

I love the Christmas season! Christmas carols on the radio –
Holidays parties – Christmas decorations –

Okay, Just out of curiosity, how many have completed their
Christmas decorating?

Oh yeah – there is also the annual reminder it is Christmas by all of
the ads in the paper. Okay, how many have completed their
Christmas shopping?

Okay – how many people haven't even started their Christmas
shopping yet?

For those of you who have – did you go out there and fight the mess
on the day after Thanksgiving - Black Friday?

Before this year – I never went out on Black Friday –It's too crazy.

But it is a good day that you can see people getting into the
Christmas season - by fighting over Cabbage Patch Dolls, or Tickle
Me Elmo, or whatever the big toy is that year.

I normally don't want to be anywhere close to that kind of craziness.

But this year, I got pulled into it.

See, I was looking at all of the ads in the paper on Thanksgiving.
I was learning new words; tag lines like “door busters” and “3 hour
sale”.

Well there was this one “Door Buster” that caught my eye. And not
for personal reasons actually, but for the church.

See, we have been wanting to get a computer and LCD monitor that
is dedicated for the video system. We've been using my laptop and
it doesn't support the software we want to use for the video.

So here I am looking at “my” ads. They are called “my ads” because my wife Shirley always gives me the Office Max, Office Depot, Circuit City, Comp USA, and of course Best Buy ads.

So here I am looking through the Best Buy ad, and right there on the front page is a computer system. Not just any computer system, but a computer system with all the geek stuff in it that we need.

For those of you techies you will appreciate this – It had a DVD player, a gig of RAM, 120 mb hard drive, and a 15 inch LCD monitor. And the best part, it was on sale for only \$180.

What a great deal. \$180! This type of system normally would cost closer to \$700.

I was excited. I wanted it. I actually thought about getting two of them and I would give the second one to my daughter. What a great deal.

Then, I read the small print – 10 per store.

I was worried at first, but thought, “That’s okay – we’ll just get up early and go.”

I was excited to go out on Black Friday. Shirley and I decided to get up about 5:00 in the morning, take quick showers and be there by the time the doors open at 6:00.

Great plan – perfect idea. I really hoped I would get one of them.

Then, I heard that there was someone camping in front of Best Buy. My hope of getting that computer was challenged. But then I heard there were only a couple people out there.

So I figured, “okay, a couple of crazy people – no big deal.” I still had hope.

Then Shirley and I drove past there around 6:00 Thursday night. There had to be over 50 people in line. I was losing hope pretty quickly. But I thought, maybe they are here for one of the other door busters. We’ll just get here a little earlier than we had planned.

Then we drove back again around 8:30 Thursday night. There had to be over 100 people in line. I didn’t have much hope left at that point, and then I lost all hope when I watched the 10:00 news and the top story was the line of 100’s of customers waiting outside of Best Buy.

But in today’s world, we tend to hope for a lot, don’t we?

It starts when we are younger and continues throughout our lives

- “I hope Santa Clause brings me this or that for Christmas.”
- “I hope I get a car for my birthday”
- “I hope I get asked out to the prom”
- “I hope I get this job”
- “I hope my kids are okay – I haven’t heard from them in weeks.”
- “I hope _____” and fill in the blank for yourself

Our lives are filled with hope. Looking forward to something.

The scripture from the Book of Jeremiah that Jim read for us earlier was a message of hope for the Jews.

There were all types of wars and sieges taking place. Jerusalem was just about to fall into the hands of the Babylonians – people were scared.

And Jeremiah gives this great prophecy about the coming Messiah or Savior.

Hope in times of hopelessness.

And that is what our Advent season is about. Going towards Hope in a crazy and worrisome world.

Advent season is so much more than just preparation for the “Baby Jesus”. It is also a time for us to prepare and look forward to the second coming of Christ.

The scripture Jim read to us from Luke contains some of the words Jesus used when he was asked the question “What will be the signs of the end times?”

Jesus talked a lot about the signs in all of Chapter 21 of Luke, and I encourage you all to go home and read it this week. But I want to focus on the end of the chapter Jim read for us – verses 34-36.

Jesus gives us the message to not let the worries of this life get us down, but look with anticipation to what is coming ahead for us. Pray that we have the strength to get through our day to day worries to take part in the Heavenly Kingdom and stand before Christ himself.

It makes me think back to the computer at Best Buy. I could have bought one. I just had to decide what it was worth to me.

When I had heard that only one or two people were in line, I could have grabbed my tent and got in line. And today we would be using the new computer system.

What was it worth to me? Was it worth doing whatever it took to get that gift? Was it worth standing in line for hours? Was it worth sleeping in a parking lot on Thanksgiving? Or was it not worth the trouble?

Living the way our God wants us to – what is that worth to us?

God wants to be in a relationship right now with us. He wants our lives to be filled with more than just hope, but with the peace, love, and joy that can only be received by truly knowing, accepting and serving our God.

God won't let us down. If our hope is built on His word – if in our hearts we accept Jesus Christ into our lives – and if we serve Him the way he wants us to – then our lives will be blessed with love, with joy and with peace.

The Christmas message is a wonderful message – the Birth of our Savior Jesus Christ.

But the Advent message holds even more. Yes, it looks backward to the original glorious Christmas event, but it also looks forward to a second glorious event that we commonly call the Second Coming of Christ.

Some people believe that the second coming will be any day now, while others believe it is so far in the future that we shouldn't get worked up about it.

Ask yourself this question, "If Christ came back today, would he find us waiting in line, doing what it took to get His great gift, - or would he find that we just felt it wasn't worth the trouble?"

Luckily, he doesn't ask much from us to receive his gift. We don't have to sleep in parking lots, fight big crowds or have a coupon.

Most of you have heard Jesus' two commandments – Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind, and the second, Love your neighbor as yourself.

The first one means to Love God, to Trust God, to Give Thanks to God, to Listen to God and to Believe in God – with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind. Accept him into your life.

The second commandment of Jesus tells us to love each other. Treat each other well. Care for each other. Encourage each other. Pray for each other.

When things get crazy this Christmas season, whether it is the long lines, pushy people or even bad news on TV – we need to remember that we do have hope.

We have hope and a promise of a new life. A life where God will wipe away our tears and there will be no more death. Now isn't that something to be hopeful for?

We can thank God for giving us such hope.

And for giving us His only Son Jesus who died for us so we can have that hope.

In the Sacrament of Holy Communion, we are given a special time that we are able to draw a little closer to Christ – reflect on His sacrifice for us, His love for us and His Grace that is available to all of us.

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