*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 23- 28

Hope

**Monday, November 23 Psalm 33:13-22**

*“Our hope is in you alone”*

 This passage teaches one of the critical lessons Israel had to learn again and again throughout her long history with God: Deliverance belongs to God, and salvation comes to those who wait hopefully for God rather than to those who trust in any form of human power. The supreme example of this need to trust God in contrast to relying on human power is the picture of Israel between the Egyptians and the Red Sea in Exodus 14. Aware of the approaching Egyptian chariot forces behind them and with all escape seemingly cut off by the expanse of the Red Sea before them, the people panic.

 Moses, able to see with the eyes of God, responds serenely, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today” (Exodus 14:13). At this point the impossible happens. The sea opens up to allow the Israelites to pass through to safety, while the Egyptians are destroyed pursuing God’s people into the sea. Hopeful waiting – faithful endurance – rather than panicked action is the appropriate stance of God’s people.

*Our hope is in you, Lord, not in the powers of this world. Amen.*

**Tuesday, November 24 Psalm 42:1-5**

*“Put your hope in God”*

 Few images in the Bible exceed the beauty of the opening lines of this psalm. The soul of the psalmist pants for God like a deer for scarce water in the midst of drought. Here God is seen as the source of life and refreshment that satisfies the longing of the psalmist to meet with God. The emphasis is not just on his utter dependence on God for life (while that is, of course, assumed); it is rather the joy and pleasure of being in God’s presence that the psalmist misses and longs to restore. Why he is prevented from enjoying God’s presence in the temple the psalm does not tell us, but the taunts of the enemy seem to indicate that he is being held captive in a foreign land.

 The suffering and sense of longing that the psalmist is experiencing in his soul is challenged with a set of questions intended to cast the present circumstances in a hopeful light. There is a sort of “self-talk” in which the psalmist recalls the basis for faith and hope. God is his Savior, and therefore there is hope that God will come to his rescue and overcome the present circumstance, returning the psalmist to God’s temple where he can join his fellow worshippers in praise of God.

*At times I feel distant from you, Lord; nevertheless, I put my hope in you. Amen.*

**Wednesday, November 25 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 being 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.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 23- 28

Hope

**Thursday, November 26 Romans 15:7-13**

*“May you overflow with hope”*

 Paul pleads for unity in the Roman church between Jews and Gentiles by urging them to “accept one another . . . just as Christ accepted you.” We are to welcome one another in the church because Christ has welcomed each one of us. After all, what right do we have to refuse fellowship with a person whom Christ himself has accepted into the body? Through such mutual acceptance God will be praised. For God sent Christ to the Jews so that Gentiles also might be able to praise God, and the Old Testament likewise predicts that Gentiles will join with Jews in worshipping God.

 Paul beautifully incorporates into his prayer three key ideas. First, “the God who gives hope” is seen in the Gentiles who now have hope of salvation through the Jewish Messiah. Second, the “joy” and “peace” he wants them to experience are two of the essential values of God’s kingdom that Paul encourages them to make a priority. Third is the Holy Spirit, by whose power Christians may “overflow with hope” as he brings about our spiritual rebirth through faith in Christ.

*You sent your Son, Father, and he is the hope of the world. Amen.*

**Friday, November 27 Hebrews 6:13-20**

*“We have this hope as an anchor for our soul”*

 Hope is an important and critical element if Christians are to stay loyal to Christ their Lord in a secular world of increasing opposition to Christian faith and lifestyle. The winds of hostility are increasing in their force, tending to blow Christians off their course and against the rocky shores of doubt and sinful living. What can hold them on course? Is it not an unwavering hope in the person of Christ, the one who died on the cross for our sin so that we can live in the presence of God at all times?

 Using a sailing metaphor, the writer of Hebrews describes this hope as an “anchor for our soul” which is both firm (steadfast, sound, unyielding) and secure (safe, established, guaranteed). These are characteristics that sailors long for in an anchor holding them against a storm. Jesus himself lived as one of us, fully human and therefore susceptible as we are to the storms of this world. As the one who went before us, he has entered safely into the presence of the Father, and we can place our hope in him that he will bring us there safely, as well.

*Keep me anchored in you, Lord, and bring me safely home. Amen.*

**Saturday, November 28 Matthew 12:15-21**

*“His name will be the hope of all the world”*

 In response to a threat, Jesus withdraws. He is not trying to escape opposition but to keep it at bay until the time for his predicted betrayal, arrest, and death. He is still in full public view, because “many followed him, and he healed all their sick.” From the beginning of his public ministry people came to Jesus for healing from the surrounding countryside, now including people from as far away as Idumea, over a hundred miles away.

 Matthew cites the Old Testament prophet Isaiah to show not only that Jesus is the promised Messiah, but to emphasize what kind of Messiah he is. While many in his day were expecting a “conquering hero” Messiah, Matthew affirms the prophetic vision of a Servant Messiah who will not brazenly demand allegiance with his proclamation of justice but will gently and humbly invite all who are in need of salvation. Further, it is not only for Israel that he has come. He is the hope of all the world, the Spirit-endowed Son of God whose “name” (that is, whose identity and mission) is the only name by which we may be saved.

*You are my hope, Lord, and you gently invite me to trust in you. Amen.*