

December 1 Worship
1st Sunday of Advent- Hope
Greeters/Readers-Dan Smith, Chris Kenney

Announcements/Joys-

Time Of Quiet Meditation- *“Let thy steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in thee.”* Psalm 33:22

Lighting of the Hope Candle- Battersby Family

Opening Scripture- Jeremiah 33:14-16(page 683)

Opening Chorus- 120- O Come, O Come Emmanuel(1st verse)

Responsive Call To Worship-

Leader: We lift up our souls to you, Holy God.

People: We trust the Lord with our past, present, and future.

Leader: Teach us, Lord, that we may know your ways.

People: Guide our every move, Holy One, that we may walk in your paths of love and mercy.

Leader: Let us worship the One who leads us in what is right.

People: Together, let us worship God!

Hymn- 335- O God Our Help In Ages past

Unison Prayer- Lord Jesus Christ, we await your coming, We wait filled with hope, Knowing your light will shine in the darkness. We wait anticipating your peace, Believing that one day it will fill our world. We wait embracing your love, May we reach out to share it with our neighbors. We wait with joy, Bubbling us in expectation of your birth. Lord we wait, Come soon and fill us with your life as we pray in the way You taught us, saying...*Lord's Prayer...*

Gloria Patri- Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,

World without end. Amen, Amen.

Old Testament Scripture- Psalm 25:1-10(page 476-477)

Special Music-

Gospel Scripture- Luke 21:25-36(page 915-916)

Children's Time/Echo Prayer/Passing of the Peace

Hymn- 121- Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

New Testament Scripture- 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13(Page 1030)

Message

“Keep Your Hope Alive”

Today is the 1st Day in a time period known by Christians as The Season of Advent. Advent is a season observed in most Christian denominations as a time of waiting and preparation for both the celebration of Jesus' birth at Christmas and the return of Christ at the Second Coming. Advent begins on the 4th Sunday before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. The observance of Advent began sometime during the 4th century after Jesus' birth and was originally intended to commemorate the time one month prior to Jesus birth and the Day of Epiphany or when the 3 Wise men arrived to witness this prophesied Savior of the Jewish people. It was not until the 6th century that the celebration of Jesus birth, or Christmas, became a small part of the celebration. The meaning of Advent in the early years of Christianity was to prepare for His 2nd coming and God's judgement of the world. It was a time of fasting, meditation, Bible study and long sessions of prayer. The entire season was meant to prepare the people for the anticipated New Kingdom that God promised when the Christ would come again to do battle with the evil forces of Satan. It wasn't until the Middle Ages when the church began to focus more on the original birth of Christ as the culmination of Advent.

The 4 Sundays of Advent each have a different theme, all revolving around the coming birth. Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love are the 4 ongoing themes and we light a candle on the Advent wreath each week until the final candle, the Christ candle, is lit on Christmas Eve to celebrate the birth. This week, being the 1st Sunday, we observe the candle of Hope. The word, hope, can be either a verb or a noun and is defined as; “to cherish a desire with anticipation: to want something to happen or be true--to desire with expectation of obtainment or fulfillment, to expect with confidence, to trust.”(verb) As a noun; “desire accompanied by expectation of or belief in fulfillment, expectation of fulfillment or success, someone or something on which hopes are center, something desired or hoped for.” These definitions are only the worldly or temporal definitions and do not include the biblical meanings.

The biblical definition is; “The sure and confident expectation of receiving what God has promised us in the future.” The difference in the definitions lies in what our hope is based on. Worldly hope, or secular hope, is a subjective expectation; it may be solidly based or misguided simply because it does not consider God's will. We hope for things we want (I hope I get the job; I hope she'll marry me). We hope for good outcomes (I hope my child returns home safely; I hope I don't get sick). But worldly hope is not a virtue, as it usually contains some degree of uncertainty, doubt, and personal bias and can often be misdirected and selfishly motivated. The believer's hope is not a faint or obscure wish but “an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (Hebrews 6:19). In Scripture, hope is a virtuous quality because it contains no doubt, always trusting in God's faithfulness and presence no matter the circumstances, whether good or bad (Psalm 71:5).

The apostle Paul includes hope among the three indispensable Christian virtues of faith, hope and love. (1 Corinthians 13:13) Love is the greatest because God values it most and because it is eternal. Neither faith nor hope will be needed in heaven or in the New Kingdom; we won't have to trust an unseen God or anticipate His appearance because we will see Him and be with Him in the perfection of His presence forever. Hope and faith are closely tied because both operate based on trusting God and living according to what is unseen. The author of Hebrews, Paul, explains that “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”

Regarding hope, Paul reasons, "But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?" (Romans 8:24). Like faith, hope is built on our unwavering confidence in God's goodness and power to do what He says He will do because of His unfailing love for us. Biblical hope, like faith, takes custody here and now of God's good promises yet to come.

So, what are you hoping for this season? We all know the standard Christmas hope list; Peace on earth, feed the poor, take care of those who suffer, love for all and on and on. All of these things are well intended and we do need to care for others, but we must understand just what is the priority in our hope list. As important as it is for us to see that those who hurt are cared for, we are required by God to see to them all year long, our hope in God's promises must be foremost in our hearts at all times. So, what are the promises of God that we should be hoping for? Here are just a few for you to contemplate.

Old Testament promises; God promised Israel to be their God and make them His people. God promised that if we search for Him, we will find Him. God promised protection for His children. God promised that His love would never fail. God promised Israel that their sin could be forgiven, their prosperity restored, and their nation healed. God promised blessing for all who will delight themselves in His Word.

New Testament promises; God promised salvation to all who believe in His Son. God promised that all things will work out for good for His children. God promised comfort in our trials. God promised new life in Christ. God promised every spiritual blessing in Christ. God promised to finish the work He started in us. God promised peace when we pray. God promised to supply our needs.

Jesus' promises from the gospels; Jesus promised rest. Jesus promised abundant life to those who follow Him. Jesus promised eternal life to those who trust Him. Jesus promised His disciples power from on high. Jesus promised that He will return for us.

These are just a few of the many promises we find in God's Word. How many more do we need to have in order to hope? Remember, hope is different from wishing. All of our hope will find ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Never lose hope, keep the faith, love God and your neighbor. Praise be to God. Amen.

Prayers of People/Prayer- Lord of time and hope, we are rushing headlong into the holidays to come. We look at our calendars and our day planners and wonder how we will get everything done in the time allotted to us before the "big Day" arrives. We begin to panic at the thought of projects still to be finished, contacts that need to be made, preparations for festivities that have only just begun. And the darkness of obsessive holiday planning overtakes us and clouds our minds and spirits. But you are a God of time and Light. You bring hope to us, as you always have through the voices of the great prophets, and now through the One who is to come, Jesus Christ. Remind us again what this season is truly about, hope, peace, joy, and love. Calm us down. Slow us down. Help us remember that it is in loving relationship that you gave your Son to us and it is in loving relationship that your Word is carried into the hearts of the people. No tinsel, ribbons, tape, cards can convey the eternal message adequately. You have given us the Light, to shine in our path and cut through our darkness. Shine in the hearts of your people today. Bless those dear ones whom we have named before you today with your healing, reconciling, comforting presence and love. Give strength to all who face difficult situations and let your compassionate light shine on them guiding their decisions and their steps. Bring us at

last to your presence, where the light of hope and love continually pour out on us. These prayers and hopes we offer in confidence and gratitude for your love and presence. In the name of Jesus Christ, our living Lord and Savior. Amen.

Communion Hymn- 370- Come Celebrate Jesus

Sacrament Of Holy Communion

Thanksgiving Prayer- Holy, gracious, God, Here at this table your promise of life is made tangible. We have rested in the depth of your love; We have tasted your nourishing, nurturing presence; We accept you into our bodies, into our lives. Together, at this table, you have offered us life. Together, by your grace, we accept the life you offer. And we give you thanks. Amen.

Closing Hymn- 136- Lo How A Rose E'er Blooming

Benediction- As you leave this place, may God lavish love on you so that it fills your lives and overflows to everyone around you. May you be infused with strength and purity, and filled with confidence in the presence of God our Father when Jesus returns again. Go in peace and joy!