

Introduction

1. It is the time of year again. The days are getting shorter, shopping malls are offering endless coupons and discounts, Christmas music is played in radio stations, and Christmas lights are put on everywhere. We as Christians call it Advent season. Advent was originally from Latin language, "*Adventus*" which means "the coming of the Savior." It is a holy season for all the Christian churches waiting and preparing for the celebration of the Nativity of Christ, also known as the season of Christmas.
2. Traditionally, purple is the color for Advent. We know that purple was very difficult to be made in the ancient time, thus it was used by kings for the symbol of nobility. Purple also signifies the repentance of God's people as they patiently await the arrival of the Lord. That's why we always use purple for Lenten season.
3. However, in the relatively recent time, many churches have adopted blue into the liturgical system for the symbol of Advent. Maybe this color means differently in USA, but blue symbolizes hope, expectation, and heaven.
4. Today is the first Sunday in advent, a Sunday represented by our first candle... the hope candle. This hope is not something like "I hope I can get an iPad for Christmas gift," "I hope Lakers win the game," or "I hope a job of less working hour with more pay." No, it's not this kind of earthly hope.
5. It's the Hope of a people, a nation, the whole world. Many people might not be aware of this Hope, but this Hope will be the solution of all the problems; this Hope will wipe out all the tears and terminate the sufferings; this Hope will give you great joy and true peace and those gifts will last forever. This Hope is Jesus Christ our Savior.

I. Hope in the Hopeless situation

- Once upon a time a manufacturer of shoes sent 2 salesmen to a far-way-country. A few days after their arrival, the boss received 2 telegrams from these 2 salesmen. The first one said, "Get me out of here—no one wears shoes!" In contrary, the other telegram said, "Send me all the inventory from your warehouse—everyone needs shoes here!"
1. I am sure that many of us have heard this story before; and this story might be true. In today's OT lesson, the message of the prophet is similar to the 2nd salesman who asked for more shoes. It's the message of hope, in a hopeless situation. Let me give you some background of this passage.

2. At that time, the prophet Jeremiah was in jail because he prophesized against the king and the people of Judah. They had sinned against God by not obeying His laws, worshipped different idols and kept those idols' important days as national holidays.
3. Jeremiah was very disappointed. He warned the king, the nobles and all the people of Judea, but none of them listened to him. Later, God showed Jeremiah how He was going to punish the Jews—by sending Nebuchadnezzar and his troupes from Babylon to defeat Jerusalem.
4. Maybe to most of us it's not a big deal. But think about this: if you hear a great religious leader like Billy Graham prophesizes against the country that Al Qaida and Hamas are going to invade USA, and we shouldn't fight back because they are the instruments of God to punish our unfaithfulness, what will you do? Will you believe it? Or instead, you will pick up a stone and throw on him? That's exactly what's happening to Jeremiah. He was put to jail, and that jail was not a room behind the bars; it's a pit, a well, a deep hole below the ground.
5. Therefore, in most cases Jeremiah was like the first salesman of the shoes; he thought there was no hope, no future, and no way out for the Jews. And as a prophet, he had tried his best, but it seemed to make no progress. However, after receiving the revelation how God was going to set the captives free and restore the nation of Israel, Jeremiah found hope.
6. The book of Jeremiah chapter 32 and 33, the messages are not warnings or judgments but the message of hope, healing, comfort, and message of restoration. Although Jeremiah didn't have the chance to see the people of God return from the captivity, he had great hope on God, and thus he delivered the message of hope to his people.
7. The people in Jeremiah's time didn't understand, but years later when those captives were set free and returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the holy temple, they experienced the presence of God, and they actually see the promises fulfilled in front of them.
8. **Brothers and sisters. God is faithful; even when we break our covenant with Him, He is still faithful to keep His promises to us. Hold onto Him and His promises, and the truth will set you free (John 8:32).**

II. Take the Son, take it all

- Many years ago, a very wealthy man who were also a collecting of art paintings. He had only one son; together they traveled all over the world, seeing and buying only the best art treasures to their collections. Priceless works by Picasso, Van Gogh, Monet and many others that filled the house of the family.
- Years later, the wife of the father died; as the widowed father was getting older, he was ready to give everything to his only one son who was also a great art

collector. But the day came when the war reached the nation, and the son left to serve his country. After only a few short weeks, his father received a telegram that his beloved son died in the war.

- On a Christmas morning after the war, someone knocked door of the old man's house. A veteran came to greet him with a large package. He said to the old man, "I was a friend of your son. He laid down his life to save mine. God gives me some gifts on drawing pictures, so I paint the image of the one who saved my life. And this is what I want to give to you."
 - As the old man unwrapped the package, it was a portrait of his son. Although it's not a masterpiece, the painting did feature the young man's face and capture his personality.
 - A few months later, the old man died. All the collectors of art world were in anticipation! According to the will of the old man, all of his collections would be auctioned. The day soon arrived, and those collectors from all over the world gathered to bid on the world's most spectacular paintings. The auction began with a painting that was not on any museum's list. It was the painting of the old man's son.
 - The auctioneer, who was also the lawyer of the family, asked for an opening bid. "Who will open the bidding with \$1000?" he asked. The room was silent for several minutes. Someone from back of the room murmured, "Who cares about that painting? It's just a picture of his son. Let's forget it and go on to the valuable paintings."
 - But the auctioneer replied, "No, we have to sell this one first. Now, who will take the son?" Finally, a friend of the old man spoke. "I knew the boy, so I'd like to have it. I will bid the \$1000." "I have a bid for \$1000," called the auctioneer. "Will anyone go higher?" After a long silence, the auctioneer said, "Going once. Going twice. Gone."
 - It was a huge relief to all the people in the room; they thought it's time for real deals. But the auctioneer looked at the audience and announced the auction was over. Everyone was shock, "What do you mean it's over? What about all of these other paintings? There are millions of dollars of fine art here!" The auctioneer replied, "According to the will of the father, whoever takes the son... gets it all."
1. "Whoever takes the son...gets it all." This is the true hope for the world, and this is what the Christmas all about. As we are preparing for the coming of the Lord, keep this in mind: Jesus Christ is the reason for Christmas season. He has come to bring us Hope, and one day, He will come back again for you and for me, to take us to the real Promise Land.
 2. May the peace of God which surpasses all understandings, keep and guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus, Amen.