

**“God’s Gift Of Hope”** Delivered by E. A. Terry 12-03-17

Titus 2:11-14; 1st John 3:1- 3; 1st Peter 1: 3 – 15; **Romans 8: 18 -39; (Sermon)**

Today is the first Sunday of Advent on the church calendar.

Advent means, “The coming of Jesus Christ.”

The first Advent or first coming of Jesus was when Jesus was born 2000 years ago in Bethlehem.

The Second Advent or the second coming of Christ will be when Jesus returns to establish His earthly eternal kingdom.

During Advent and Christmas we read about and we sing about “Immanuel”.

And Matthew 1:23 tells us “Immanuel” means God with us.

That is what Christmas is all about; Christmas is all about God coming to be with us.

Sadly some Christians only focus on the First Advent which was the birth of Jesus 2000 years ago in Bethlehem.

Sadly other Christians only focus on the Second Advent which is Jesus’ second coming when He will establish His eternal kingdom on earth.

When Jesus comes again Jesus will destroy all evil and all evil doers.

I say sadly because if we only focus on the past or if we only focus on the future we will miss the present benefits of God being with us today.

During Advent this year we will be looking at the gifts God has given to us.

Today we will be looking at God's gift of hope.

In 1st Peter 3: 15 we told to; "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."

So I want to begin this morning by asking you this question; "What would you say to an unbeliever if they asked you to explain the basis of Christian hope? "

So what is hope?

Hope can be simply defined as a "positive attitude toward the future".

Most people hope and we express hope in many ways.

We say, "I hope you have a good day and I hope you a safe trip".

Some people live their lives hoping to win the lottery, hoping to improve their skills, or their image, hoping for a better job, hoping to meet Mr. or Mrs. Perfect, and some people just hope that whatever tomorrow brings will just be better than what is happening today.

In the spiritual realm many people hope they are good enough to get into heaven; hoping that their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds.

But all of these kinds of hope are no more than wishful thinking.

However, hope for the Christian is much more than wishful thinking.

Because our hope is in The Person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Hope for the Christian can best be described as “an attitude of confidence, expectation, and trust. The unwavering assurance that Jesus will do exactly what He promised to do for all who believe in Him and have accepted Jesus as their Savior and their Lord.”

With confidence we can look forward to the fulfillment of all of Jesus’ promises.

The Christian’s hope is not based upon what might happen or what might not happen.

The Christian’s hope is based upon who Jesus is and what Jesus Christ has already done for us!

Jesus Christ has already shed His blood on the cross to pay for our sins.

Jesus Christ has already risen from the grave and defeated death so that we could live with Him in heaven throughout eternity.

Jesus Christ has already given us His Spirit to comfort us and to give us power to live the abundant victorious life He planned for us while we are physically alive on earth.

Jesus Christ has already ascended into Heaven and is interceding for us.

What Jesus Christ has already done provides living proof that Jesus is God and that Jesus can and Jesus will do exactly what He promised.

Our hope is based on the indisputable evidence of Jesus' resurrection.

The Christian's hope in Jesus is as certain and as sure as the fact that Jesus Christ is alive!

In our lesson from 1st Peter; Peter call Christian hope "a living hope"

The word living describes something that is dynamic, vital, and alive.

A "living hope" is not dependent upon a person's outward circumstances or upon their environment.

Our living hope comes from our living Lord and our living hope is based on Jesus' death on the cross and Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

Next we need to ask ourselves; why is hope so important?

To me it hope is important because without hope there is no reason to expend any effort.

Without hope we only experience discouragement.

And Satan is the source of all discouragement.

Someone said; “a state of hopelessness is closely akin to a state of death.”

And another person “A life without hope is a living hell”

The one thing that will make hell so unbearable is the absence of hope.

And Romans 15:13 tells us that our God is the source of all hope.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:13)

Ephesians 1:18 tells us as Christians we have a living hope.

You see our hope as Christians is for the here and now while we are on earth.

Jesus made ample provisions for all of His disciples to live the abundant victorious life that He planned for us while we are on this earth.

However, it is up to us to take advantage of these gifts.

Jesus does not exempt or relieve us from suffering and pain while we are on earth however; Jesus does help us through them and God uses circumstances to mold us into His image.

God has given us His indwelling Holy Spirit so God is always with us!

As you know we live in an evil ungodly world.

When Paul talks about life on earth, he does not candy coat the pain and struggles that we go through.

But what Paul is trying to do is to get us to put our present pains and struggles into perspective.

We are spiritual beings.

We will only live on earth for a very short time but we will live forever.

So we need to look at life with an eternal spiritual prospective.

In Romans 8:18 Paul wrote “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us”.

Paul wants to make sure that we Christians don't get so discouraged with the difficulties of this life that we lose sight of the big picture of eternity.

As Christians we need to remember that when The Lord calls us home there will not be any more struggles, pain, death or tears.

For those who are in Christ, there will be only joy and happiness throughout eternity."

Our future hope is for the resurrection of the dead.

There will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. (Acts 24:15)

The wicked will live in pain and suffering throughout eternity (Revelation 20:14).

But as Christians we can look forward to the resurrection to eternal life because we have been given the righteousness of Christ.

Jesus promised that all those who love Him and trust in Him as their Savior will live and reign with Him in Heaven throughout eternity. (Titus 1:2).

And that life in Heaven will be free of all the things that caused us pain and suffering while we were one earth.

Our future hope is also for The Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When Jesus ascended into heaven Jesus He promised to come back to earth for His disciples. (Titus 2:13)

When Jesus returns to earth Jesus will right all wrongs and Jesus will destroy all evil and Jesus will establish His eternal kingdom on earth.

1st Corinthians 13 tells us that hope is one of the three greatest gifts God gives us.

God has given us this great gift of hope but like any other gifts we have to take possession of the gift and we must use the gift for the gift to be of any benefit to us.

Like any skill we have to practice and develop hope to derive the most benefit from it.

So how do we develop the gift of hope?

First we practice and develop God's gift of hope by reading The Bible which is God's Holy Word to us.

In Romans 15:4 we are told that we gain hope through the encouragement of Scripture.

Psalm 119 states over and over "I have put my hope in your word." (Verses 43, 74, 81, 114, & 147)

Not only can we hope in God's word we can obtain hope from God's word.

The Word of God fills us with hope because God's Word is full of examples of the faithfulness of God and the ways God can and God will work in our lives.

We practice and develop God's gift of hope by endurance.

Romans 15:4 we are told; "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

We practice and develop the gift of hope by being a faithful obedient servant (Romans 15:1-2)

Servant hood is God's way of making us great.

That is because God created us to be the happiest, the most fulfilled, and most the peaceful when we learn to serve others.

Hebrews 6:19 describes hope as an anchor for the soul and that anchor is Jesus Christ.

You see the key to the Christian's Hope is to continually focus on who Jesus Christ is, what Jesus Christ has already done for us, what Jesus Christ is doing for us, and what Jesus Christ has promised to do for us in the future!

Hope in Jesus The Christ is set before all people, but only those people who accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and make Jesus the lord of their life will ever possess God's gift of hope!

Only when we invite Christ in our lives and claim Jesus as Lord and Savior will we experience the hope that God offers us.

Colossians.1:27 states; "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

To live without Christ is to live without hope.

The Christian hope that we read about in our lesson from Romans 8 is knowing and believing that what Jesus promised will come true.

Christian hope is not just wishful thinking.

But rather Christian hope is the calm assurance that no matter how bad the world may look at this very moment there is a God who is in control of the entire universe and our God has the power to accomplish His plans despite of all the evil that is around us.

In this 8th chapter of Romans the Apostle Paul gives us six reasons why we as Christians have hope. Christians have hope because:

1. God's Spirit prays for us (verse 26)
2. God works for the good of those who love Him (verse 28)
3. God's predetermined plan (verse 30)
4. God is for us, God not against us (verse 31)
5. No one or thing can condemn us (verse 33)
6. No one or thing can separate us from God's love (verse 35)

As Christians we have hope because of what God has already done for us; not because of anything we have done.

And we know that hope will not disappoint us because our eternal destiny is sealed by God Almighty in Christ Jesus. "Christians Are People Of Hope" AMEN