

Hope Poured Out

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In the season of Advent, we anticipate the coming of Christ into the world. This claim, that God came into the world in the person of Christ, the incarnation, is what one writer called *the Grand Miracle*. Unlike other religions, Christianity hinges on a single grand miracle. Take that miracle away and it's just another religion with minor miracles scattered here and there. Keep it in and you are *promised* peace, hope, joy. Today, we're looking at *hope*. Our text shows us *hope poured out, hope pierced through, hope flowing abundantly*.

Hope Poured

Hope is often associated with water. The desert wanderer searching for an oasis, Ponce De Leon and the fountain of youth, ceremonial Hindu cleansing in the Ganges river. Millions wade in every year with the hope of washing their sins to snap the cycle of reincarnation. Ever find yourself wanting something more, more youth, less failure, a new start/clean slate? Maybe 2016? Our text shows us hope *poured out*: "[And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy](#)" (12:10). What's being poured out? Well, the action of pouring out, and this word in particular, is often negative, associated with God pouring out judgment. Earlier in the chapter Israel is described as a cup of God's judgment that causes the nations to stagger. The verse immediately prior says "[And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem](#)". But in verse 10 what's poured out is positive. There's a day in the future, yes when nations will be destroyed, but before then there's a day when all will be welcomed. God chooses to first pour out a **spirit of grace** and mercy. But what is it? The OT prophets frequently comment on this day saying things like: "[And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel](#)" (Eze 39:29). Now why is this a grace? Because up to that point, Israel was incredibly fickle, unable to live up to their own standards, much less God's. Now he's saying a day is coming when I won't turn my face away from you, because my Spirit will be in you, poured out. This idea is kind of odd, but think about how a parent ogle over their newborn. She looks like you. No she's got your nose. The child grows up, gets a personality and you see her do something and someone leans over and says, "She's got a lot of you in her." What's he saying? She's got the family resemblance. And God is saying, "You're going to have so much of me in you, you'll look like me." That's what the Spirit does. He makes us like God, not God, but like God, godly. This Spirit of godliness is being poured out, and the more we are like God, the closer we are to our true selves, to who we were made to be. Of course, like children we also try to go our own way, even throw off the parental likeness. So it's a good thing it's a spirit of grace and *pleas of mercy*. Why mercy? Mercy is *not* getting what you deserve. If you deserve destruction, then you need pardon, forgiveness. But if you choose *not* to stand under what he pours out, *you have absolutely no hope of godliness or forgiveness*. You can't stand to the *left* and say, I just need to forgive myself because your sins aren't against yourself. That would be like seeing your child hit another kid and telling him, "Now be sure to forgive yourself." No, you ask forgiveness from the offended party. And in this case, God is the offended. You also can't stand to the *right* and say I don't need forgiveness. I mean you can, but you'll never be forgiven or godlike; you'll never get back to being who you were meant to be. You'll have to settle for bent, broken, eventual destruction. No mercy. See, God is

pouring out hope in a particular direction, not favoring the left or the right. But you have *to choose* to stand right under him. **It's not Jesus + Buddha or Jesus + a great 401K. It's Jesus, and Jesus alone, that's where grace and mercy tumble out.**

Hope Pierced

How do we do stand under hope? Our hope has to be pierced. Say someone confides in you that they're really struggling. Life is hard, they're not making the progress they want to. Their career isn't satisfying, friends let them down, they're are disillusioned with spiritual life. And they say, "I think I just need a fresh start." What would you say? You need your hope pierced?! Here's the deal, you can change your job, friends, church, even your city, and you know what? Your story goes with you. Your flaws, your weaknesses, your sins follow you into the new city, the new church, the new friends. **There is no such thing as a fresh start.** That counsel is skin deep. We take our story, good the bad and the ugly, with us wherever we go. We need something that goes deeper, that can get into our story, back into the dark chapters, up to the present, and remake us from the inside out. We don't need a fresh page; we need all the other pages to be re-written. This is what the incarnation is all about. The physical embodiment of hope. Rewriting the story. How? **We need not just hope poured out but hope pierced through.** We need our hope in a fresh start, a new day, a new batch of friends, to be shot through, to see none of that is enough. That in fact we've demanded too much of these things. We've levied god-sized expectations on people and life *and* pushed God out of the picture. We need Israel's perspective, to pull God back into the picture: [when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him.](#) This is YHWH speaking of Christ. How do we know? Standing beneath the cross, with the dead Jesus hanging there, John the beloved disciple observes: "[But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water...For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "They will look on him whom they have pierced."](#)" John connects the pierced one of Zechariah to the pierced Christ of the cross. Now John didn't do the piercing but his sin did, our rebellion did. There is hope for mercy. It is not a myth or a mind job. **God became blood and water**, flesh and bone. Why? Mary Douglass was a renown Oxford anthropologist in the 20th century, studied cleansing rituals in different cultures. During her research, she wrestled with the prevailing notion in anthropology that all religions arise from social conditions and therefore are relative. *She concluded that Christianity was unique, not just because in it the Almighty God becomes a real human being, but because in it the Almighty chooses to influence history and culture from the inside* (The Slain God, 172). **He doesn't just sprinkle spiritual fairy dust on our story, he say just come meditate under a tree, or drop a holy book from heaven; he comes to earth; he changes history by becoming part of it; he rewrites history from the inside-out. Jesus has a pretty good resume when it comes to rewriting stories.** He is born in a manger, becomes a refugee in Egypt, returns to his home, is beaten and tortured, and despite all the mockery and scorn, he changes stories one at a time—a dead daughter come to life, a self-righteous Jew forgiven, a plain ol fisherman, a prostitute welcomed into his family, a blind man, a powerful centurion. One by one, working from the inside-out, Jesus changes stories. He wants to change yours too. To rewrite it with splashes of grace that work all the way back to childhood. In becoming one of us, he's saying, you no longer have to be defined by what happened to you or by what you have done or failed to do. You are defined by me, by my sacrificial love. You are precious to me. You belong in my family,

underneath my hope poured out. I lived and died to secure it, a spirit of grace and mercy that flows from my side. You are mine. And this hope can never be taken away from you. **Because God changed history. The incarnation is God's guarantee to offer more than a fresh start; it's to rewrite your whole story**, to lace it with forgiveness for every past failure, to pour out grace into every gutters, to clean us up, to make us like him. And all we have to do is stand under it, and open our arms, and embrace the Pierced One. It's enough to make you mourn missing it so many times, but its also enough to make you sing for joy.

Flowing Hope

We've looked at hope poured out, hope pierced through, could it get any better? Yes, hope flowing abundantly! Prophetically commenting on the piercing of Christ, Zechariah says, **"On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness"** (13:1). This healing fountain is directed to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Does this exclude us? It means his hope is poured through a particular king and to a particular people. Who? Jesus is the Davidic king and all who hope in him will live in the new Jerusalem. So the fountain is open to all who will come stand under it. Who will say, you and you alone are my only hope Jesus, not friends, not jobs, not cities, not other gods. Only you. And it gets even better. This is no ordinary fountain. In Zechariah 14, we get a picture of the future when the king Jesus returns. He descends on the Mount of Olives, and splits them wide open to create a valley, and do you know what comes rushing through it? Living water! The water irrigates the whole creation, making everything dead come to life, everything that struggles thrive, everything alive more alive. Trees bear fruit in every season, leaves offer healing to the nations: **Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever"** (Rev 22:1-4). Hope flowing abundantly. From where? The very throne of God. The source of life, where hopes are fulfilled. This is difference the Grand Miracle makes. Hope poured, hope pierced through, hope on tap forever.