



# CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

WEEKLY UPDATE

Christmas

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## Christmas Message 2022

### Jesus Christ Our LIVING Hope

*Rev. Rohan Forrester*

Please read Isaiah 62:1-12; Psalm 97; Luke 2:1-20



Our waiting is over! We've been waiting since the start of Advent, preparing ourselves in anticipation of this day. Amid all that is still wrong in the world, today we proclaim that God comes to us in the Christ child. Each week of the Advent season led us closer to the ever-brightening path to the manger of the Christ Child. As a people of hope we have waited, not in despair or dejection. We waited with joy, because we know that even though the end was not in sight until a day like today, the end of our waiting would come to pass. What a wonderful feeling to know the One who is the reason for this season. Let us rejoice, praise and give thanks to God!

At the birth of Jesus, we receive living hope. We have tremendous possibilities as a result of this birth; possibilities that didn't exist in the Old Covenant. Christ is indeed our living hope. However, there is a major difference between the way a believer and an unbeliever define the word hope. When the world speaks of hope you'll hear something like this, "I hope I win the lottery." But what do they mean by that? The chance of people involved in a game of chance actually winning the lottery is very small, but we often hear another expression, "I just wish I would get lucky."

The believer's hope, however, is the exact opposite. The believer's hope is a living hope that is not the unsure like secular hope. Our hope is a certain and confident expectation of good things to come. It is a confident expectation that something will come to pass. Our hope is not passive nor dormant. Our hope is active and powerful. It is:

- Hope for those who are longing.
- Hope for those who struggle.
- Hope for those undergoing trials.
- Hope for those who feel lost or unseen.
- Hope for those who have failed miserably.
- Hope for those who wonder if God is there or has forgotten them.
- Hope for all peoples, all circumstances, all seasons.

God has given us a living hope in the person and work of Jesus Christ, so that our faith might result in God's glory. The following are elements of living hope that God has given us that our faith might result in God's glory.

#### **I. We have living hope as we wait on the fulfillment of God's promises (62: 2-5)**

Isaiah chapter 62 picks up from where the previous chapter ended. You see, Zion was profoundly important to Isaiah, not just because he was a patriot, but because he was acutely aware of its strategic significance in God's purposes. He could not keep silent about it (v. 1a). The future of Zion in God's plans was the theme of his preaching, and when preaching became impossible, it became the theme of his prayers (vv. 6-7). Therefore, if righteousness and praise are to spring up before all nations, the question is how and where? The answer has been already given in previous chapters, but now it is taken up again with fresh vigor. It is from Zion that righteousness will shine out like the dawn, and salvation like a blazing torch, and all nations will see it (vv. 1-2). Isaiah is here speaking clear hope of good news to the exiled people. We also see the culmination of extravagant promises God made to God's exiled people. Earlier in the book of Isaiah, God promised to build up the barren and forsaken city of Jerusalem with foundations of sapphires, ruby towers, gates and walls of precious jewels (54:12).

Here the prophet promises newness, transformation, and new names signaling joyful union for Jerusalem and all the land around her (Verse 5). There is continuity; the new will emerge from the old. But there is also discontinuity. The new will be so different from the old that it will require and be given a new name (vv. 2b-5, 12). The prophet can only make these promises because God has made them.

God promised to deliver and bring the exiled people home and promised them the richest of feasts (56:2). Indeed, they did not come home until the year 539. When they finally returned home to their native land, returning to them were sacred vessels and other objects from the plundered temple in Jerusalem. However, the reality people returned to was far from glorious. The land seemed to them like a desert. It was true that the land was not empty; people had remained in Judah during the years of exile, and others had moved into the area, making a life for themselves in Jerusalem and in the surrounding countryside. In essence, salvation for the people is seen as the fulfilment of God's promises to bring back God's people, restore them, and make them as glorious as God has always intended. The truth is, they didn't know when that will happen or how. What they did know is that they must keep hope alive.

## **II. We have living hope as we call on the Lord (62:6-9)**

Our daily call on or prayer to God is not vain repetition. It's a call that demonstrates we have confident expectation that God continues to work in our lives. The prophet Isaiah said that watchmen are set up in Jerusalem, but they are not to be watching for enemies to attack. This was the usual function of the watchmen. They would sound the alarm when armies would approach, but this is not the purpose for these watchmen. These watchmen are pictured as calling on the Lord day and night until God accomplishes this promise of salvation and righteousness.

Verses 1-5 rise to the climax of 5b: your God will rejoice over you. It is an impressive reminder of how significant God's people are to God. God's interest in the people is not casual but focused, determined, and full of love. They are destined for glory (v. 2), to be held aloft in the Lord's hand (v. 3), and to be married to Him as His bride forever (vv. 4-5). The reference in verse 5 to God rejoicing prepares the way for the switch to God as speaker in verse 6. He has a word of encouragement for all those who, like Isaiah, give themselves no rest but call on the Lord unceasingly to bring His plans for Zion to fruition.

We are encouraged to keep calling on the Lord to accomplish his promises. God will do, but give him no rest until he does. What a great picture that God offers us! God will do it because God promised it, but pray for it anyway! Pray for God do accomplish his promises. Do not give God rest until he does. This is not a reminder because God has forgotten or could somehow break a promise. This reminder is communicating our faith. It is dependence on God. It is relationship. The promise was that they would have what was theirs – their land, faith, peace and joy, among other things.

Think about how often God tells us to be persistent in prayer (cf. Luke 18:7; Philippians 4:6; Romans 12:12; Colossians 4:2). Keep praying because it will keep us hopeful in the promises of God. Keep praying because it will call to our minds the promises of God. We are given authority by God to wear God out in prayer. God tells us to persist in prayer and not lose heart. Even though we believe that God will do what God says, we still must pray about it day and night. Today, we have this living hope in prayer whereby God calls on us to pray, pray, and pray even more!

## **III. We have a living hope because of our salvation (62:10-12)**

Our lives must be centered around the hope of our salvation. Everything that we do must be surrounded by the hope of our salvation. When we go out to work or to school, and whatever we do, we should be walking in the hope of our salvation. That must be the foundation of how we live and everything that we do. Because of our salvation we do not have just a hope, but a living hope. That means that the believer's hope is genuine, real, and vital. Our hope is alive and true. It is not empty or vain. Our hope is effective, and alive.

In verses 10-12, the call goes through once again to the land and the people to get ready. The proclamation (vv. 10-12) is, in effect, an announcement that the time has come for the final great pilgrimage to Zion to begin. The promise of a Savior is about to be fulfilled (v. 11), so those still in captivity in Babylon are set out quickly as a vanguard to the multitudes who follow,

both Jews and Gentiles (v. 10). The future city of God will be a far cry indeed from the desolate, ruined Jerusalem of the sixth century BC. It will be full of holy, redeemed people, the joy of the whole earth (v. 12).

It's a call to prepare the way for the people to come to the Lord because salvation is coming. God is removing our sin obstacles so that we can come to him. At times, the description of Zion in this chapter is very concrete – its name, land, and walls. In other places it's more abstract: glory, salvation, righteousness. But in a sense the last verse of the chapter is the key to it all. The real glory of Zion will be its inhabitants: the Holy People, the Redeemed of the Lord (v. 12), gathered in from the nations as well as from Israel (v. 10). You shall be called "The Holy People," "The Redeemed of the Lord," and "Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken." This is a picture of God's love. God went after us. This demonstrates that God was not going to give us up even though we were enslaved in our sins. We are not forsaken. God has come to our rescue. God has redeemed us. God has made us holy, and we belong to Him. Let us lift up our eyes and see that our Savior comes. Here comes our salvation!

Notice that God is pursuing the people to save them. This tells us that we are not saved according to our own effort, but God of His own accord shows mercy on us. Therefore, our hope rests firmly on the power of God to save, as prophesied in the promises in the book of Isaiah. These are comforting truths to live with as they are tied to God's promises and produce hope in our lives that God is able to save.

## **IV. We have a living hope in Christ's Return**

At Christmas, we remember that Christ, our living hope, isn't isolated from us—Christ is right there with us and lives in us, intimately involved with us, everywhere, all the time. Also, in Christ, we look forward to the future of His return. Isaiah points us to the reign of Christ predicted in the Book of Revelation in chapter 19, which validates this promise for us. Jesus will strike down the nations and rule them with a rod of iron (Revelation 19:15). He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Think about this: He rules the nations in righteousness. This is our hope for the future.

While some see these things as symbolic, others see the culmination of fulfillment of their hope as in Christ. However, when we lose sight of Christ, our living hope, we lose sight of what is important. When we lose sight of what is important, we chase after the temporary and cannot find satisfaction. We are left empty and hopeless. It is easy to be so focused on day-to-day living that we forget that Christ has come and will return. So, let us fix our hope in the love of Christ and the grace to be revealed when Christ returns.

May we, today, find hope and comfort in the birth of the Christ child, our living hope. Isaiah 62 is a magnificent promise for the Church of Jesus Christ, the new Jerusalem composed of people from every nation, race, tribe and language. The Church - like the ancient post-exilic Israel - must see the promises of God through the eyes of faith as if they were made today.

*Lord, we celebrate your coming to us in Jesus your Son. Prepare us for that joyful day when Jesus will come again. In the meantime, accept our imperfect offerings - our broken*

selves - as we struggle to be faithful, as we yearn for your coming when all will be made new. And may our church know the reality of the Christ who came and is coming again. Come to us soon, Emmanuel. Amen.



## Peace Initiative Project

At the 42nd Synod of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, held in April 2021, the Peace Initiative was introduced. Each Regional Mission Council was asked to identify a project. The Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council (CIRMC), at its October 8, 2022, Meeting agreed that the Cayman Island Crisis Centre would be our project. The Mission MAT coordinated the effort and prepared a list of items needed by the Crisis Centre. The items were collected at the Council Office.



On December 16, 2022, the Chair of Council, Rev. Rohan Forrester presented a cheque of CI\$3,050 and Foster Gift Cards to Ms. Mariesha Spencer of the Cayman Islands Crisis Centre. Thank you all for your participation and generous support!



(From left: Rv. Dr. Yvette Noble-Bloomfield – RDGS/CIRMC, Rev. Rohan Forrester – Chair of Council, Ms. Mariesha Spencer – CICC, Ms. Melody McLean – Mission MAT and Mrs. Tessa Boddan – Vice Chair of Mission MAT)



The donations received at the Council Office.

## Christmas Day

December 25, 2022

Jesus Christ Our LIVING Hope



Isaiah 62:26-12 Psalm 97 Luke 2:1-20

Isaiah reminds us that Jesus is the culmination of ALL promises, restoring us to fullness of life with names like Holy, Redeemed, Sought Out, Not Forsaken. There is cause to celebrate, for Christ's birth is testimony that He WILL Return. The message to the Shepherds assured them of a LIVING testimony of God's redemption – a sign and a hope for all humanity.

- What is the message of Hope for us in the birth of Christ?
- With whom do we need to share this message?

## UPCOMING EVENTS

December 24. (Saturday)

**Christmas Eve Candle Light Service - 6:30 pm** Elmslie UC

December 25. (Sunday) **Christmas Day Services**

8:30 am – South Sound UC

8:45 am – Robert Young UC

9:00 am – Savannah UC

9:00 am – William Pouchie Memorial UC

9:30 am – Gun Bay UC (**Christmas Youth Production**)

10:30 am – Elmslie UC

11:00 am – John Gray MUC

11:00 am – Webster Memorial UC (**Christmas Cantata**)

11:00 am – East End UC (**Children/Adult Production**)

December 26. (Monday) **Boxing Day - Public Holiday**

December 27. (Tuesday)

**Public Holiday for Christmas Day**



on Radio Cayman 89.9  
every Sunday at 7:45 am

**December 25, 2022**  
**Rev. Rohan Forrester**

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