

In the name of God Father Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Saint Paul writing to the church in Rome. Is said whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction. So that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have a hope.

Paul might well be writing to us at St. Thaddeus this morning that we might have hope.

The overarching theme of the season of Advent is one of hope. John the Baptist, comes roaring out of the wilderness, "*Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near, repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near*". To Repent means to turn, to have a dramatic change of mind and direction. To repent is to turn away from the values and the practices of the old age. Such as idolatry violence in justice and exploitation. . . .and to turn to, the values and practices of the Kingdom of God, such as love, peace, justice, dignity, freedom and abundance. There is one who is coming the Baptizer says, and he will judge the people as to whether or not, they show forth those values. . . . those Kingdom values in their lives.

Last Sunday when our bishop was here we recited the baptismal covenant. And we said that we would persevered and resisting evil. That we would proclaim the good news of God in Christ. That we would seek and serve Christ in all persons. That we would strive for justice and peace and respect the dignity of every human being that's what we hope for in our lives isn't it? That's what we want our lives to show forth is it.

That there are many things that are essential for life. We know the physical needs food water shelter but there are spiritual qualities that are necessary for life as well . . . and hope is one of those qualities.

St Paul in this portion of his letter to the church in Rome with this blessing. By the God of hope. Fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that you may abound in hope, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The catechism and I know you all read it all the time. The catechism asks< "What is the Christian hope?" And the answer, *The Christian hope is to live with confidence in newness and fullness of life and to await the coming of Christ in glory and the completion of God's purpose in the world and the completion of God's purpose in the world.* So, the question before us this morning is do we live with confidence in the newness and fullness of life.

I don't know about you but I need that kind of hopeful confidence with all that's going on in our world today. I'm reminded of something that happened several years ago in a coal mine in Elkins West Virginia, you probably remember it as well. There was an explosion down in the mine and a number of miners were trapped deep in the earth. And as the rescuers approached the wall of timber and rock trapping the miners, they heard tapping noises. It was the miners on the other side asking in Morse code, is there any hope? Is there any hope. And you and I sometimes wonder and ask that same question Is there any hope for our divided country? Is there any hope for someone facing divorce? Any hope for my child for my grandchild? Any hope that I can control my addiction? Any I hope my friend my family member will be healed from cancer? Any hope that I will find comfort and a renewed sense of purpose in my life? Any hope for the families of the children killed on that school bus? Any hope for the victims of the tornadoes this past week? Any hope for the victims of the wildfires and Gatlinburg? Any hope that war and terrorism, will end soon with peace and freedom?

In preparing this sermon. I went to google (and beware of Google). I went to Google and enter the word hope. And what I got were a series of distraught statements. Of people who didn't feel any hope. Persons who were experiencing despair who were forlorn, desperate, sad, suicidal, lost folks. It was eye opening. . . .and soul crushing.

I was reminded of what Dante inscribed over the gates of hell.. . .remember? Abandon all hope ye who enter here. Because without hope you are in hell.

So what does this mean for you and me this morning? What does this mean for us in our daily lives that may be short on hope.

I just returned from a clergy conference this week. And one of the topics discussed wasn't titled, "The Unraveling of society". The unraveling of society. You and I live in a time of anxiousness and insecurity. Now let's face it, the majority of us here this morning, I say the majority, are in the over sixty age bracket. For example, I still read the morning newspaper. And I watch the evening news on T.V.. But most of our society doesn't. And they live in the world of tweets. Social media, reigns supreme.

Let me tell you what you already know. Our world view our mindset is not today's reality. The institutions which once I think heard us, are no longer relative to the majority of our population. And that includes the church. You know we sometimes pride ourselves that say that it is a warm and welcoming family. And we think that everybody who would know us would want to join us. But people don't join social clubs anymore. And if that's our claim to fame, we are soon to be extinct but. But. . . . If we are a people who shows forth Christ in our lives. If we are rooted in the Holy Spirit. If we know Jesus, then *there is hope for us*.

There are people here this morning who need hope. And there are people here this morning who can give hope. Sometimes I suppose we all live on both sides of that equation. But I want everyone who feels hopeless today, to feel that they are in the right place. When you need hope, find someone who has it. And when you have hope. Give it away. Hope causes the person who has it to consider others to worry not just what is best for one but what is good for all. Without hope, there is little motivation to love your neighbor as yourself.

Advent is the season, that reminds us that the world we live in is a fall in one. A place that lies in the shadow of sin and death. And it's all too easy for many of us to forget the hope of Advent. We may be tempted to believe that our Christian hope is just too good to be true. . . . Remember this my friends, hope is not wishful thinking. The hope of Advent, calls us to remember the truth about God, the truth about the world and the truth about ourselves. Advent reminds us that as we dwell in the shadow of this present day age the dawn from on high will break up on us and the light of His coming. Well awaken a new world.

Hope is God's promise to us that he is with us and Christ is the proof of that hope. Paul's prayer, for the church in Rome, is prayer for us today as well. May the God of hope, fill you with all joy and peace and believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray.

Lord Jesus renew the gift of hope in our hearts. That we may see all things in the light of your promise coming. Amen.