

Hebrews 6:13-20

December 5, 2018

“Christ is the Hope of God’s People”

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

First Wednesday of Advent

Vicar Otterman

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, Our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

[Hope From the Beginning]

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ. In Genesis the Bible tells us the sad and tragic story of humanity’s fall into sin. Satan tempted our first parents with the false hope that they could become like God by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

In their weakness they listened to Satan’s deception and ate the fruit that God had forbidden. In their shame, Adam and Eve tried in vain to hide from God. Their hope turned to hopelessness.

From Satan’s first deception that led to sin, we were made his captives and were enslaved to darkness, chafing under the cruel rod of oppression and tyranny. Adam and Eve could do nothing to deliver themselves from the hopeless situation of sin. They and their descendants were trapped in a life of evil and wickedness and had no power to do anything else.

But God found Adam and Eve, and even as He punished them for their sin, He would not leave them without hope. God spoke the first promise of the Savior that would fuel the hopes of his people for many years.

Through the woman’s Seed, the expectation of deliverance from death, salvation from sin, and rescue from the devil became the hope of the people. In fact, so great was Eve’s hope for the Savior that when she gave birth to her firstborn son she said, “With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man” (***Gen 4:1***) or, as Martin Luther translated that verse, “I have the man, the Lord!”

[Hope Through the Ages]

However, many centuries passed before the advent of the promised Seed of the woman. Some four thousand years ago God gave a promise to a man named Abraham. He promised Abraham he would be the father of countless peoples. However, Abraham had no children, and he and his wife were very old, far past the normal age for bearing children. The apostle Paul writes, “Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had

been said to him. . . . He did not waver . . . regarding the promise of God” (*Rom 4:18, 20*). This promise of many children and of that one Child in whom the world would be blessed served as the beacon of hope for God’s people through the centuries. That Holy Child would be the Savior of the world.

The need for hope in a savior never went away. God’s people endured years of discipline by his hand as they were oppressed and conquered and even driven from the Promised Land. Not only were their hopes beginning to dim as they waited for the promised Deliverer, but they also underwent much spiritual affliction. During their lowest moments the prophet Jeremiah reminded Judah that their hope was still the Savior who would come.

[*Hope Today*]

What was true for Judah is still true for us today. Afflictions are still part of our daily lives, and we are in need of hope. Many times our thoughts and feelings mirror those of Jeremiah and the faithful of all the ages who have endured great sorrow and suffering in their lives. And why? Because we live in a sin-fallen world.

We may wonder, Will I ever get any relief? Can I really have the hope that things will improve? We, too, may feel exiled from God and isolated at those times, and it feels like we struggle in vain to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Our world still experiences Satan’s tyranny through sin and death, but in Jesus, God sent us a guardian who could contend with the devil and break his power, as well as the power of sin and death. In this Child born of Mary, the devil was outmatched because Jesus is true God in the flesh, the almighty Lord of hosts.

Yet it was not with a flick of his omnipotent hand that he vanquished the devil and broke the power of sin and death. Rather, with his hands and feet nailed to a cross he crushed the serpent’s head. By his death and resurrection, he broke Satan’s back and delivered us from his kingdom of darkness.

You and I are no longer captives to the darkness of sin. For through faith in Christ, the apostle Peter says, we have been given a “new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet 1:3).

[*Hope as an Anchor*]

Because of Mary's little baby boy, who is the resurrection and the life, you and I have the certain expectation and the unwavering hope that we will survive death and that sin will not get the best of us. We have the certain hope that we will be reunited with our loved ones who have died with Christ and will rise with Christ when he comes again.

Since he is risen and ascended on high, we have the sure promise we will soon join him. The writer to the Hebrews says, "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (***Heb 6:19***). An anchor keeps a vessel firmly moored and fastened, so that no matter how fierce the winds may blow and the waves crash against its sides, it will not be moved.

Since we have a living hope in Jesus Christ, our souls are anchored, moored, and fastened to him who is now in heaven. Though all the devils and demons rage against us, though we suffer with every imaginable disease and affliction, though we be assaulted by doubts and uncertainties, we always have Christ as the anchor for our souls. From him nothing can move us, not even death itself, because he is our fortress, our trust and hope secure.

[*Hope Points Forward*]

St. Peter says that we should always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks us a reason for the hope that is in us (***1 Peter 3:15***). In other words, we should always be prepared to point to Jesus when others ask us how we can stay hopeful in our times of crisis and trouble. We tell them about our Anchor who keeps us steady in a turbulent sea.

Just as the Old Testament people waited in fervent expectation for the Savior's birth, we now look in eager anticipation for his return. When our long-expected Jesus comes again, we will be free from sin forever. Then we will no longer be tempted and accused by the devil. Then we will live in glory and rejoice with all who, like us, have lived in hope. Amen.

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)
