

## WAITING FOR DELIVERANCE

Adapted from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Christmas Sermons*. Zondervan, 2005; p.p. 88 – 96  
London, England / December 3, 1933

**Text:** LUKE 21.25 - 31 (in pew Bible p. 1043 / in large print Bible p. 1623)

### **Intro:**

- **illust.** Brothers Rescue Hiker

-the focus of our first Advent sermon was on *receiving Christ*.

- wait for God's knock to come and to open your life to his call.

-the focus of our second Advent sermon was on *how we are to wait for Christ's coming*.

- **watching** in darkness, expectation, and submission.

-the focus of our third Advent sermon was on *truth freeing us from self-centredness*.

- **Walking** in truth and abiding in Christ's word.

-today's theme deals with Christ's coming to Release us from *hopelessness and despair*.

### **Take Home Point:**

-be hopeful in the deliverance offered by *Christ's coming*.

## **1. LONGING FOR DELIVERANCE**

-examples of those who are longing for the deliverance of Christ's coming.

- Trapped Miner
- Hopeless Prisoner
- Terminally Ill Patient
- Depressed & guilty

-in each case, the hopeless are shaken by the *wonderful announcement of deliverance*.

- Psalm 107.10 - 22.

-this is the power of Advent.

- our Father is saying – don't look at the ground.
  - look at me – I'm your Father – *your deliverance is at hand*.

-do you long for deliverance / have you longed for deliverance?

- message is for:
  - people who know they are not free / *enslaved & bound*.
  - people who long to be free from *power of bondage & darkness*.

## 2. EMBRACING DELIVERANCE

-some object to Church's truth claims:

- say the Church has proclaimed this over & over, yet nothing has happened.

-why has nothing happened?

- because we have not: wanted it to / believed it could.
- because we have: looked to our own standards & resources / *ignored God's promises.*

-demands of Advent:

- look up / raise up your head (v. 28).
  - gaze is no longer riveted to the earth.
  - surrender the superficial, the disappointments, the blurred, tearful vision, the cringing guilt.

-by looking up to God you will have a new perspective & understanding.

- God will come and *arrive.*

### Conclusion:

-be hopeful in the deliverance offered by Christ's coming.

-do you want *to be delivered?*

- is there a burning longing to know the full extent & power of deliverance?
- if not, then Advent is simply something sentimental, a time of kinder moods.

-Advent call is directed to those who are hungry & thirsty:

- **illust.** Mary's Song
  - it is for those to whom Jesus clearly knocks.
  - he is heard by those who are like trapped miners.
  - his offer of abundant life is wonderful.
    - guides us out of the rubble and stoniness of our old hearts.
    - hard hearts will be made soft.

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a **new heart** and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a **heart of flesh**. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws (Ezekiel 36.25 – 27)

- **illust.** Ravi Zacharias

-Advent is a call directed to God's holy church.

- battle is not lost – ours is the victory – *take courage*.

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 11.15).

- be strong & fearless because Christ came and he will come yet again.
- no reason to have drooping hands and weak knees – *no doubt or uncertainty*.

No **discipline** seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Therefore, **strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees**. “Make level paths for your feet,” so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed (Hebrews 12.11 – 13).

-trapped miners concern themselves only with hammers & drills of the rescuers.

- for us, nothing is more important than the hammers and blows of Jesus' coming into our lives.
- we have nothing to add, no action - *let him come as he will*.

**-illust.** Mining Miracle

-ponder the mystery and power of Christ's coming and never forget to rejoice in the deliverance he came to bring.

**-Closing Hymn:** #125 Joy To The World (all verses).

## Brothers Rescue Hiker

On Monday afternoon Donnie and Loren Frederickson arrived in the parking lot at Johnston Canyon, a popular hiking trail approximately 15 kilometres east of Banff.

The brothers thought the day's thrills were over when they missed a snowboarding outing with pals and opted for a hike instead – but within moments they became involved in a dramatic rescue. A passerby told them a man had fallen through the ice about 10 minutes from the trailhead and was trapped underneath. The witness surmised that man likely wouldn't survive, but the brothers thought otherwise and set out to see what they could do. "We figured we'd be the judge of that," Loren said from his Calgary home on Wednesday.

Donnie, 26, arrived first and saw the man had managed to surface through a hole in the ice about three metres from the canyon wall but wasn't able to hoist himself out of the chest-high water of Johnston Canyon. Donnie climbed under the railing bordering the paved trail and was able to speak to the man from a ledge about three metres above the creek.

"I just started trying to talk to him, to see how much time we had," said Donnie, who lives in Revelstoke, B.C. "He wasn't very coherent at first."

During the commotion, the brothers found out the man's name was Eric and he also lived in Revelstoke.

Eric was wearing crampons on his boots and was likely on the creek scouting ice-climbing spots when the frozen surface gave way under his feet. He was trapped initially but had been able to breathe in air pockets between the ice and the water before resurfacing downstream.

After reassuring Eric, Donnie climbed back onto the path, where he and Loren looked for anything that could be used to pull the man from the fast moving water. They found a five-metre tree limb and borrowed a dog leash from another hiker. They lashed the leash to the end of the branch.

The branch and leash were extended to Eric, who wrapped the leash around his wrist. This helped Eric from slipping back under the ice, but the branch wasn't long enough to allow the brothers to pull Eric out of the water. Fortunately the bystander who had initially met the brothers in the parking lot appeared with a five-metre tow rope, which they tied to their end of the branch.

By now Eric was getting weaker and started to lose consciousness. With the longer line, and added manpower, the group was able to pull Eric from the water – but he remained on the ice about five metres below the trail. The brothers retrieved the branch and threw the tow rope down to Eric, telling him to cinch it around his chest. The group was able to hoist Eric up onto the trail – just as he lost consciousness. “He went limp like a sack of potatoes,” Donnie said. An ambulance took Eric to hospital in Banff, where he was treated and released (*StarPhoenix* A10 December 16 / 10).

## Trapped Miner

Danger of a mining disaster.

- trapped in dark depth of the earth – *cut off and alone*.
  - fate sealed – *raging of no avail*.
  - torture on knowing people on surface are free.
- elation when evidence is heard of rescue mission.
  - wait, hold on, coming as fast as I can.
  - seems like an eternity while waiting for the drilling to reach you.
  - soon the place of death will be plundered and the trapped miner freed.
- wonderful allegory of Christ's advent.
  - God drawing near to fallen humankind – *deliverance is on the way*.
  - Christ's coming brings release & redemption.
  - stand up & lift up your heads, your redemption is drawing near.

## Hopeless Prisoner

Shame & punishment is unending.

- forced labour turns life into a terrible burden.
  - escape attempts are always foiled.
  - increased punishment & penalty.
- then a message comes – within a short time you will all be free.
  - your chains will fall off & your tormentors will be bound.
  - with one voice all prisoners cry out, "Yes, Deliverer come!"

## Terminally Ill Patient

Despair of a hospital where patients are languishing with terminal diseases & pain.

- patients long for the peace of death.
  - one day a doctor comes to the patients and confidently announces, "Today you will be cured and discharged."
- stand up & lift up your heads, and be delivered from pain & despair.

## Depressed & Guilty

Many are not in prison or terminally ill.

- Instead they are locked in deep depression & guilt.
  - joy & happiness is gone.
- at times our sinfulness betrays Christian living.
  - son cannot look father in the eye.
  - husband cannot look wife in the eye.
- the word of forgiveness reverses the grip of hopeless depression and guilt.

## Psalm 107.10 - 22

<sup>10</sup> Some sat in darkness, in utter darkness,  
prisoners suffering in iron chains,

<sup>11</sup> because they rebelled against God's commands  
and despised the plans of the Most High.

<sup>12</sup> So he subjected them to bitter labor;  
they stumbled, and there was no one to help.

<sup>13</sup> Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,  
and he saved them from their distress.

<sup>14</sup> *He brought them out of darkness, the utter darkness,  
and broke away their chains.*

<sup>15</sup> *Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love  
and his wonderful deeds for mankind,*

<sup>16</sup> *for he breaks down gates of bronze  
and cuts through bars of iron.*

<sup>17</sup> Some became fools through their rebellious ways  
and suffered affliction because of their iniquities.

<sup>18</sup> They loathed all food  
and drew near the gates of death.

<sup>19</sup> Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,  
and he saved them from their distress.

<sup>20</sup> *He sent out his word and healed them;  
he rescued them from the grave.*

<sup>21</sup> *Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love  
and his wonderful deeds for mankind.*

## Mary's Song

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;  
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.  
He has brought down rulers from their thrones  
but has lifted up the humble.

***He has filled the hungry with good things  
but has sent the rich away empty.***

(Luke 1.51 – 53)

## Ravi Zacharias

We watch the world crumbling under the weight of broken dreams and broken lives and broken relationships because we don't pay heed to what those negatives are and where to find God and [his] ... word. This is truly a time for people to understand that presence of God in our experience is not a negative; rather, it is the most beautiful truth and the most positive discovery when we realize how He rescues us from our own self-destructive ways, and why He warns us to understand ourselves and the limits of human reason. That is what I see in the Gospel: rescue and a roadmap by which to live in these dangerous times. Rescue from pride, greed, and the violation of the sacred, and a roadmap to guide us on the journey into an understanding of why he created us and to what end we must live (Ravi Zacharias in *RZIM* November 2010).

## Mining Miracle

Accidents are not uncommon in a country with a long mining history but the world jumped into action when a small gold and copper mine collapsed in Chile's Atacama Desert, sending dust flying and caving in tunnels below the surface.

Thirty-three miners had no idea when they descended into the mine like normal on Aug. 5 that they themselves would end up being the treasure the whole world would search for.

It wasn't until 17 days later that persistent search efforts were rewarded with a note attached to one of their drills. "We're alright in the shelter, the 33 of us."

Through this narrow shaft food, water, messages, and more travelled over 600 metres beneath down to the miners awaiting rescue.

Sixty-nine days later, on October 12, their wait ended. One billion people around the world were glued to their television sets to watch what has been called the most eagerly followed rescue since Apollo 13, 40 years ago.

“One thing that is certain is their lives will never be the same again,” said Dr. Alberto Iturra, the Chilean psychiatrist leading a 20-strong team of therapists working with the men.

Indeed, all “*los 33*,” as they have come to be known, have been changed in some way by this experience. Many have spoken about a new lease on life, a shift of perspective, or an adjustment of priorities. Some of the men, however, experienced an even greater life change as they considered possible outcomes of their situation, what could have happened during the collapse or if they were not found in time, and sought out God.

A few of the miners were Christians when the mine collapsed giving them an opportunity to share the hope that they had in the eventuality of not being rescued. They spoke of already having been rescued – from their sins – and they were assured of being with God whether they were rescued or not.

Several men grabbed the lifeline that was being offered. Reports indicate up to six received God’s forgiveness and grace while underground and were set free for eternity, even while trapped. Jimmy Sanchez, the youngest miner at 19, wrote in a letter to the team above ground, “There are actually 34 of us, because God has never left us down here.”

Mario Sepulveda, the second man to be rescued, received the nickname “Super Mario” due to his good attitude while still trapped below and his enthusiastic actions after surfacing. This memorable miner turned serious when he became the first man to speak to the press. “God and the devil were fighting over me – and God won,” he declared, “I always knew they would get me out. I always had faith in the professionals here in Chile and in the Great Creator.”

One of the men, Jose Henriquez, was nicknamed “the Pastor” early on in the ordeal. A Christian before the accident, the 55-year-old led prayer services twice a day and a Bible study with the 33 New Testament Bibles delivered to the men via the four-inch wide tube.

Also sent from the surface were MP3 files of audio Scripture and the *Jesus* film, provided by Campus Crusade. After receiving these, “pastor” Jose wrote a letter to the organization: “thank you for the tremendous blessing,” he wrote. “I am fine because Christ lives in me” (Sarah Chestnutt “Mining Miracles in Living Light News p. 1, November / December 2010).