



ENTER God's presence

*Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise Him,
my help and my God.*

Psalm 42:5-6

Father God,
The world around us seems full of chaos and reasons to despair.
Help us to life our heads above the distractions and concerns of this
world as we meet again around your word. May it be for us a
promise and a beacon of hope in every situation. Amen.



SHARE life together

1. Where have you seen God's power at work in your life this last week?
2. Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?
3. How would you define the word 'hope'? What does hope mean to you?
4. What is your greatest hope for Christmas this year?

Life comes at us fast. If you have ever driven a left-hand drive vehicle when you are used to a right hand drive...you may know the terrifying feeling of suddenly seeing three lanes of oncoming cars bearing down on you! It's frightening. But that's the reality of life as we know it too. World events, earthquakes, bushfires, floods, acts of terrorism and war, and of course global pandemics can come over the rise and shake our very foundations. Personal or family tragedies, untimely retrenchments, or an unwelcome health diagnosis can feel like three lanes of traffic bearing down on us, causing our lives to go into a fearful spin. Jesus tells us that the louder the threats of the world around us, the nearer he is beside us and the closer his return to rescue/receive us into his kingdom. Hope comes to town, precisely when all seems lost or at risk. Jesus reminds us of our assured future in him when our future circumstance looks bleak. When God comes to town, hope comes too, to fill us with courage in the moment, boldness for the days ahead and a joy-filled expectation & anticipation of what will be.

Week beginning:
Sunday 28th November 2021

Worship series
WHEN GOD COMES TO TOWN:
When HOPE comes to town.
(#1 in series)



VERSE for the week

**When these things begin to
take place, stand up and lift up
your heads, because your
redemption is drawing near.**

Luke 21:28



REMEMBER this week

**The posture of the redeemed is
to stand tall and live with
courage, whatever the
circumstances, for God is active
and moving in this world to
redeem it.**



LISTEN attentively

Read Luke 21:25-36

Our body language and posture can communicate a lot about us, our mood, our health, and our state of mind. Often our body language or posture betray us even when we think we are keeping it under control. While we may not recognise it in ourselves we certainly recognise it in others. It is not usually difficult to identify those whose lives feel like three lanes of oncoming traffic, their demeanour and body language usually give them away.

5. ***What do you hear this scripture saying to you right now?***
6. ***What parts of Jesus words do you see being played out in the world today?***
7. ***Look closely at verse 28***
 - a. ***What kind of attitude or state of mind do you think your default body language communicates to those around you at the moment?***
 - b. ***Jesus tells his disciples to “stand up and lift up their heads”. What kind of attitude would that kind of posture/body language communicate to you?***
 - c. ***What might be some of the advantages to this standing with your head held high kind of posture as opposed to a slouching, sitting or downcast kind of posture?***



GROW deeper

Look again now at Luke 21:29-36

One of the reasons to stand up and lift our heads is so that we can see clearly what is going on around us. Rarely do we encounter scripture that lines up nicely with our Southern Hemisphere seasons, but as we come into the Christmas season and also summer here in Australia, Jesus' lesson of the fig tree is particularly apt. Those of us with gardens will have undoubtedly noticed the new foliage on our deciduous trees announcing the near arrival of summer. Most of Luke 21 is Jesus talking about his second coming to the earth and while he does not give a day or time, he tells us that it will happen and those who are watching we will see the signs. So we are told to stand and keep watch, to look for the signs, to be expectant. Not to be surprised when the world is difficult and chaotic, not to be downcast when this life gets tough, but to stand with a posture of hope and certainty knowing that God is at work in all things bringing about his plan for the redemption of all creation.

8. ***I recently heard Christian hope defined as, ‘a future certainty grounded in the present reality of a risen and present Jesus’. How do you ground your hope in the present reality of God at work and present in the world when it appears so chaotic and confusing?***
9. ***Reflect for a moment on your own life. Would you say that in your own experience, you have felt the presence of God in your life more acutely when life has looked its darkest? Explain?***



LIVE purposefully

Think about your body language. Before you set out for the day, hand your cares and concerns over to Jesus; choose to put on a posture of hope, stand tall and lift up your head. This is part of living purposefully as his disciples. Let your posture also communicate the hope and faith that has been placed within you. It's like when you go to a football game and there, seated among you and all the home team supporters is one lonely soul barracking for the visiting team. They are not ashamed to show their colours, they cheer when everyone around them is groaning and they stick out like a sore thumb! Let your hope in Christ be visible as you walk your neighbourhood this Christmas. Let the joy and HOPE of Christ be evident in all you do.

- 10. How will you adjust or correct your posture or body language to communicate the hope you have in Christ during the craziness of Christmas?**
- 11. What things are you seeing or experiencing in the world around you that are making it difficult to live in the hope of Jesus?**
- 12. What might you be able to do to help 'lift up your head' and to see God at work amongst the chaos?**



PRAY intentionally

- Praise God for his gift of hope, delivered to us in the birth of Jesus.
- Ask Holy Spirit to help you see God present and at work in your life and the lives of those around you this week.
- Ask the Father to give you someone (or two or three) to pray for, asking the Father to draw them to him. (John 6:44,45)
- Pray for all those standing for office in local government and council elections in the coming week. Give thanks for those who seek to build and develop local communities and pray that God would give them wisdom and understanding.
- Pray for those who have lost loved ones in any circumstance. Ask that they would receive comfort and a deep knowledge of God's grace as he sits with them, sharing in their grief.
- Check the prayer list in LifeWay News and pray accordingly.
- Thank God for all the gifts he has given you to share and to minister to others with love.
- Ask God to show you where he is inviting you to join him in his work of redeeming all people.



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

[Name], the hope of Christ has taken up residence in your life. Amen.