

Hope in a New Year February 9, 2021

Opening Prayer

Loving God,

Show us the greatness of your goodness, that we may overflow with thanks every day. Bless us abundantly with rest for the heart, power for virtue, wisdom for life, and patience in suffering. Give us a joyful hope, and one day grant us the inexpressible joys of eternal life. Amen.

What is hope?

Hope is an optimistic state of mind that is based on an expectation of *positive outcomes* with respect to events and circumstances in one's life or the world at large. As a verb, its definitions include: "expect with confidence" and "to cherish a desire with anticipation."

"Hope is a match in a dark tunnel, a moment of light, just enough to reveal the path ahead and ultimately the way out." - Dr. Judith Rich

Hope: God can, does, and will act positively in the future

Hope is an act of confidence that God is the basis of our very lives.

Ephesians 1:3-19

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ just as he chose us in Christ^[a] before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵ He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹ he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance,^[b] having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹² so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴ this^[c] is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

¹⁵ I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love^[d] toward all the saints, and for this reason ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, ¹⁸ so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance

among the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.

1. What does it mean to be adopted? How does adoption provide hope? (verse 5)
2. What do we receive through adoption (both regular adoption and adoption as children of God)?
3. I have two adopted children. They are equal inheritors with our biological daughter. What does it mean to you to be equal to God's son in inheritance? What do we inherit? Does this provide you with hope? Why? (verse 11)
4. Does this hope found in your faith help you face life today? How?
5. What is the hope to which we have been called? (verse 18)
6. What does it mean to live with *wisdom* and *revelation* so that the eyes of our hearts are enlightened? How is this hopeful? (verses 17-18)
7. Contrast this wisdom with "the wisdom of the world"

Romans 12:9-13

⁹Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

1. Is hope passive or active? Why?

I hope I win the lottery.

I hope you come back soon.

I hope in the work of God done in and through me now and in the future.

Hope changes us from passive to active people!

Jurgen Moltmann Theology of Hope

Those who hope in Christ," Moltmann wrote then, "can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it. Peace with God means conflict with the world, for the goad of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present." Such hope, he continued, "makes the Church the source of continual new impulses towards the realization of righteousness, freedom and humanity here in the light of the promised future that is to come."

2. What are the behaviors and characteristics of a Christian in this Romans passage? What do these characteristics have to do with hope?
3. How does the hope that Jesus provides us speak to injustice in our world?
4. What does it mean to you to rejoice in hope? How does our faith allow us to rejoice in hope?
5. What does hope have to do with being “patient in suffering?” Does having faith prevent us from suffering in life? How does that hope based in faith help us in our suffering?
6. What are ways Romans says we can be bearers of hope (verse 13)
7. How do or can we contribute to the needs of the saints? Do we do this begrudgingly or joyfully? Why? (we are blessed to be a blessing)
8. What do you think it means to welcome the stranger? (it is hard to love people we do not know or people we choose to judge) How is sharing hospitality sharing God’s gift of hope with others?

I Corinthians 13:13

¹³ And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

1. What do faith and love have to do with hope?

God gives us hope through Jesus. Jesus teaches us to love. The Spirit moves us into actions of welcoming, feeding, caring, sharing, volunteering, worshipping, and nurturing.

God uses us to bring hope to others! To whom much is given, much is expected!

A Prayer for Hope and Peace

Heavenly father, I am your humble servant,
 I come before you today in need of hope.
 I need hope for a calm and joyful future.
 I need hope for love and kindness.
 I pray for peace and safety.
 Some say that the sky is at its
 darkest just before the light.
 I pray that this is true, for today seems stormy and dim.
 I need your light, Lord, in every way.
 I pray to be filled with your light.
 Help me to walk in your light, and live
 my life in faith and service.
 In your name I pray, Amen.