picture of the future he has promised to all of his followers. One where there is no oppression, there's no hurt, there's no pain, where we will live in peace with one another. Like the song says, there's a new and glorious morning coming and we can choose to have hope in this!

 But as we wait, we need hope to be our anchor. Anchors don't change the conditions of the water, but it holds the boat steady. Hope is the same way. It doesn't stop things from getting difficult, but it's something steady to hold onto when they do.

Do you need hope today? Jesus is offering it to you. He offers you a hope that doesn't rely on circumstances. A hope you can hold onto even in the most difficult times. A hope that is Evergreen. But it all starts with knowing him…

(give a chance to pray to Trust in Jesus)

Let’s close by singing “O Holy Night together”. Let these words of hope refresh your soul.

(Close by singing O Holy Night together)

Well I have loved walking through this Christmas season with each one of you, but don’t forget that Christmas is still on its way! I want to encourage each and every one of you to make the most of everyday leading up to Christmas. Keep the leather evergreen tree with you and let it remind you of the real reason we celebrate Christmas. I pray it’s the most powerful one yet, full of Joy, Peace, and Hope. Love you guys!