



# + YOU

Winter 2024-25  
Looking Forward to Christmas

**Sermon Title:** Christmas Gives Us the Gift of Hope

**To be used with session 1:** Looking Forward with Hope

**Scripture:** Matthew 12:9-21

**Connection with Bible Study:** This sermon complements the Bible study “Looking Forward with Hope” by examining how the coming of God’s Servant, the Messiah, brought hope to the world. The Bible study for this week focuses on the prophecy found in Isaiah 40. Matthew, in his gospel, pointed to this same Messianic prophecy in Matthew 3:3. In addition, Matthew pointed to another prophecy of the Messiah from Isaiah 42:1-4. This prophecy is quoted in Matthew 12:15-21. Here the Messiah is identified as the one in which the nations will put their hope. The coming of Jesus at Christmas serves as a gift of hope to us as well.

## Introduction

Maybe you’ve seen the television commercial that includes a testimonial of the impact of a product on personal health. Following the testimonial, a celebrity spokesman emphatically states: “That’s the truth.” “That’s the facts.” “That’s the hope.” Don’t you wish it was that simple to find hope? A pill in a bottle. So easy! Our world is constantly looking for hope, but most of what passes for hope is temporary, whether it’s pain medicine, the latest relationship, or the latest peace talks. It doesn’t last. What is needed in our world is lasting hope, eternal hope.

Hope might be defined as the wishful feeling that what we want will happen. Biblical hope is different and is based on the promises and character of God. What God promises, He brings to pass. For the believer hope is a strong belief in the reality of what God will do.

Much like our world today, the first-century world was desperate for hope. The people lived in dire poverty, eating at best one meal a day and meat once a week. Taxation under the Roman government was more than oppressive. Freedoms were limited and life was filled with misery.

In this misery, however, was the ray of hope found in the promise of the coming Messiah. He would surely bring hope. But when Jesus, God’s Messiah, came, the hope He brought was totally different from what they were expecting. His agenda as Messiah contradicted everything hoped for by the Jewish people.

## 1. Hope took on a servant’s role (Matt. 12:15-18).

Reading through the gospels reveals a growing puzzlement of the people with their expected Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. They were sensing that He was not the type of Messianic deliver

they were anticipating. They were looking for a military conqueror who would rid them of Roman domination. After all, He was to occupy the throne of David, and David had been a warrior king.

Jesus appeared to resist such thinking. Yet the more Jesus healed and cast out demons, the more intense the hopes of the people became. All of this inevitably led to growing conflict. Matthew 12:9-14 records one of those confrontations over the expectations of the religious leaders and the people. Verse 14 was one of many references to the plot to eliminate Jesus because He wasn't what they expected.

In response to this impending conflict, Matthew inserted an Old Testament prophecy pointing to the real nature of God's Messiah (vv. 15-21). Isaiah 42:1-4 pointed to a description of the Messiah unlike what was expected. There we find three qualities that didn't seem to fit a great revolutionary leader.

First, Jesus the Messiah came as a servant. He was here, not to bring military deliverance, but to obey and please His Heavenly Father. "... the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). The Messiah came to serve others by giving His life for them. Through His servant's heart, He brought hope to this world.

## **2. Hope adopted an attitude of humility (Matt. 12:19).**

The Jewish nation suffered terribly under the domination of the Roman government. Brutality and harshness were the order of the day. The expectation was that the coming Messiah as a military conqueror would meet force with force, even brutality with brutality.

Jesus came with a different attitude, an attitude of humility. Paul pointed to His humble attitude in Philippians 2:6-8: "who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross." This attitude was strikingly different from the leaders of His day. This was not what was expected!

Jesus demonstrated His humility through the menial work of a household servant by washing the feet of His disciples (John 13:3-16). Even in His death His humble nature shone through. Before the Sanhedrin he didn't open His mouth in defense (Matt. 26:63). He also refused to speak in His defense before Pilate (Matt. 27:12-14). All of this fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughter and like a sheep silent before her shearers, he did not open his mouth" (Isa. 53:7). Out of this attitude of humility Jesus brings hope for all who also are oppressed.

## **3. Hope related with tender compassion (Matt. 12:20-21).**

The people in Jesus's day knew little of compassion and tenderness from those who led their nation, whether it was the Roman government or the Jewish religious establishment. All was cut and dried. In their suffering, any hope for compassion was ruled out. That is, until the gift of

hope arrived in the Christmas event of the birth of Jesus. Isaiah told us through the quotation in Matthew 12 that the coming Messiah, the Suffering Servant, would relate to all people with tender compassion.

The picture in Matthew 12:20-21 (Isaiah 42:3) is that of a reed that was broken and candle or lamp wick that would only smolder thus never producing light. The reed was used for many different purposes, but once it was broken it was fairly useless. The same is true with a worn-out lamp wick. It too would be considered useless.

These pictures represent the lives of broken people. Jesus, as God's Messiah, came to tenderly extend compassion on these. Jesus wept over lostness (Matt. 9:36; Luke 19:41-44). Jesus Himself invited these broken people to come to Him: "Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:28-29).

### **Conclusion**

Such an approach by Jesus of Nazareth of servanthood, humility, and tender compassion may not have been what the people were expecting from the Messiah, but it was exactly what they needed. Christmas brings all sorts of expectations. In reality the things most people are expecting are the things not really needed. Consider this Christmas extending the hope that this world needs to those you encounter through acts of servanthood, attitudes of humility, and an abundance of compassion and tenderness. To whom might you give the gift of hope this Christmas? Hope, not in the way we hope that hope will be, but hope as God designed it from eternity.

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