*DEVOTIONAL*

November 27 – December 2

*The Hope of Christ*

**Monday, November 27 Psalm 42:1-11**

*“I will put my hope in God”*

 The message of the forty-second psalm is that we need not be overwhelmed or cast down in times of trouble. Instead, we are encouraged to confide in God with every confidence that all will yet be well, that all will be used by God for our good, and that brighter and happier days will come. That is what it means to put our hope in God.

 In a world of trouble and sorrow such as ours; in the distress which springs up in the heart when, from sickness or from any other cause, we are long deprived of a healthy quality of life; how imperfect would be a book professing to be a revelation from God if it did not contain some such psalm as this, so accurately describing the feelings of those who are in such circumstances; so well suited to direct us to the true source of hope. Psalms like this make the Bible a complete book, and show that he who gave it "knows what is in us" and knows what we need in our times of sadness.

*I remember your loving kindness, Lord, and I put my hope in you. Amen.*

**Tuesday, November 28 Colossians 1:1-8**

*“The faith and love that spring from your hope”*

 Paul is giving us a description of the Christian life. First, he gives thanks for the gift of faith in Christ Jesus. The heartbeat of Paul’s preaching was to be made right with God by grace through faith. It is faith that brings Christ into our lives. Second, Paul gives thanks for their love for all of God’s people. They were supportive of Christians in other churches, praying for them and contributing financially to those in need. Third, Paul names hope which is the quality of life that is promised to all who believe, a quality of life we begin to experience in the here and now, but which will be perfected in heaven.

 Here is the great triad of Christian virtues, describing the Christian way of life: faith, hope, and love. These remain though all else may perish (see 1 Corinthians 13). Faith is directed *to* Christ and is *in* Christ; love is *to* and *for* fellow believers; hope is *for* the coming of full salvation. Interestingly, hope is not a reward for our faith and love. Rather, the hope that is ours is the source (the “spring”) of our faith in Christ and our love for others.

*I want my life, Lord, to reflect these forever truths: faith, hope, and love. Amen.*

**Wednesday, November 29 Psalm 130:1-8**

*“Put your hope in the Lord”*

 Advent begins this coming Sunday, when we start thinking about the first coming of Jesus but also about his second coming. The second coming matters because Jesus still has a job to finish; the basis for believing that it will happen is that he really has begun it. As Christians we celebrate Christ’s first coming, and expect and wait for his second coming.

 Thanksgiving is tomorrow, which reminds me of a conversation I had with a woman several years ago. She was telling me about her work as an ER nurse and how she had to work on Thanksgiving. I asked her what kind of emergencies happen on Thanksgiving. She told me about the young man who was shot by his father during dinner, and the high number of attempted suicides around the holidays. Yes, there is a job for Jesus to finish. Fortunately, the fact that people put their hope in the Lord brings harmony to many families and gives many people a reason to carry on living in times of struggle and loss. This shows us that Jesus has begun the work, and gives us the confident hope that he will indeed finish what he has started.

*Thank you, Jesus, for coming to earth that I may put my hope in you. Amen.*

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**Thursday, November 30 Romans 5:1-5**

*“Hope does not disappoint us”*

 To be forgiven of our sins through the death of Jesus is the most important blessing that the gospel brings to our lives. But it doesn’t come alone. It opens a door of hope through which each reconciled sinner may look forward to a whole new world of many blessings.

 Hope is the keyword of this passage: (1) our hope rests on this new reality, established between us and God, that we are at peace with him. There is now room in our hearts for the hope that God will continue to bless us. (2) Our hope is not impaired but confirmed by our present troubles. The Christian who perseveres during times of trouble is an approved or accredited believer. Is it not true that when the tested Christian finds his faith has proved itself genuine, his hope will grow and become all the more confident? (3) Our hope is warranted by the proof which we already possess of the love of God for us. That proof is the Holy Spirit who lives in us, a gift of grace not earned or deserved but given because we are loved by God.

*Thank you, Father, for your love which affirms my hope in you. Amen.*

**Friday, December 1 1 Peter 1:3-9**

*“God has given us new birth into a living hope”*

 What has the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead done for Christians? It has given us the grace of hope. Peter expresses this when he exclaims that God, the Father of our Lord Jesus, is blessed, because from his abundant mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope by his Son's resurrection from the dead. Among other things, such hope spurs us on to godly living.

 No one who has not a clear belief in a future life can have permanently a strong sense of moral responsibility. A person may, indeed, persuade himself during various periods of his existence that his sense of responsibility is the purer from not being bribed by the promise of future reward or stimulated by the dread of future punishment. But, for all that, his moral life, if he has not an eternal future before him, is weak and impoverished because he has fewer and feebler motives to right action. He needs a hope resting on something beyond the sphere of earthly space and time, and God has given him one by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

*Lord, I will continue to depend on you and live for you. Amen.*

**Saturday, December 2 Isaiah 40:27-31**

 *“Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength”*

 Sometimes we feel forsaken by God. Our "way" seems to be hidden from him. We suffer, and God seems indifferent. We experience the injustice of the world, and God does not defend us. We read his Word, which makes sense to others, but not to us. We begin to project onto God this weakness that is in us: he must be growing weary and faint in caring for us.

 God replies by first appealing to our intelligence. “Do you not know? Have you not heard?” Look away from yourself and see God’s work in creation. Listen to those who witness to God’s love and grace. He is the everlasting God who is faithful and trustworthy. Then, God shares with us the wisdom of hopeful waiting. Even the spiritually strong, so full of life and vigor, will feel abandoned at times and become spiritually weak. This is when hopeful waiting looks to the Lord for renewed strength, a strength that surpasses what was experienced before, allowing for new and amazing soaring in the powerful and loving Spirit of God.

*By your Spirit, Lord, lift me up when I am down and give me strength. Amen.*