

# In Him Will Be Hope

Advent 2

Pastor Josh Frazee

Romans 15:4-13

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

Christmas is still a month away. Today is only December 4<sup>th</sup>. We have two more Sundays and three more Wednesday Midweek services before the big day. So why the excitement? Why the hope?

According to Dictionary.com, hope is “the feeling that what is wanted can be had or that events will turn out for the best.” Some of you younger members may know what that is all about. You may know one or two of the things you will be receiving as gifts for Christmas. Because you saw your parents or guardians buy some things you want, you know what it is to feel that what you want you can have—it’s only a matter of time. Others of you know what it is to hope that things will turn out for the best. You’ve had your fair share of scrapes and you know that it was God who had seen you through.

Hope is one of the big three: faith, hope, and love. Hope is also produced by character, which comes from endurance. Each of these are learned through suffering. But again, the end result we receive is hope; and that hope does not and will not put us to shame.

It is fitting to hear about hope today because that is the purpose of Advent, to be a season of hope. We’re not to the red and green of Christmas yet, or even the white of Christmas, if you want to follow liturgical practices. We’re in the blue season of Advent.

With that in mind, our Epistle text for today makes sense, too, because it is also all about hope. St. Paul writes to a church to unite the Jewish and Gentile converts in the hope they have each received in the Messiah who has come.

## Verse 1

Paul writes: “May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.”

Paul calls God the “God of endurance and encouragement”; but is God only the God of those things for believers? When Paul wrote his letter, he was addressing Christians who had formerly practiced Judaism. These Christians were not always so welcoming to the Gentile converts. So Paul reminds them that God had had patience with them in their conversion to the hope they had in Christ. God had not abandoned them in their sin but had given them hope in the Messiah who had come. In the same way, the Jewish Christian converts were encouraged by Paul to share that same patience with their Gentile brothers and sisters that they might have the same hope in the Messiah.

Today, most if not all of you were born as Gentiles who were baptized into faith in the Messiah who has come. Even though you may be Gentile converts, Paul’s letter still applies to you. How patient are you with those who have only recently come to faith in the Savior? Do you show the same patience in their learning the faith which God showed you in your education of our doctrine?

God welcomed you into the faith with open arms. He did not withhold His Word from you or the waters of Holy Baptism but met you before you could even grasp what was going on. “Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.” “For whatever was written in the former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have

hope.” Although Paul wrote these words about the Old Testament Scriptures for his own time, they apply to his own letter for us today. His letter to the Romans, and all the other epistles, the Gospel accounts, Revelation, and yes all of the Old Testament were written for all of us—lifelong members and recent converts alike. They were written, as Paul mentioned to the Romans, so that we might have hope.

### Verse 2

And Paul continued: “For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised (Jewish converts) to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.” Then Paul makes several quotes from the Old Testament concerning the mercy God would show the Gentiles through His chosen Messiah. Three of the verses he used prophesy a time for the Gentiles to sing hymns of joy and praise; and the fourth gives the reason for that singing: the hope that the Gentiles would have in God’s Messiah.

Paul was very good at tying everything together, and this section is a good example. He reminds his Jewish-Christian convert audience of the importance of the Old Testament writings, and then he quotes from them words about how even the Gentiles would have cause for hope.

Today we hope for many things. The gifts to be received at Christmas. The cure for cancer and other diseases and bodily ailments. But as Paul has shown us through his letter, our ultimate hope lies in God’s Messiah. That’s what he is referring to when he quotes from Isaiah that “the root of Jesse will come.” The “root of Jesse” is God’s Messiah, who had been born in that lowly manger and who would go to His death for His people, both the lifelong members of His kingdom, as well as the recent converts.

Neither the Jewish-Christians or the Gentile-Christians had deserved any of God’s mercy, and neither do you. None of you loves your neighbor as you should—which is as you love yourself. And none of you loves God as you should, even with the bounty of hope He has given you. How often do you show impatience to recent converts or to those who don’t even know the Word of God’s love? You are called to love all of your neighbors as yourselves, not just the recent converts. Have any of you lost your temper or even become impatient waiting in lines at stores this shopping season?

Yet it was for those very reasons that God sent His Messiah into the world. He sent Him to give you hope. His Messiah came to be born of a virgin and lived and died, so that you might have the forgiveness of sins. And that same Messiah was raised from the very dead so that you might have hope—all of you, the lifelong members and the recent converts.

### Verse 3

And so Paul concludes: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we share the hope that God has given to us. It is a hope which we did not deserve but which our Heavenly Father was pleased to give to me and to you—whether you have believed your entire life or only began to walk in faith over the past year.

Now some of you may be wondering how these things tie in to a season which is preparation for the Messiah’s coming. But it’s not that far of a stretch when you consider the word from the angel concerning His arrival. The angel told the shepherds, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior.” That Savior was and is God’s

Messiah. And His appearing brings joy and peace to “all the people,” both lifelong members and recent converts.

Even more than that, the appearing of the Messiah brings joy and peace to all people, it's just that some have not heard. Today and every day we can share that Gospel good news of the Messiah's arrival so many years ago. His arrival brings hope for this season and every season; for lifelong members and recent converts; for those who have heard already and for those who will, because the Messiah came to bring forgiveness of sins. So “as it is written, ‘Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.’ And again it is said, ‘Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.’ And again, ‘Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him.’ And again Isaiah says, ‘The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope.’” The root of Jesse, the Messiah, has come. This season we sing His praises in hope. In Jesus' Name. Amen.