

## Sermon - New Years - Pray

Imagine you're in row boat rowing backwards - how do you make sure you keep rowing straight?

- points of reference (tree)

- as we head into 2012 I wanted to move forward by giving us a great p.o.r. to follow

- our p.o.r. is something that was visible but didn't talk much about during Xmas - advent candles

- does anyone know/remember what each of the candles stands for/symbolizes?

Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, Christ - **this is an awesome p.o.r** for us to keep our eyes on through 2012

- if our point of reference was a tree, then these things are like different branches on the tree

- these things could be a bad point of reference if we misunderstand them - joy...

- so this morning we want to clarify how God sees each of these - so they can be a good p.o.r

- important - these aren't four points of reference, together these make up one point of reference

**As you listen think - what action steps do I need to take in this area to make it my point of reference in 2012 and beyond?**

**We start with Hope, what is our hope? (Read Romans 8:18-28)**

- as you head into 2012, is that your hope? all this is not all there is/something more/better

- are you so comfortable with this world that it's all you can see? It's your point of reference

- or is your point of reference the hope of Christ? **(Read Romans 8:28)**

- means regardless of your circumstances, storms, surprises, interruptions, pain, bad news

- you can trust/hope in God through it all because he's working it all out for your full adoption

- hope is a faith thing - and your hope will be stronger as it's connected to other aspects of faith

**Peace - What is our peace? (read John 14:27)**

- is the peace Jesus offers the absence of conflict? (what are disciples about to experience?)

- does anyone remember the first words Jesus says to them all after resurrection "Peace be w/you"

- that's Jesus's peace to us - complete security that whatever we go through - God's in control

There's something you can do to experience more of this peace **(read Phil 4:6,7)**

- which is where we were before Xmas and where we'll pick up again soon in New Year

**Joy - What is this joy that we're to have as followers of Jesus Christ? (Read John 15:1-11)**

- our joy is to remain in Jesus' love by learning & doing the will of God (it's not - blind happiness)

- why is that joyful, because as Romans 12:2 tells us - his will is good, pleasing and it's perfect 4 us

If this is what true Christian joy is about, what can you do to build your joy?

- make this time central, read God's Word, read, anything you can do to grow & obey

- and like hope & peace ,joy transcends your circumstances

- you can be in mourning and still be joyful because you know God's there through it (comfort)

- God's there later (working all things out for your good, if you're his follower)

**Love - What is the love that we're to have as followers of Jesus Christ? (Read John 15:12-14)**

- I've said this many times over the last six years - this is the biggie

- do everything else, don't do this one - 1Cor 13:1 says you're? (resounding Gong/clashing cymbal)

- again, this is not about how we want/able or not able to love

- this is all about will we be obedient to Jesus' command - Jesus had very few commands - this one

- love others as I loved you - no grey area there - Jesus I would love them but... **(Gong 3x)**

- Jesus tells us, I loved you sacrificially, mercifully, graciously - I want you to love others that way

- I lay down my life for you in every sense of the word - I want you to lay down your life for others
- is it hard? it's the hardest thing you could do. It's death to you for the sake of others
- and it's the greatest reason for living - because at the end of it is your full adoption as God's child
- it's eternal glory for God and eternal reward for you

Will you chose to love as Jesus loved, loving those who even hate you?

- Or will you continue to live to please yourself and a few other people that you like
- you can be religious and do that, but that's not following Jesus
- how can you do this - again, you've got to be committed to your own growth - practice it!

### **The last candle we light is the Christ Candle**

- Jesus is our example for the living out of Christian hope, peace, joy and love (**read Heb.12:1-3**)
- He has given us the H.S. to give us the strength, courage, ability to do these things
- Jesus, what do you want me to do? That's question you've got to ask yourself moment x moment
- and then you've got to obey
- and the more you know him, and obey, and trust him...
- the more your life will be filled with true and godly hope, peace, joy, love & Christ-likeness
- and it is all leading to one thing (**read Revelation 21:1-7**)

I hate to end on a bad note, but for those who think, thanks but no thanks...

- there's more at stake here than just hoping, loving, being joyful and peaceful like Jesus
- Revelation 21:8**

Jesus entered our mess because our mess leads to most horrible & inconceivable consequences

- but he said of himself in John 14:6 "I am the way the truth and the life, no one comes..."
- he also said in John 11:25 "I am the resurrection and the life and anyone who believes in me will.."
- but the choice is ours. What will be our reference point as we travel through 2012 and beyond?

I offer this reference point as the best reference point for us to follow in 2012 and beyond - Jesus

- hope in the full redemption of our bodies and our adoption as God's children
- peace, complete security in the fact that God is in control regardless of what we will face
- complete joy in learning, knowing, and doing the good, pleasing and perfect will of God
- loving like Jesus loved - laying down our lives for the sake of others -
- loving sacrificially, mercifully, graciously

**What needs to happen for this to be your point of reference in 2012 and beyond? Action steps?**