***The christmas Code***

**Advent Worship Series – Week 2**

***Code Word:* Hope**

**December 4, 2022**

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| **WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINE**S  Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. Sermon manuscripts are included as a *sample* and not to be preached verbatim. |

**[*Project* “Week 2.QRCode”***(in Graphics file)* ***or below words on screen as people enter*]**

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| **Code Word: Hope**  ***The incarnation tells you who God is (Perfectly holy, bountifully loving) and who you are***  ***(Sinful, unable to escape). Believing both = hope.*** |

**Announcements and Offering**

**Call to Worship:**

Because we are made in God’s image, we are hardwired for hope. You and I are always putting our hope in something. If you listen, you will realize that we communicate with the language of hope all the time.

“I sure hope it doesn’t rain today.”

“I hope she isn’t mad at me.”

“I hope they win the championship.”

“I hope they can get along for once.”

“I hope this sickness isn’t something serious.”

“I hope when I get home there will be something to eat.”

“I hope I can do something worthwhile with my life.”

Today our Christmas Code word is **Hope.** I am persuaded that the language of hope is on our lips so much because we live in a world where hope seems temporary or is often dashed. But we can’t stop hoping, because God created our lives to be propelled and directed by hope, and he made our capacity for hope to drive us to him. It’s true that hope isn’t a thing; it’s a person, and his name is Immanuel. Celebrate hope this Christmas.

(*Come Let Us Adore Him*, pp. 90-93)

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| **SB#100/HC#280/SS#186/CF#5 – Angels, from the realms of glory** | TB-407 –Regent Square  HC-280  SS-186  CF-5 | HTD4-T12 (4 vs.)  HCD26-T20 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#103/CF#41 – Christians awake, salute the happy morn** | TB-476 – same  CF-41 | HTD10-T1 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#104 – Come, Thou long expected Jesus** (sing 2 vs. together; no chorus) | TB-370 – Hyfrydol | HTD1-T14 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#107 – Hark the glad sound! the Savior comes** | TB-87 – Joy to the World! | HTD4-T9 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#108/HC#270/SS#191/CF#1 – Hark! the herald angels sing** | TB-270 – same  HC-270  SS-191  CF-1 | HTD4-T5 (3 vs.)  HCD25-T20 |
| **SB#111/SS#192/CF#24 – It came upon the midnight clear** | TB-133 – same  SS-192  CF-24 | HTD9-T7 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#114/HC#146/SS#137 – Light of the world (Here I am to worship)** | TB-653 – Here I am to worship  HC-146  SS-137 | No HT CD  HCD13-T16 |
| **SB#116/HC#140/SS#194/CF#6 – O come, all ye faithful** | TB-496 – Adeste Fideles  HC-140  SS-194  CF-6 | HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)  HCD12-T20 |
| **SB#118/SS#195/CF#8 – O little town of Bethlehem** | TB-136 – same  SS-195  CF-8 | HTD3-T5 (3 vs.) |
| **SS#187/CF#17 – Angels we have heard on high** | SS-187  CF-17 | No HT CD |

**Missions Moment**

[*For a Missions Moment idea, go to:* <https://centralmissions.org/category/missions-moment/> ]

*The Candle of Hope*

**Lighting of Advent Candle**

**[The first (purple) Advent candle should be lit prior to the service.]**

**Reader 1:** When God chose Mary and Joseph, He chose the only woman and man in the

world to whom He would entrust His own precious Son.

**Reader 2:** Joseph was a quiet man of faith, dependability, and practicality. He not only

served as a model for Jesus, but for all of us.

**Reader 1:** An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:20-21, NLT)

**Reader 2:** To fulfill his plan, God chose a carpenter. A man who was sturdy, stable and practical, yet sensitive to the voice of God, knowing he would be faithful to Mary as she carried in her womb, the hope of the world.

**Reader 1:** On this second Sunday of Advent, we light the Candle of Hope. May it remind

each and every one of us of God’s great promise to us. He is our Hope, He is our Redeemer, and He is Savior.

(*Why the Nativity?* page 28)

**[Lighting of the second (purple) Advent candle.]**

**Prayer:**

Thank you, God, for the hope you give us. Help us today, and every day to worship you, to hear your word, and to do your will by sharing your hope with each other. We ask it in the name of the one who was born in Bethlehem. Amen.

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| **Children’s Moment – Hope** |

**Responsive Reading:**

**Leader:** In God’s plan to restore a fallen and disfigured world, Abraham became the father of all of us, the agent of blessing to everyone. Jesus completes what God started centuries before when He established Abraham’s covenant family. Those who put faith in Jesus and call Him “Lord” become part of Abraham’s faith family.

**All:** Because God is gracious, loving, and merciful, men and women from every corner of the earth are not only declared right, but ultimately are made right as well.

**Men:** It happens through God’s actions—not our efforts—in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus who was crucified for our misdeeds and raised to repair what has been wrong all along.

**Leader:** So the promises of God made long years ago are being realized in men and women who hear the call of faith and answer “yes” to it.

**All:** **1**Since we have been *acquitted and* made right through faith, we are able to experience *true and lasting* peace with God through our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One, *the Liberating King.*

**Women: 2**Jesus leads us into a place of *radical* grace where we are able to celebrate the hope of experiencing God’s glory.

**Leader:** **3**And that’s not all. We also celebrate in seasons of suffering because we know that when we suffer we develop endurance, **4**which shapes our characters.

**All:** When our characters are refined, we learn what it means to hope *and anticipate God’s goodness*. **5**And hope will never fail to satisfy our deepest need because the Holy Spirit that was given to us has flooded our hearts with God’s love.

(Romans 5:1-5, *The Voice*)

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| **HC#168 – Offering *(Christmas Version)*** by Paul Baloche | HC-168 | HCD15-T18 |
| 1.  Over the skies of Bethlehem appeared a star, While angels sang to lowly shepherds. Three wisemen seeking truth, they traveled from afar, Hoping to find the Child from Heaven.  Falling on their knees, They bow before the humble Prince of peace.  Chorus:  We bring an offering of worship to our King. No one on earth deserves the praises that we sing. Jesus, may You receive the honor that You're due. O Lord, we bring an offering to You.  2.  The sun cannot compare to the glory of Your love. There is no shadow in Your presence. No mortal man would dare to stand before Your throne, Before the Holy One of Heaven.  It's only by Your blood, And it's only through Your mercy, Lord, I come.  Chorus:  I bring an offering of worship to my King. No one on earth deserves the praises that I sing. Jesus, may You receive the honor that You're due. O Lord, I bring an offering to You. | | |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#32/HC#127 – How deep the Father’s love for us** | TB-663 – same  HC-127 | No HT CD  HCD11-T17 |
| **SB#82/HC#82/SS#38 – Jesus, name above all names** | TB-714 – same  HC-82  SS-38 | No HT CD  HCD7-T12 |
| **SB#109 – How far is it to Bethlehem?** | TB-509 – Stowey | No HT CD |
| **SB#114/HC#146/SS#137 – Light of the world (Here I am to worship)** | TB-653 – same  HC-146  SS-137 | No HT CD  HCD13-T16 |
| **SB#117/CF#20 – O come, Immanuel** | TB-444 – same  CF-20 | HTD11-T8 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#118/SS#195/CF#8 – O little town of Bethlehem** | TB-136 – same  SS-195  CF-8 | HTD3-T5 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#124/SS#196/CF#25 – Silent night! Holy night!** | TB-842 – Stille Nacht  SS-196  CF-25 | HTD4-T15 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#204/HC#5/SS#27 – There is a redeemer** | TB-881 – same  HC-5 | No HT CD  HCD1A-T15 |
| **SB#376/HC#219 – King of kings, majesty** | TB-722 – same  HC-219 | No HT CD  HCD20-T19 |
| **SB#402/HC#186/SS#73 – When I look into Your holiness** | TB-927 – same  HC-186  SS-73 | No HT CD  HCD17-T16 |
| **SB#439/HC#139 – There is a message** | TB-879 – same  HC-139 | No HT CD  HCD12-T19 |
| **HC#123/SS#55 – Shine on Us** | HC-123  SS-55 | HCD11-T13 |
| **HC#136 – We All Bow Down** | HC-136 | HCD12-T16 |
| **HC#156 – Enter In** | HC-156 | HCD14-T16 |
| **HC#187 – Jesus, Messiah** | HC-187 | HCD17-T17 |
| **Come Thou Fount *(Christmas Version)*** (Words by Geron Davis, Dave Clark and Tony Wood) 2016 Word Music, Woodspring Music, Tony Wood Songs | TB-374 – Nettleton  HC-186  SS-79 | No HT CD  HCD17-T16 |
| 1.  God of glory, King of Heaven, for this moment robed in flesh.  Prince of power, strength and honor, now contained in tenderness.  Hear the shouts from Heaven’s hallways, saints and angels all applaud.  Praise the Infant in the manger; glory to our mighty God.  2.  Here to break the bonds of evil, here to set the captives free.  He will triumph; He will conquer, and deliver you and me.  Hear the shouts from Heaven’s hallways, saints and angels all applaud.  Praise the Infant in the manger; glory to our mighty God.  3.  Let us live with hope and courage through the trials we face in life.  He will be our Strength in weakness, our Defender in each fight.  Hear the shouts from Heaven’s hallways, saints and angels all applaud!  Praise the Infant in the manger; glory to our might God. | | |
| **HC#220 – Incarnate** | HC-220 | HCD20-T20 |

**Pastoral Prayer**

**Sermon – Code Word: Hope**

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| **Drama – Wishful Thinking** |

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| **SB#492/HC#65/SS#7 – God will make a way** | TB-639 – same  HC-65  SS-7 | No HT CD  HCD5-T15 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#77/HC#151/SS#31 – Fairest Lord Jesus** | TB-206 – Ascalon  HC-151  SS-31 | HTD5-T1 (3 vs.)  HCD14-T11 |
| **SB#118/SS#195/CF#8 – O little town of Bethlehem** | TB-136 – same  SS-195  CF-8 | HTD3-T5 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#129/CF#7 – We three kings of Orient are** | TB-915 – same  CF-7 | HTD11-T12 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#130 – When Christ drew near to dwell with men** | TB-4 – Armadale | No HT CD |
| **SB#153/CF#35 – Thou didst leave Thy throne (O come to my heart, Lord Jesus)** | TB-94 – Margaret  CF-35 | HTD10-T6 (4 vs.) |
| **SB#290/HC#7 – Spirit of God, descend** | TB-467 – same  HC-7 | No HT CD  HCD1A-T17 |
| **SB#402/HC#186/SS#73 – When I look into Your holiness** | TB-927 – same  HC-186  SS-73 | No HT CD  HCD17-T16 |
| **SB#439/HC#139 – There is a message** | TB-879 – same  HC-139 | No HT CD  HCD12-T19 |
| **SB#565/HC#89/SS#43 – All I once held dear (Knowing You)** | TB-725 – same  HC-89  SS-43 | No HT CD  HCD7-T19 |
| **SB#711 – In heavenly love abiding** | TB-227 – Penlan | HTD2-T11 (3 vs.) |
| **HC#72 – Emmanuel** | HC-72 | HCD6-T12 |
| **HC#123/SS#55 – Shine on Us** | HC-123  SS-55 | HCD11-T13 |
| **HC#136 – We All Bow Down** | HC-136 | HCD12-T16 |
| **HC#156 – Enter In** | HC-156 | HCD14-T16 |

**Advent Blessing**

Be people of hope.  
Let hope live in your heart and share the hope of Christ with all you meet.  
Share hope by noticing someone else’s humanity.  
Share hope by listening to someone’s story.  
Share hope by praying for our world.  
In this Advent season, we need to see, feel, and share hope.  
As you go out into the wonder of God’s creations, share hope with those you meet. Amen.

*(Submitted by Rev. Susannah DeBenedetto, Christ Congregational Church &*

*Takoma Park Presbyterian Church, Takoma Park MD, LiturgyLink.net)*

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| **SB#116/HC#140/SS#194/CF#6 – O come, all ye faithful** | TB-496 – Adeste Fideles  HC-140  SS-194  CF-6 | HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)  HCD12-T20 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#73/HC#141/SS#28 – All hail the power** | TB-306 – Coronation  HC-141  SS-28 | HTD5-T5 (4 vs.)  HCD13-T11 |
| **SB#77/HC#151/SS#31 – Fairest Lord Jesus** | TB-206 – Ascalon  HC-151  SS-31 | HTD5-T1 (3 vs.)  HCD14-T11 |
| **SB#106/HC#260/SS#189/CF#43 – Go, tell it on the mountain** | TB-631 – same  HC-260  SS-189  CF-43 | HTD11-T4 (2 vs., start with chorus)  HCD24-T20 |
| **SB#112/HC#180 – It was on a starry night** | TB-535 – A starry night  HC-180 | No HT CD  HCD16-T20 |

**NOTE:** Unless otherwise noted, scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version (NIV). © 2011 by Zondervan. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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| **Advent 2022 Week #2** | |
| **DRAMA**  **Wishful Thinking**  **By Martyn Scott Thomas**  © Copyright 2021 by Martyn Scott Thomas. All rights reserved. Used by permission. | |
| **Topic:** | Hope |
| **Scripture:** | Romans 5:1-5 |
| **Synopsis:** | Three readers share their thoughts on hope. |
| **Characters:** | Reader 1  Reader 2  Reader 3 |
| **Props/Costumes:** | None. |
| **Setting:** | Bare stage. |
| **Running time:** | 3 minutes |

[*The Readers are standing across the front of the stage.*]

**Reader 1:** [*slowly, with a slight pause between words*] Suffering. Perseverance. Character. Hope.

**Reader 2:** Today’s my birthday. And it’s a big one. I won’t tell you how big, but trust me, it’s a significant number. There was a party. A lot of my family and closest friends, presents, ice cream, cake, and candles – a lot of candles. Everybody sang and then I was implored to “make a wish” and blow out my candles.

“Make a wish.” Now there’s a challenge – so many choices. I could wish for specific presents. [*thinking*] No, too selfish. There’s world peace. No, too easy and generic. I could wish for good things for my family. Maybe even a better diagnosis for my dad. Then I start thinking about that guy with the sign that’s always at the intersection asking for spare change, and my neighbor who just lost her job, and those kids around the corner whose parents never seem to be around.

Do I only get one wish, or do I get to make one for each of the candles on my cake? As many candles as there are, they may not be enough. I sure hope someone is listening.

**Reader 3:** [*slowly, with a slight pause between words*] Suffering. Perseverance. Character. Hope.

**Reader 1:** I passed a fountain the other day while I was walking in the park. A man was staring at the water flowing down the statue in the middle when he reached in his pocket, pulled out a coin, and threw it in. I stopped and watched as he walked away, then moved closer.

I couldn’t believe how many coins were in that fountain. Pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters – there had to be hundreds of them, each one representing someone’s wish. I wondered what each represented, and I wondered what caused each person to cast that wish into this particular fountain. Then I started thinking about all the fountains around town, around the state, and around the country. I wondered how many coins and wishes filled them. People so desperate, that they brought their hopes and desires and threw them into the water. I hope someone is listening.

**Reader 2:** [*slowly, with a slight pause between words*] Suffering. Perseverance. Character. Hope.

**Reader 3:** At times, life can be overwhelming. It’s easy to get caught up in my own little world with the inconveniences and stresses that come my way, but then I start thinking about all the issues around me.

**Reader 1:** Suffering.

**Reader 3:** I believe in God, and I know he’s sovereign, but sometimes it seems like he’s looking the other way as evil gets a tighter grip on this world. No matter how hard I try to do the right thing, it feels like I’m the one that ends up getting punished. God’s blessings seem few and far between.

**Reader 2:** Perseverance.

**Reader 3:** But God ***is*** faithful. I may not see his hand at work in each situation, but I know he has brought me this far and he promises to keep me until the end. I know that ultimately good will be rewarded and evil will be punished, even if it seems like the opposite is true most of the time. God is righteous. God is holy. God is just.

**Reader 1:** Character.

**Reader 3:** My hope is not based on my feelings or my desires. If it were, I’d be better off wishing on a star or trusting in the universe to somehow make things right. As the song says, “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.” You see, it’s not what I hope for, but who I hope in.

**Reader 2:** Hope.

**Reader 3:** I don’t have to worry about solving all the world’s problems or changing things over which I have no control. I just have to trust in the God who created all things and remains sovereign over this world. He is in control and when I cry out to him, I know that he is listening.

[*Blackout*]

***The christmas Code***

**Children’s Moment – Week 2**

***Code Word:* Hope**

**December 4, 2022**

**Written by Katie Laidlaw**

**Synopsis:** *The Christmas Code* Children’s Messages are given from the perspective of Gabriel, the angel. Gabriel’s perspective is meant to help children understand the narrative of the Christmas story, while encouraging application, and remembrance of the true meaning of Christmas.

**Set-Up/Staging:** Invite children to come to the front, either having them stand or sit for the lesson. (I personally recommend having the children stand, as this helps keep them attentive, engaged, and involved in the lesson—especially with the dynamic of the congregation watching them. In this more public/formal setting, sitting provides a more relaxed/informal mindset, allowing the children to disengage and merely be present in the moment.)

**Props:** Halo, wings, white shirt

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| **Week 2 – Hope** |

***Script:***

Oh! Hello! Do you remember me? I’m the angel, Gabriel! I’m here to give you more of the inside scoop on why we celebrate Christmas.

I remember when I visited Mary, and told her that she was going to have a baby. Mary was shocked and terrified when I visited her with this news. I tried not to get offended, because I know I don’t look the best to the human eye when I make my visits, and can scare people when I come out of nowhere. I even tried to soften Mary’s reaction, greeting her with, *“Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”* (Luke 1:28, NIV)

Mary was really confused why I was visiting her. I had to tell her! So, I did.

We know from our time last week, that the birth of Jesus was talked about, and being looked forward to for years before it actually happened. The world was waiting for the Messiah, the one who would save the world from their sin – this was the hope, anyway.

What does it mean to have hope? [*Allow children to answer*]

Hope is the waiting in wanting. When we have hope, we wait for a certain thing to happen, and we wait with excitement for this thing we are wanting and needing to happen unfold before our eyes.

We can hope for a lot of things, but the greatest hope of all is being saved by Jesus. We have hope because of God’s promises – and remember, God always keeps His promises. I told Mary when she was pregnant with Jesus:

*“He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”* (Luke 1:32-33, NIV)

This is why we celebrate Christmas: our hope came to life through the birth of a baby, who is Jesus, God’s son, the Savior and King! Knowing we have hope in Jesus helps us get through the hardest times—when we’re lonely, sad, disappointed, afraid, or don’t understand why things happen. We can have hope knowing that Jesus saves us, loves us, and has a plan for us, and the whole world! This is something to hold onto, get excited about, and share with others, especially in a world that is having a hard time.

How can we share our hope with others? [*Allow children to answer; help and encourage them to get creative*]

Those are all great ideas to share hope with others, especially this Christmas season. I encourage you to use one or two of those ideas and do them, maybe even asking your family to help you make it happen.

[*End with prayer.*]

**Main Points:**

* The greatest hope of all is being saved by Jesus (salvation)
* We have hope because of God’s promises
* Hope came to life through the birth of a baby: God’s son, the Savior and King
* We can have hope knowing that Jesus saves us, loves us, and has a plan for us, and the whole world
* We should share our hope with others

**Questions:**

* What does it mean to have hope?
* How can we share our hope with others?

***The christmas Code***

**Advent Sermon – Week 2**

***Code Word:* Hope**

**December 4, 2022**

**By Lieutenant Adam Hines**

***The incarnation tells you who God is (perfectly holy, bountifully loving)***

***and who you are (sinful, unable to escape). Believing both = hope.***

**TITLE: *Codeword:* Hope**

**SCRIPTURE: Romans 3-5; Matthew 1:18-21**

**CHARACTER: Joseph**

**INTRODUCTION:**

[Use a story of a person who gains access to a place of great importance because someone else provided them with the necessary credentials.]

**CONTEXT FOR ROMANS 3 & 4:**

1. **Reference Romans 1-3**: All people are sinners by birth and choice, which is an eternal problem.
   1. Man in sinful and live under the wrath of God **(Romans 3:10-13)**
   2. God is holy and we are not
   3. We are at war with God
   4. There is nothing we can do – religion, works, the Law, or rituals cannot save us
   5. The great U-TURN – but there is a work of grace through faith **(Romans 3:22-24)**
2. **Reference Romans 4:** Transition using the example of Abraham; the solution to the problem of sin as presented in Romans Chapters 1-3
   1. Chapter 4 shows us that a “do-over,” a “mulligan,” is not going to work. The solution to humanity’s problems in Romans 1-3 must come from outside of us.
   2. Refer to the Codeword “Promises” from series week one: *“All the promises of the prophets were carried on the shoulders of the One born in Bethlehem, and He fulfilled them all.”* **Read Romans 4:16:** *“Therefore, the* ***promise*** *(heir of the world) comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed.”*
   3. The Old Testament is filled with expectations of redemption, salvation, a Messiah, and victory. God built this expectation into His people to look forward to the birth of the Messiah.
   4. Christmas is HOPE realized.

**CHRISTMAS IS “HOPE” REALIZED**

**READ SCRIPTURE: Romans 5:1-5**

Romans 5 presents a great theological and practical picture of what it means to live as people of hope. As a CODE WORD of the Christmas season, **hope** comes from the certainty of the glory of God. This hope is accessible through Jesus Christ, born on Christmas morning, and it will not disappoint us. Because we *know* that God is a God of fulfilled promises! We have an assurance of HOPE in Jesus Christ.

**THEOLOGICAL MAIN: HOPE IS THE LENS WE USE TO SEE GOD FOR WHO *HE* IS AND US FOR WHO WE ARE.**

**OUR POSITION IN CHRIST GIVES US REASON TO HAVE HOPE.**

1. **READ ROMANS 5:1a:** *“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith”* 
   1. An event of the past (Christ’s life, death, and resurrection)
   2. Legal term *justified* – “to look upon as righteous”
   3. What God demands, He supplies. He did it at a great, great cost.
   4. *Through faith* – brings us together into the family of Abraham (as referenced in Romans 4:16)
   5. Joseph’s story in Matthew 1:18-21 demonstrate how faith and hope meet

**OUR POSSESSION AND GIFTS IN CHRIST GIVE US REASON TO HAVE HOPE**

1. **The possessions here are precious and should be treated with care and never taken for granted.** 
   1. Gifts must be taken, opened, and accepted to experience their fullness.
   2. [Use a personal illustration of a gift you have receive and used.]
2. **First, we have the possession of “peace” with our Lord Jesus Christ.**
   1. Peace with God –completeness or wholeness with God.
   2. We don’t make peace with God (Colossians 1:20)
      1. God brings peace to us through Christ’s blood
   3. Peace with God is a relational rightness that was abandoned at the fall and made *possible* by the death of Christ
   4. Why say “possible”? Because peace with God was offered as a gift. With any gift, it requires an active response. You must choose to take it, open it, and accept it.
   5. ILLUSTRATION: 1829 – George Wilson was convicted of murder and sentenced to death in Philadelphia. High powered friends got his case taken all the way to President Andrew Jackson. Jackson granted the pardon.
      1. Wilson refused the pardon. Chief Justice Taney said, “The pardon must be accepted to be valid.”
      2. If you refuse the gift of the pardon, there is NO HOPE!
      3. The Chief Justice of the universe offered you a pardon. Do you accept it? Have you accepted that gift?
3. **Second, we have “gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.”** (Romans 5:2a)
   1. *Access* is an interesting term. It means, “enter the presence of,” and is especially used in reference to a king.
   2. Through Jesus, we have the right to enter the very presence of the God of Heaven.
   3. This was totally counter-cultural in Paul’s day. There was a “curtain” problem. You don’t have access to the King because of your sin!
   4. REFERENCE: Hebrews 10:19-22
      1. Social distancing was required of the worshipper and God.
      2. Gentiles were restricted to the outer court.
      3. Women were restricted to “the court of women.”
      4. Only the priests could enter the “Holy Place.”
      5. Finally, only the high priest could enter the “Holy of holies”—only once a year—and not without the blood of an innocent sacrifice.
      6. The message is clear - KEEP YOUR DISTANCE
   5. Access 🡪 Why don’t we spend more time praying given this reality? It is in this presence that we realize the total unmerited favor of God.
4. **Third, we can “boast in the hope of the glory of God.”** (Romans 5:2b)
   1. How can we rejoice in something (the glory of God) – as it is something we fall short of (Romans 3:23)?
   2. Paul answers this question in Colossians 1:27.
      1. The “hope of glory” is a person.
      2. Hope is a certainty that hasn’t happened yet. Eternity is a reality that hasn’t happened yet. This is the reality that allows us to live above the circumstances of our lives.
      3. Hope is increasingly hard to come by and Paul is telling the Romans, ‘your hope better be in something that transcends this life’. The only thing that transcends this life is God the Father whom you have access to by Jesus Christ His Son.
   3. Paul is famous for mentioning boasting, especially in 2 Corinthians 12:9 – *“Therefore I will boast in my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.”*
   4. Back in Romans 4:2, Paul said, *“If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about – but not before God.”* We can’t boast in anything except for God’s grace. **As believers in Christ, this is our hope.**
   5. What is the antithesis of hope? It’s impatience. It’s the belief that we can pull up to the “ordering window” and give God our payment (money, obedience, etc.) and expect that God delivers our order at the next window. We expect God to fulfill our hope from the 1st window to the 2nd window.

**OUR PRIVILEGES IN CHRIST GIVE US REASON TO REJOICE**

1. **Imagine being the recipient of a Christmas present that wasn’t that great.**
   1. How would you respond? Has it ever happened to you?
   2. God never gives a present like that.
   3. Paul lays out this process of Christian growth in Romans 5:3-5.
      1. We are called to rejoice “in our sufferings”. Some translations say “afflictions” because we know that they ultimately lead to what? HOPE – having only positive expectations.
      2. *Suffering* is listed here as a gift, the same way that the hope of glory is a gift!
         1. Philippians 1:29 – *“For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him . . .”*
         2. Do we approach it that way? Do we see afflictions as obstacles to or within our faith, or as opportunities to be obedient for His glory?
      3. Suffering offers some potent benefits to the believer. The gift of suffering first brings us *perseverance*. What is perseverance?
         1. It is an intense focus that is meant to correct our vision.
         2. It is a necessary step in drawing closer to God.
         3. As things improve, do we become like the Israelites and turn from God and focus on other things?
      4. Perseverance produces *character*. What is character?
         1. It is “tested-ness.” It is what is left after the other stuff has been cut away. Sometimes the word for character is experience or even proof – it is the inarguable truth or reality of something. Are you a living testimony, a proof, of the work of perseverance? Have you shared this gift?
      5. Character produces *hope*. Hope is a reminder of who God is and what He’s done in us. It is the result of this process.
2. **This hope does not put us to shame.** (Romans 5:5)
   1. Hope was poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.
   2. Hope is eternal because it comes from the power of the Holy Spirit.
   3. The Holy Spirit leads us to God’s unfailing character and becomes the source of hope.

**CHALLENGE**: Is your hope that the circumstances will improve or that God will walk through the circumstance with you? What is your hope in today? More importantly - **Who is your hope in today?**

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