

**Advent 2021: Jesus is Good**  
**Pastor Hannah Souter**

**Big idea:** Hope changes the way we see.

**Purpose:** To cultivate hope in Jesus' goodness.

**Primary Passage:** Psalm 36

**Additional Passage:** Isaiah 9:7

**Psalm 36:1-9**

*Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in their hearts;  
there is no fear of God before their eyes.*

*For they flatter themselves in their own eyes  
that their iniquity cannot be found out and hated.*

*The words of their mouths are mischief and deceit;  
they have ceased to act wisely and do good.*

*They plot mischief while on their beds;  
they are set on a way that is not good;  
they do not reject evil.*

*Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens,  
your faithfulness to the clouds.*

*Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,  
your judgments are like the great deep;  
you save humans and animals alike, O Lord.*

*How precious is your steadfast love, O God!  
All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings.  
They feast on the abundance of your house,  
and you give them drink from the river of your delights.  
For with you is the fountain of life;  
in your light we see light.*

During this season of Advent, we have the opportunity to collectively reorient our hope around Jesus. Today we are focusing on Jesus' goodness.

**Commentary**

In the psalm we read, did you notice how the psalmist contrasted the Ways of Evil and the Ways of God & Goodness?

**The Ways of Evil** are characterized by a lack of self-awareness, lack of humility, lack of honesty and integrity, lack of wisdom, and an unwillingness to do good.

**The Ways of God** are characterized by steadfast love, faithfulness, justice and righteousness, care for all of creation, safety and refuge, and abundant generosity.

We long for the Ways of Goodness, the Ways of Jesus to rule in our world, but instead, the last few years have held grief, disappointment, despair, and disillusionment. We've seen the ways of evil run rampant in our government, our culture, our society, our leadership, our families, and most humbling—in our very own selves. **Is it just me or has it been hard?**

How do we keep clinging to the hope of Jesus' goodness when so much in our world seems to be unraveling? And if we *do* cling to hope, how does that hope actually change things?

Let's look back to the psalm we just read for some clues:

*For with you is the fountain of life;  
in your light we see light. (Psalm 36:9)*

I wonder if hope changes the way we see.

### **"In your light we see light"**

Hope in Jesus' goodness doesn't always change our circumstances. It doesn't always mean things work out in a way that is comfortable or happy for us. It doesn't always carry with it answers or insight or clarity. But it does, I think, change the way we see. *In Christ's light, we can see light.*

What does it look like for you to step into Christ's light so you can see light?

Maybe you step into the light through:

- Scripture
- Creation & nature
- Connecting to love
- Beauty
- Meditation
- Creating
- Prayer
- Confession
- Service
- Forgiveness
- Movement
- Worship

For me right now it's going for a walk and talking to God about what's on my mind and heart. It's taking a deep breath and just taking a moment to sit quietly with God. It's looking for and engaging with beauty—a sunset, a song, one of my cute houseplants.

**Think about how you step into the light. Or if you're struggling to do that right now, what has worked in the past?**

With you is the fountain of life. In your light we see light.

We are going to spend the rest of the service stepping into the light through worship. As you sing or listen, notice if there are blocks in you. Notice if you feel resistance or disconnection. Notice if you are carrying a burden; perhaps the burden of a question, a hope, a longing, a hurt or an unanswered prayer. We don't have to ignore those things when we come to worship. God welcomes us exactly as we are. Carry what you are

carrying today to God in worship. God receives all we have and all we are—even the yucky and hard stuff—as an offering of love and communion.

### **Communion: Revelation 12:10-11**

In the last book of the Bible, called *Revelation*, there's this little line that has really stuck with me over the years. In the midst of this cosmic, crazy, apocalyptic battle between God and Satan, there's a proclamation that goes like this:

*Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down, the one who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. (Revelation 12:10-11)*

The line that grabs me is: **they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony.** To me that reads that the difficulties, the confusion, the discouragement, the grief, the shame, the lies, and the loss are overcome by: 1) the saving grace of Jesus, and 2) by telling our stories of goodness.

Jesus is good, but **we need to tell each other why.** Jesus is good, but **we need to tell each other how.** We need the stories of scripture, the stories of our tradition, and the stories of those we walk with to overcome the ways of evil and keep our faith, keep our hope, keep our love in the Ways of our Good Jesus. Take a second to look around at the people you are gathered here with. We can't do this alone.

We are going to do communion a little bit differently today. I'm going to have you turn to a person or couple of people and offer one another this communion blessing:

**This is the body and blood of Jesus, broken and shed for you.  
Take this in remembrance of Him.**

We will leave this slide on the screen so you can remember the words. Go ahead and turn to your person or group and take turns offering communion to one another.

### **Benediction:**

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow  
Praise Him, all creatures here below  
Praise Him above the Heavenly host  
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost  
Amen*