

## **“Do Not Grieve As Others Do Who Have No Hope”**

### **I. Hope Is An Expectant Belief In A Future Fulfilment**

Our themes for tonight is hope. Hope is defined as *“desire accompanied by expectation of or the belief in fulfillment.”* We desire for the end of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and believe that they will soon end. We desire for economic recovery and believe that the economy will soon rectify itself. We desire for our children and grandchildren to be successful in school and in life and believe and work toward that end.

Hope is based on our remembrance of the faithfulness of God in the past, our trust in God’s love and goodness presently and our belief that God will in the future work together for good for those who love God and are called accordingly to God’s purpose. A hopeful person seeks to live with patience and confidence and to pray, work and wait for a brighter future. *In the Eucharist, we acclaim, “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again!” And, in Advent, we proclaim, “Christ came, he comes and he will come.”*

The passage of scripture that we have chosen for tonight comes in response to the overwhelming success by the grace of God that Paul, Silas and Timothy experienced in spreading the gospel in Thessalonika. Paul had been driven out of Thessalonika but sent Timothy back to minister to the Christians there. Through Timothy, he has discovered that some Greeks, many Jews and some of the leading ladies had remained steadfast in their faith and he wanted to return to strengthen that work. For the mean time, the faithful of Thessalonika had two question, one of which was concerned with what was to happen to those of their relatives who die before the Second Coming of Christ.

Paul’s response was, *“We would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.”* I Thessalonians.4:13. Paul was telling them that if one has the faith to believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead and if one believes that Christ Jesus will come again, then one can put ones trust and hope in the belief that Christ will bring with him when he returns those who have fallen asleep previously. In other words there would be a general resurrection in which their relatives would be saved.

Paul further gave them an expected order of that resurrection, addressed the subject of the timing of it and prayed for their patience expectation of it. We too join with them when we sing in Advent, *“Come thou long expectant Jesus born to set thy people free; from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.. Born thy people to deliver, born a child, and yet a king, born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.”*

### **II. Hope is A Prayerful Waiting**

Advent is a time for us to place our greatest hope in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to fulfill his promise of salvation and eternal life. It is a time to be prayerfully vigilant. It is a time to be actively loving. It is time to be expectantly hopeful. And, it is a time for us to be believably patient. Advent is a time to live as a hopeful people-to seeing the cup as half full rather than half empty and to stop listening to the nay-sayers who preach gloom and doom every day. It is a time to live within ourselves and before others, a life of joyous expectation in the coming of Christ to fulfill God’s purpose on earth.

The Advent hope is positive, courageous and hope-filled. It gives us the insight to see

the mighty oak in a tiny acorn; the ocean in a small stream; a magnificent sculpture in a piece of granite and a lawyer, doctor, teacher, priest or candlestick maker in the eyes of a cradled infant. Hope then enables us to pray and sing, *“O come, O come Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appears... O come thy Dayspring from on high, and cheer us by thy drawing nigh, disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death’s dark shadow put to flight.”*

### III. Hope Is A Patient Waiting

Hope is an active exercising of our faith in patient waiting. Hope is not static. The hopeful person seeks to be an instrument of God’s fulfilment while waiting.

Amos wrote, *“But let Justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”* Amos 5:24.

Micah added, *“He has shown you O human what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”* Micah 6:8.

Paul wrote, *“For in this hope ( the hope for the consummation and completion of Christ work on earth) we are saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”* Romans 8:24

Paul wrote again, *“If for this life only, we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied.” But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.”* I Corinthians 15:19.

And finally St. Paul wrote, *“He has now reconciled you in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you Holy and blameless and irreproachable before him, provided that you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which has been preached to every creature under heaven, and of which, I Paul became a minister.”* Colossians 1:22-23.

Christian hope is the faithful, courageous, patient and active waiting in expectation for the Second Coming of Christ; lived out in constant worship of Almighty God and in service to our fellow human beings. The question tonight is Upon whom then is my hope built? The lyricist sings,

My hope is built on nothing lessThan Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand ,All other ground is sinking

sand. All other ground is sinking sand. When darkness veils his loving face, I rest on His unchanging grace. In every high and stormy gale, My anchor holds within the veil. On Christ the solid rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand. When He shall come with trumpet sound, Oh may I then in Him be found. Dressed in His righteousness alone, Faultless to stand before the throne. On Christ the solid rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand.