



Title: Hope

Date: 12.20.09

Series: WWJD (What Would James Do?)

Text: James 5:7-11

Synopsis: What if you came to your pastor and said, "I've lost my job, the bank is foreclosing on my house, my spouse is leaving me and taking the kids, and I've just been diagnosed with cancer"? Would you feel encouraged if your pastor responded to you, "Well be patient, Jesus is coming soon"? Probably not, that is unless you understood the resurrection and the return of Jesus in the same way as the first century church did.

For most of us we think of the return of Jesus as something far off and as primarily spiritual. We think of heaven as a place where our disembodied souls wander off into the nether regions of space into the presence of God (wherever that is). A statement like "be patient, Jesus is coming" is like saying, "suck it up, you'll soon be dead" neither of which brings much comfort.

But for the first century church, the resurrection and the return of Jesus meant that the Kingdom of God was established *now*, not in the far distant future. It meant an end to oppression and subjugation. It meant that Jesus had defeated death and that all who believed in him defeated death as well. It meant that we are part of a greater reality, God's reality. It meant that heaven was not a place where souls drifted through space for eternity, but rather Jesus was coming to bring God's space (heaven) and man's space (earth) in to one spatial reality. In other words, God's reality and man's reality become the same. It meant hope.

And that's just what those first century Christians needed. Hope. They needed it then, and we still need it now. We could all use a little good news and the angels knew it. That's why one of them told those shepherds on that mountainside more than two thousand years ago, "Fear not, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." That's what good news of great joy brings. Hope.