

**Advent 2**  
**December 4, 2016**

*“Overflowing with Hope”*

**ROMANS 15:3-14**

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*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. <sup>5</sup> May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. <sup>8</sup> For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs <sup>9</sup> so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name." <sup>10</sup> Again, it says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." <sup>11</sup> And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples." <sup>12</sup> And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him." <sup>13</sup> 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.*

What a beautiful prayer this is! I am referring to Paul's words in verse 13, "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." As we gather together in worship, we are constantly reminding each other of the hope we have in Jesus our Savior. This strong hope that flows in us and through us is so clearly shown us in the words of Psalm 23, "Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." We have the sure hope of knowing where we are going when we die, and the sure hope of knowing that whatever the future brings in this life the goodness and mercy we have in the Lord will never change.

There are three good points about this overflowing hope that we want to focus on this morning as we take a closer look at these words of Paul to the Christians in Rome. First, hope comes to us through the Scriptures. Second, hope is shared when we worship together. Third, hope increases through the work of the Holy Spirit.

**Hope comes to us through the Scriptures**

Your life is overflowing with hope for the future because of what you have come to know and believe through God's Word, the Holy Bible. Paul writes, "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance and encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." The Old Testament is filled with examples of people who put their hope and trust in the Lord. God told Abraham he would have a descendant who would bless the whole world. Abraham believed this. And we are told the Lord credited this to him as righteousness. He did not find his hope of being loved by God and blessed by God in himself. He found this hope in the Lord and the promises that we made to him.

When God's people entered the Promised Land they were overflowing with hope that when they planted the seed into the ground They believed in hope that the Lord their God would provide the rain that was needed to germinate the seed and cause it to grow. In contrast the people living in the land, the Canaanites, had a false hope. They worshipped the storm God Baal and offered him sacrifices, even their own children, so he would cause the rain to fall and the crops to grow.

How many people do you know that have false hope? They believe in their heart of hearts that if they show a certain amount of kindness and love to other people, God will reward them with greater blessings in the future. When we lived in Santa Barbara, I knew this man who would let us pick up manure from his horse ranch that we could use in the garden. One day he said to me, "Just look at this beautiful ranch I have. I must have done something right in my life to have such a blessing." If you ask people if they think they will go to heaven after they die, they often respond with the words, "I hope so." With these words they indicate a false hope based on their performance.

Here is why the Bible is so important for your life and for every person who ever lives on this earth. The Bible destroys any hope that I might have of improving my life with God by how I perform. Earlier in this letter the Apostle Paul quoted from the Old Testament Scriptures, "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God." The Bible makes it clear that the only hope of being saved lies outside of ourselves. It is found only in Christ.

To illustrate the difference between a real hope and a false hope, I brought along with me a potato. When I was a child, I helped my dad plant potatoes in the spring of the year. We cut the potatoes into pieces with an eye on each piece of potato, placed them into the ground and then covered them with dirt. Then we depended on God to cause the potato to sprout and provide rain, and dirt and warm sunshine to make it grow. In the fall we would dig up the potatoes and put them into storage for the winter. However, we never planted rocks into the ground with the hope that they might grow into potatoes. If I think that I can plant the good things I do in my life to earn God's favor, that is more foolish than planting a rock and hope it will grow into a potato.

So what happens when we gather together in worship and believe with all our hearts that are saved by what Christ has done for us? We share our hope with each other in words of the Bible that we read, the prayers we pray and the hymns and songs we sing. We develop a spirit of unity as we worship together and celebrate the hope that is overflowing inside of us.

### **Hope is shared when we worship together**

The Apostle Paul calls on the Christians in Rome to unite together in sharing their hope with each other. "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." If you read the chapter before this here in Romans you realize that there was tension among the Christians in Rome over eating meat that had been associated with some of the heathen sacrifices. There was also tension between Jewish Christians and non Jewish Christians. Paul pleads with them to be

united as they celebrate the hope they have together in the Lord.

He calls on them to accept each other as they bring their praises to the Lord. He reminds them in verse 8 and 9 that Jesus served them by fulfilling the promises that were made to the Jews so that the Gentiles could have the same blessings in Christ and also share in the praise of the true God.

What amazes us is how Paul quotes from four different places in the Old Testament to show how the prophets had predicted clearly that Jews and Gentiles would be worshipping together. "I will praise you among the Gentiles" and "rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people" and "Praise the Lord all you Gentiles." Isaiah said the Root of Jesse would spring up and the Gentiles would put their hope in him.

Think of what a privilege it is each week to unite our voices with other Christians to sing about the hope we have in Christ. So many of our hymns speak of this hope. "My hope is built on nothing less, Than Jesus blood and Righteousness." "In Christ alone, my hope is found." Or we think of how the psalms lead us to put our hope in the Lord. Psalm 130 says, "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope." "O Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with his is full redemption." We sing about our hope of glory with such hymns as "Jerusalem the golden with milk and honey blest." We sing about the hope we have in God's strength and power with words such as "A Mighty Fortress is our God." During this Advent and Christmas season we sing of the hope that we have because Jesus was born in Bethlehem to be our Savior.

It has been said that you can live 30 days without food, 3 days without water and 3 minutes without air, but only three seconds without hope. The daily grind of life can take our eyes off this hope we have in Jesus. That is why we come together and worship together with people who may be older than us or young than us, smarter than us, or poorer than us, single or married, we come together to share our hope and lift our spirits with one heart and one mouth.

### **Hope increases because of the Holy Spirit**

Now we come to the third point of our sermon for today. It is the Holy Spirit who increases or fuels this hope that you have in Christ Jesus your Savior. We turn our attention again to verse 13. "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." Perhaps there are days the hope we have seems to be drained from. If this cup is filled with water, the water will drain from the cup if holes are poked into it. Just living in this world, or living with yourself, can drain you of hope. But then we are blessed to have the Holy Spirit. The God of hope fills you with hope and increases your peace and joy by leading you to overflow with hope through the Word of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus called the Holy Spirit our Comforter. The word for Comforter or Counselor has the thought of someone walking alongside of you constantly talking to you and encouraging you. The Holy Spirit restores our hope by constantly taking us back to what Jesus has done for us, and constantly helping us to look forward to what Jesus has planned for us in the future. In Romans 8 Paul wrote, "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we

are God's children." How many times has the Holy Spirit reminded you this past week that you are a dear child of your heavenly Father? Also in Romans 8 it says, "Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."

The Holy Spirit will not leave you alone. He will constantly fill you up and cause you to overflow with hope. Do you want more proof of this? Romans 5 says that we "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." Then it goes on to say, "And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us." At his lowest moment of life, Job was able to confess, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God, I myself will see him with my own eyes- I and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" These words have brought hope to so many people. How thrilled I am to be here this morning worshipping with people who are overflowing with hope. Amen.