

What is our Hope?

Scriptures

Romans 12
Romans 14:7-8
Psalm 139
Psalm 23



Annie

"Rejoicing in Hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer"

Today is the first Sunday of the church festival named Advent, a time of looking forward to the day when we celebrate the earthly birth of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Traditionally, a candle is lit on each of the four Sundays in Advent, the first being the candle of Hope. As I've been thinking about this tradition I've been asking the question, what exactly is our Hope, in both life and death?

Down the centuries, Christians have been pondering where we find comfort in this world, usually before many other questions that they later ask in their walk with Christ. They need to know because death comes to all of us, unless Jesus returns first, we will all die one day, but, when we surrender our lives to God, we have Hope. This Hope can only come from trusting the one who died to overcome death through His resurrection, bringing us the only comfort that can help us live with the knowledge that our life on earth ends in death, and to prepare for this. It is the Hope that Christ's resurrection brings that enables us to joyfully worship God in thanks and love, and know His Peace.

Christ Himself is our only Hope, He is our only confidence of anything in these uncertain days. Why? Because it is God who sovereignly holds this world in His Hands, His Word tells us that He holds all of our days, they are numbered and written in His Book. I am totally unable to tell you how long I will dwell on this earth, but God knows down to the last second, and this applies to everyone. And, while it is sobering, even considered unfeeling and inappropriate in our society, to speak of death this way, it brings comfort and confidence that nothing takes Him by surprise.

Imagine that you are planning the ultimate round the world trip. Your only confidence that you will complete this dream excursion is that all of your flights, trains, buses, hotel rooms, maybe even cruise ships, will be reserved and perfectly on time for when you need them. You have to consider the end of your trip, in order to be able to relax and enjoy the rest of it. And doing it yourself is fraught with complication and the likelihood that you will, through lack of experience, miss something. Therefore, you find someone who knows what they are doing, someone who is experienced in all facets of planning such an adventure and you leave all the fine detail in their capable hands. So, why are we so flippant about the plan for our greatest adventure of all?

As followers of Christ, adopted into the family of God, we have nothing to fear in death, our life is hidden with Christ in God, the safest place it could ever be. We belong to our Lord, we are no longer our own, as this Hope we have confirms. We were bought with an immeasurable price at Calvary and, while we can do nothing to earn even a minute part of our salvation, in accepting

this priceless gift, we also accept that we now must relinquish all to God. Leaving all the detail to the only One who knows when our journey ends, the only One who knows what we must accomplish each and every day, gives us the absolute trust and confidence to declare that our Hope is in Him alone.

We are walking in God's Presence for every second of our journey on earth. From the moment of our conception, He has watched over our every move, intricately and intimately weaving the great tapestry of our life. When we stumble or begin to stray, our Father is there, guiding and sometimes, as the great Shepherd, hooking us out of danger, His Rod and Staff comforting us as we journey. He truly is our Hope in life and death, therefore, we can confidently and exuberantly say, as the Psalmist said, "In Your Presence is fulness of joy".

Prayer: Abba Father, may we always keep alight the candle of Hope in our hearts, for You paid such a great price give us the most precious eternal gift. The gift of everlasting Life in You. Hallelujah, Amen.