

# Prepare In Hope

Long Beach Alliance Church December 14, 2014 • Pastor Chris Lankford

*The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.  
~Zephaniah 3:17 (ESV)*

## **1) Advent Is A Time Of Sobering Preparation**

- A) The prophets often spoke of the coming 'Day of the Lord.' On that day Messiah would come acting as God's chosen agent (Malachi 3:1-5). The Jews (God's Chosen People) longed for the far-away 'Day of the Lord' because it meant judgment against God's enemies.
- B) As God's people longed Messiah (Jeremiah 33:14), they were largely unclear about the nature and character of the Messiah (Isaiah 42:1-9), and because of their own distractions and pain, missed His arrival.
- C) Just as the original covenant community (the Jews) were instructed to look forward to the coming of the Messiah, so also are we, the included covenant community (the Church) called to soberly anticipate the Return of our Lord, the Second Coming of Christ (Mark 13:24-37).

## **2) Advent Is A Time For Joyful Anticipation**

- A) Despite scathing predictions of doom and destruction (Zephaniah 1:1-3:13), God simultaneously provides extraordinary reminders of His grace and love (Zephaniah 3:14-20). Similarly, we also live in the great tension between God's judgment and reward (Matthew 25:31-46).
- B) The joyful anticipation of Messiah in our lives moves from the pain and dread of His coming, to an alert patience for His return (James 5:7-8; Revelation 22:20). Life in Christ brings freedom (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)!
- C) Profoundly, the most common biblical command is "do not fear" (Zephaniah 3:16; Revelation 2:10). Instead we are called to anticipate Christ in joy and hope, because of God's great love (1 John 4:13-18).