

KAILUA CHRISTIAN CHURCH
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2024
Sermon: “Hope and Uncertainty Are Neighbors”
Scripture: Isaiah 9:1-7
Rev. Irene Willis Hassan

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1 Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan- 2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. 3 You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. 4 For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. 5 Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. 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.

MESSAGE: “Hope and Uncertainty Are Neighbors”

Greetings, dear friends. I come to you today with a heart full of both concern and hope, sharing this message from the mainland due to a sudden and unexpected event in my life. This week, my dad—a man who embodies health and vitality by doing things like riding his bike 30 miles every day, eating well, and regularly visiting his doctor—experienced a sudden cardiac event that led to his hospitalization and the installation of a pacemaker. It has been a jarring moment for our family, serving as a reminder that nothing in this life is static.

As we gather today to reflect on the first week of Advent, I am reminded of the words from Isaiah 9:1-7, which speak of a light shining in the darkness, a promise of hope that is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The passage begins with a stark acknowledgment of the gloom that surrounds us: “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.” This light is not just a flicker; it is a beacon of hope amidst uncertainty.

Hope and uncertainty are neighbors—intimately connected and often inseparable. This may seem paradoxical, but let's explore this theme together. You see, hope is not something we possess because we can predict our futures clearly; in fact, it is precisely the opposite. Hope is born out of uncertainty. It exists in the space between what is and what could be. It is the belief in a restored future even when we cannot see it clearly.

As I reflect on my dad's health crisis, I realize that our lives can change in an instant. We build our lives on routines and health practices, but we ultimately cannot predict what tomorrow holds. This unpredictability can leave us feeling lost and anxious. Yet, it is in these moments of uncertainty that hope becomes our anchor.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase." This profound truth captures the essence of hope perfectly. Hope requires us to take that first step into the unknown, trusting that God is already there, mapping out a path we cannot yet see. It invites us to lean into our faith, even when the way forward is shrouded in darkness.

Isaiah reminds us that in these moments, we have a choice. We can either dwell in despair or turn our eyes toward the light—the promise of Jesus. In Hebrews 13:8, we are reminded that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." When we place our trust in Him, we anchor ourselves to a foundation that is steadfast, regardless of the storms we face. God knows that hope and uncertainty are neighbors, and invites us to knock on hope's door when we're stuck between their two houses because that is where He lives, permanently.

Trusting in Jesus during times of unpredictability assures us that we are not alone in our struggles. He invites us to bring our burdens to Him: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). In our moments of fear and anxiety, we can find comfort in knowing that Jesus walks alongside us, understanding our pain and fears. Jesus knows that hope and uncertainty are neighbors, and walks with us during times when we are standing on the boundary between those two houses.

Moreover, our trust in God opens our hearts to a greater perspective. While we may not understand why things happen, we can trust that God has a purpose that transcends our immediate understanding. Romans 8:28 assures us that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him." This doesn't mean that every situation will be good in the way we define it, but it instead means that God can bring about good even from our pain and uncertainty. God knows hope and uncertainty are neighbors, and promises us goodness for those who walk toward his stabilizing house of hope.

And here lies the beauty of hope: it allows us to cultivate resilience. When we place our hope in Jesus, we are better equipped to navigate life's challenges. Instead of viewing our circumstances as insurmountable trials, we begin to see them as opportunities for both growth and deepening our relationship with God. Our faith grants us a perspective shift, allowing us to embrace the peace that “transcends all understanding” (Philippians 4:7).

As we reflect on the Advent season, we are reminded that hope is not a passive wish; it is an active trust in God’s promises. The birth of Christ signifies the arrival of hope, a hope that assures us that there is more to life than our current struggles. It is a hope that looks forward to the ultimate kingdom of heaven—a place where there is no sadness, no disease, and no unpredictability.

In this season of Advent, while we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ, let us keep our eyes firmly fixed on that light. Even when we walk through valleys of uncertainty, we must remember that the Christ child brings with Him the promise of peace, joy, and hope. He is the light that dispels darkness and the anchor for our souls.

Jesus knows that hope and uncertainty are neighbors in our lives. They walk side by side, reminding us that hope is not the absence of fear but the presence of faith. As we await His coming, let us absorb our anxieties into Him, allowing His peace to wash over us. And may we, like the people in Isaiah’s time, see the great light that has come into the world—a light that brings hope, even in the midst of our darkest days.

Amen.