

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth  
Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023  
Rev. Gerry Gallant**

**Hope  
First Sunday of Advent  
Romans 15:8-13**

**Welcome**

**Announcements**

**Call to Worship**

Show us your unfailing love, O God, our Savior,  
**and grant us your salvation.**

Listen to what the Lord our God says:  
**He promises peace to his people,  
who are his beloved saints.**

The Lord will indeed give what is good.  
**Righteousness goes before him  
and prepares the way for his steps.**

May the Lord make his holy face to shine upon us  
in this time of Advent worship.  
**May we see God's face and so know peace.  
Amen.**

**Prayer of Adoration and Invocation**

Blessed are you, Lord our God, ruler of the universe,  
for you have kept us in life, sustained us,  
and brought us to this holy season.  
our hearts desire the warmth of your love,  
and our minds are searching for the light of your Word.  
Increase our longing for Christ, our Savior,  
and give us the strength to grow in love,  
that the dawn of his coming  
may find us rejoicing in his presence  
and welcoming the light of his truth.  
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

## **Advent Candle Lighting**

A series of readings from Isaiah  
 Jesus said, "I am the light of the world;  
 the one who follows me will not walk in darkness but have the light of life."

**We light this candle as a sign of the coming light of Christ.**

*[Candle Lighter]*

The people who walked in darkness  
 have seen a great light;  
 those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
 on them light has shined.

—Isaiah 9:2, NRSV

Come, Lord Jesus, our light, and our salvation.

**Let us walk in the light of the Lord.**

## **Opening Hymn #110: "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"**

Come, thou long-expected Jesus,  
 born to set thy people free;  
 from our fears and sins release us;  
 let us find our rest in thee.  
 Israel's strength and consolation,  
 hope of all the earth thou art,  
 dear desire of every nation,  
 joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver;  
 born a child and yet a king,  
 born to reign in us forever;  
 now thy gracious kingdom bring.  
 By thine own eternal Spirit  
 rule in all our hearts alone;  
 by thine all sufficient merit  
 raise us to thy glorious throne.

## **Call to Confession**

Prepare the way of the Lord!  
 Let us make our confession to God.

## **Prayer of Confession**

Merciful God,  
 always with us, always coming:  
 We confess that we do not know

how to prepare for your Advent.  
 We have forgotten how to hope in miracles;  
 we have ignored the promise of your kingdom;  
 we get distracted by all the busyness of this season.  
 Forgive us, God.  
 Grant us the simple wonder of the shepherds,  
 the intelligent courage of the Magi,  
 and the patient faith of Mary and Joseph,  
 that we may journey with them to Bethlehem  
 and find the good news of a child born for us.  
 Now, in the quiet of our hearts,  
 we ask you to make us ready for his coming. **Amen.**

### **Assurance of Pardon**

As we hear the ancient prophecies of the coming of the Messiah,  
 we long for the day when death will be swallowed up  
 and every tear will be wiped away.  
 As we wait expectantly  
 for Christ's promised return,  
 we live in the assurance of God's gracious forgiveness

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
 Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
 Give us this day our daily bread.  
 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.  
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.  
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
 Forever and ever. Amen.**

### **Music Ministry: "As We Break the Bread"**

### **Responsive Reading**

Isaiah 40-25-31

25 To whom then will you compare me,  
 that I should be like him? says the Holy One.

**26 Lift up your eyes on high and see:  
 who created these?**

**He who brings out their host by number,  
 calling them all by name;  
 by the greatness of his might**

**and because he is strong in power,  
not one is missing.**

27 Why do you say, O Jacob,  
and speak, O Israel,

**“My way is hidden from the LORD,  
and my right is disregarded by my God”?**

28 **Have you not known? Have you not heard?**

**The LORD is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.**

**He does not faint or grow weary;  
his understanding is unsearchable.**

29 He gives power to the faint,  
and to him who has no might he increases strength.

30 **Even youths shall faint and be weary,  
and young men shall fall exhausted;**

31 **but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles;  
they shall run and not be weary;  
they shall walk and not faint.**

**Children’s Hymn #145: “In the Bleak Mid- Winter” (V 1,2,4)**

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan;  
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;  
snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,  
in the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;  
heaven and earth shall welcome him when he comes to reign:  
in the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed the  
Lord God incarnate, Jesus Christ.

What can I give him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
if I were a Wise Man, I would do my part; yet  
what I can I give him: give my heart.

**Children’s Lesson**

**Prayer for illumination**  
**(Congregant Prepared)**

**Scripture****Romans 15:8-13**

**<sup>8</sup> For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs,<sup>9</sup> and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,**

**"Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles,  
and sing to your name."**

**<sup>10</sup> And again it is said,**

**"Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people."**

**<sup>11</sup> And again,**

**"Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,  
and let all the peoples extol him."**

**<sup>12</sup> And again Isaiah says,**

**"The root of Jesse will come,  
even he who arises to rule the Gentiles;  
in him will the Gentiles hope."**

**<sup>13</sup> 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.**

**Sermon**

The First Sunday of Advent is all about Hope. The Hope we have in Jesus coming to earth as our Savior. He came the first time to a lost world to bring the Hope of being reunited with God again through the grace of God. He came to a world that was both blind and deaf spiritually and gave the hope of a restored spiritual vision and hearing so that we could remove the scales from our eyes and see the world and ourselves for the truth of who we are and so that we could once again hear the Word of God clearly and be restored into the kingdom of heaven as Children of God. Advent also looks forward to the day when Jesus Christ will return and remove all of the persecution, suffer and sadness from this world and reign over his people in the new Jerusalem, Advent truly is a season of Hope.

Advent has four weeks, and they are traditionally; Hope, Faith, Joy, and Peace (sometimes renamed Love by some churches). Throughout the regular year we will hear sermons of Faith, in fact we just had almost eight in a row. You will hear sermons on love, we have had a couple in the past few weeks. You will even hear the occasional sermon on the joy that we have to

look forward to in heaven and enjoy here on earth. However, Hope is really not a topic that comes up often in the Scriptures covered by the lectionary. So, Advent is a time when we really need to take a closer look at Biblical Hope and what it means to us as followers of Christ.

There is an older hymn, 'Since Jesus came into my Heart' which has a [articular line in it that says, 'I am possessed of a Hope that is steadfast and sure, since Jesus came into my heart.' Every teacher in the room just cringed a little as I read that line. Because we can possess Hope, that is a truth, but how can Hope possess us?

Hope, as it is defined by the world, is wishing for the best possible outcome. It's looking out and just wishing things would go in our favor in a world that has no order, no ruler. Worldly Hope is a feeling we can possess, but it cannot possess us.

The truth is you cannot understand how Hope can possess a person until you live in relationship with Jesus. Hope is a companion to our faith; they walk together in our lives. Biblical Hope is defined as, 'a confident expectation based on a solid certainty', it means we trust that all of the promises that God makes in the Bible will come absolutely true, and the 'great Hope' that all Christians hold to today is the return of Jesus Christ to remove the evils of this world. Biblical Hope is knowing that whatever happens in the will of God, we are happy to be included in his works here on earth.

Hebrews 11:1 tells us

**Hebrews 11:1**

**11 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.**

Faith is knowing that the promises of God are assured, Faith is knowing that regardless of what is happening in this world, God is the one in Control.

Romans 15, gives us some more details on Christian Hope and as we examine the Scriptures today, I pray that we all will be encouraged by the Hope we have in our Saviour throughout Advent and throughout our lives.

**Romans 15:12**

**<sup>12</sup> And again Isaiah says,**

**"The root of Jesse will come,  
even he who arises to rule the Gentiles;  
in him will the Gentiles hope."**

In verse twelve Paul is quoting from the prophet Isaiah. He is reminding the readers in Rome that it is Jesus who is the 'root of Jesse' That Jesus is the Messiah, and that Christian Hope, Biblical Hope, should always be focused on Jesus Christ.

Proverbs 23:17-18 says,

**Proverbs 23:17-18**

<sup>17</sup> **Let not your heart envy sinners,  
but continue in the fear of the LORD all the day.**  
<sup>18</sup> **Surely there is a future,  
and your hope will not be cut off.**

Our ultimate Hope as a Christian is in spending eternity with God. When the day of Judgement comes we will be the virgins who arrive with lamps that are lit because of the oil we carry, we will be the ones who have invested into the kingdom of heaven with our time, talents and treasures here on earth and will receive our reward being called a 'good and faithful servant' by our God. We are the ones who will stand on the right as sheep and go into the kingdom of heaven.

This is the Hope that the faithful Christian is possessed by in the world. Christians who are persecuted all over the world know this hope, The pain, the suffering, the starvation, and torture mean nothing to them, because they know that in the end they will stand with God in his kingdom.

The Christian understand the meaning of the phrase,

**'I would rather stand with God and be judged by the world, than to stand with the world and be judged by God.'**

This world is just our temporary home. Like a layover on a long flight, we are here now, but we will not be here forever, someday we will go home, to the place that our hearts long to be, the kingdom of Heaven. This is the Hope that strengthens Christians to persevere in their faith all around the world now and all throughout history.

Christians are possessed by a Hope that lies in Christ Jesus. A Hope that they will be by his side for eternity at the end of their lives. However, they are also possessed by a Hope that Jesus Christ walks alongside them in this world,

Christians are possessed by Hope that regardless of what it seems the outcome of world process may be, Jesus Christ walks with them and because their Hope is fixed on Jesus, because their faith and trust is placed in Christ alone, they believe the outcome will be as God wills.

Christians do not place their faith and trust in the things of this world. Everything that you work so hard to gain in the world can be taken away or lost in the blink of an eye. Look at the great plagues that have swept away multitudes, or economic turmoil that has bankrupted many and forced people to live in poverty. Look at how war and terror ravage the world, and the constant reminder we have of just how fragile our lives are.

Christians instead place their Hope in Christ, knowing that yes there will be times of suffering, of trials and perhaps even persecution in this world, but Jesus Christ walks alongside us through these times.

Afterall, Romans 15:13 says,

**Romans 15:13**

**<sup>13</sup> 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.**

Our God is the God of Hope!

God is by his very nature full of Hope, he is the God of Hope.

Christian Hope is not 'wishful thinking' it is the confidence in knowing that God is eternal. He is the alpha and the omega; he has known everything since before the beginning and he knows everything beyond the ending. We can be assured of our Hope because God has already seen it all, the Word of God is the truth, the book of Revelation is not prophecy, it is future history, God has been there and witnesses the end and recorded it so that we can be prepared. The same way that the prophets of the Old Testament so accurately prophesied the coming of Jesus Christ. They could do that because God had already witnessed it, Jesus's coming was their future history.

He is the God of Hope because he already knows the outcome of every person's life on this planet. He is the God of Hope because he saw a way to restore his relationship with his people, even after the fall of Adam and Eve and sin entering the lives of his creation.

Jesus is able to fill our lives with Hope. When we have faith we have Hope, we are possessed by the Hope that throughout everything we experience in our lives God is fulfilling his plan for us, molding us into the disciples he has called for us to be.

If you are lacking Hope in your life, go to God. Spend time in prayer, in your Bible, in fellowship with other Christians. Ask God to fill your life with the joy of the knowledge of your salvation. When you know you are saved, that you are a 'good and faithful servant' it is hard to not be filled with Hope.

What is interesting is that when you read this verse in the Original Greek it says, '**may the God of THE hope**' The hope of the world was a plan, it was not a random event, it was something God had done. He planned for Jesus Christ to come to earth to bring salvation to mankind. God drew up the blueprints for the redemption of his lost people through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross before the very foundation of the world.



God had created the great Hope, for you and I, before he even created us. That is the love that God has for each of us and that should inspire Hope in all of us that his plans will always come to fruition. He is truly the God of Hope.

He is a God who will, 'fill you with all joy and peace in believing!'

When most people talk about the things that they Hope for in this life, it is wealth or power, a big house or fancy car, to be a professional athlete, a doctor, or a musician. They are hopes in worldly things that are unobtainable for the majority of the population, not every kid that puts on a pair of skates plays in the NHL. The hopes that people cling to in the secular world are often things that are realistically unobtainable and because of that they are filled with discontent and misery in living a life where the things that they Hope for can never be obtained.

Christians are filled with a different Hope, not one that is here in earth but one that is in all of eternity. Christians are filled with joy and peace because they know that their Hope will be fulfilled in heaven. They are not waiting here on earth filled with misery that they do not have something worldly, because they know that the things of this world are indeed temporary.

Because our Hope is an absolute certainty, we can have joy and peace in our lives now. Christians who are living in this world have a reason to be filled with Joy because their eternal life has already begun, it is assured in the promises of God and we can rejoice in that Hope.

In Romans 14:17-19 it says,

**Romans 14:17-19**

**<sup>17</sup> For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup> Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. <sup>19</sup> So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.**

Christians live a life of joy and contentment because they know that by doing so, they are living a life that reflects Christ in our lives.

1 Peter 1:8-9 teaches us

**1 Peter 1:8-9**

**<sup>8</sup> Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, <sup>9</sup> obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**

We are filled with Hope and Joy because we have absolute Faith and assurance of our salvation. We have a living Hope very much the same way we have a living Faith.

Finally, we are told in verse twelve, **'so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.'**

The word abound in Greek is 'perisseuo' which means, 'to superabound, to have in excess' to be filled to overflowing. God wants us to be overflowing with Hope. God wants our lives to be so sure of our salvation and Hope in him that it fills us up and begins to overflow into the lives of those around us, our families, our friends, our neighbors and even the people we walk by on the street.

God wants the Hope that we have in Christ to spread from us to others around us and then eventually to the entire world, this is the Great Commission, this is us living as the sheep, going out and taking care of others because we are assured of our own salvation. Sheep do sheepy things!

Christians should be waking up every day and thanking God the blessings they have and hopeful that today might just be the day that Christ returns, and that Hope should be expressed in all we think, say, and do in our lives.

And where does all this Hope come from?

We receive this Hope, we live in this Hope, and we keep this Hope alive in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The power of the Holy Spirit is not something you turn on and off like a switch. It is not something you activate; it is not a superpower that you put on by changing in a phone booth or putting on a mask.

The word for power here is 'dunamis' and it is from that root word that English gets the words dynamic and dynamite. Dunimas is a dynamic power and incredibly powerful force.'

The Hope we live in is created by the dynamic energies of the Holy Spirit as it does its work in us. Energies that are always changing and working on us in different ways, leading us through different season of our faith and consistently building us up in the character of Jesus Christ.

It is the Holy Spirit that enables us to know and understand the blessings that God has given us in this life. It is the Holy Spirit that encourages our relationship with God through Prayer, Bible study and fellowship. It is the Holy Spirit that leads us to live a reborn life, giving up our old selfish and sinful nature and embracing a selfless and giving nature. It is the Holy Spirit that changes goats into sheep.

This is why Christians live filled with Hope. Our God is a Great God, he is the God of Hope, and his Spirit seeks to fill our lives with an abundance of Hope in his promises for all of his children.

Let us pray,

Lord God, heavenly Father,  
 by your Son you have revealed to us  
 that heaven and earth will pass away,  
 that our bodies will rise again  
 and that we all must appear before the judgment throne.  
 Keep us by your Holy Spirit in your Word,  
 establish us in the true faith,  
 graciously defend us from sin and preserve us in all temptations,  
 that our hearts may not be obsessed with carousing, drunkenness, and foolish cares,  
 but that we may always watch and pray and trust fully in your grace,  
 await with joy the glorious coming of your Son and at last,  
 obtain eternal salvation,  
 through your beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,  
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
 one true living God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**Source: Veit Dietrich**

**Hymn #122: "Oh Come, Oh Come, Emmanuel"**

Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel,  
 and ransom captive Israel,  
 that mourns in lowly exile here,  
 until the Son of God appear.

Refrain:

Rejoice, rejoice!  
 Emmanuel shall come to thee,  
 O Israel.

Oh come, thou Wisdom from on high,  
 and order all things far and nigh;  
 to us the path of knowledge show,  
 and cause us in her ways to go. (Refrain)

Oh come, thou Branch of Jesse, free  
 thine own from Satan's tyranny;  
 from depths of hell thy people save,  
 and give them victory o'er the grave. (Refrain)

**Communion****Invitation to the Table**

As we prepare to celebrate holy communion, let us remember that Scripture calls us to examine ourselves before God. We are taught that eating and drinking unworthily brings judgment upon ourselves (1 Cor. 11:28-29). Let us therefore ask God for the proper spirit in which to celebrate the sacrament.

Let us Pray,

Almighty God, before whom can be neither secret thought nor hidden deed, grant us your Spirit that we may know our hearts, our lives, and our inmost thoughts as you know them.

Grant us your grace that we may repent sincerely of all sin, find peace with you through our Lord Jesus Christ, and grow in assurance of salvation in him.

May the celebration of our Savior's infinite love in his redeeming death bring joy to us and glory to you. Amen

**The Prayer of Great Thanksgiving**

The Lord be with you;  
**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts;  
**We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God;  
**It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

We acclaim you, holy God, glorious in power;  
your mighty works reveal your wisdom and love.  
You formed us in your own image,  
giving the whole world into our care  
so that, in obedience to you, our creator,  
we might rule and serve all your creatures.  
When our disobedience took us far from you,  
you did not abandon us to the power of death.  
In your mercy you came to our help,  
so that in seeking you we might find you.  
Again and again you called us into covenant with you,  
and through the prophets you taught us to hope for salvation.  
Almighty God, you loved the world so much  
that in the fullness of time you sent your only Son to be our Savior.

Incarnate by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,  
 he lived as one of us, yet was without sin.  
 To the poor he proclaimed the good news of salvation;  
 to prisoners, freedom; to the sorrowful, joy.  
 To fulfill your purpose, he gave himself up to death  
 and, rising from the grave, destroyed death  
 and made the whole creation new.  
 And that we might live no longer for ourselves  
 but for him who died and rose for us,  
 God sent the Holy Spirit,  
 God's first gift for all who believe,  
 to complete God's work in the world,  
 and to bring to fulfillment the sanctification of all.

**We praise you, we bless you,  
 we give thanks to you,  
 and we pray to you, Lord, our God.**

Let us together confess the faith of the church at all times and in  
 all places:

### **The Apostles Creed**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
 creator of heaven and earth.  
 I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
 born of the Virgin Mary,  
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
 was crucified, died, and was buried;  
 he descended to the dead.  
 On the third day he rose again;  
 he ascended into heaven,  
 he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
 and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.  
 I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
 the holy catholic church,  
 the communion of saints,  
 the forgiveness of sins,  
 the resurrection of the body,  
 and the life everlasting. AMEN.**

### **Communion**

When the hour had come for him to be glorified

by you, his heavenly Father,  
 having loved his own who were in the world,  
 he loved them to the end:  
 at supper with them he took bread,  
 and after giving thanks to you,  
 he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying,  
 "Take, eat. This is my body, which is given for you.  
 Do this for the remembrance of me."  
 After supper he took the cup, saying,  
 "This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood,  
 shed for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins.  
 Whenever you drink it,  
 do it for the remembrance of me."

Holy God, we now celebrate this memorial of our redemption.  
 Recalling Christ's death and his descent among the dead,  
 proclaiming his resurrection and ascension to your right hand,  
 awaiting his coming in glory,  
 and offering to you, from the gifts you have given us,  
 this bread and this cup,  
 we praise you and we bless you.

#### **Taking of the bread**

Take and eat.  
 This is the body of Christ, which is [given] for you.  
 Do this, remembering him.

#### **Drinking of the cup**

This cup is the new covenant  
 sealed by Christ's blood,  
 which was shed that the sins of many  
 might be forgiven.  
 Drink from it, all of you

#### **Prayer after Communion**

Most gracious God,  
 we are in awe of your great gifts to us,  
 experienced here at this table.  
 You have given your Son that we might live,  
 you have fed our spirits with bread and wine,  
 you have made us one body with all your children.  
 We are renewed today  
 in our commitment to loving service.

We leave here to build your kingdom in this world,  
 and we ask that your love will shape our love,  
 that we may reach to others  
 as Jesus Christ has reached to us.  
 Hear us, accept our thanks,  
 and continue to walk with us.  
 In the name of him who gave himself for us, **Amen.**

### **Invitation to Offering**

#### **Offering**

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

**E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. [standrewspert offering@gmail.com](mailto:standrewspert offering@gmail.com) If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.**

#### **Offertory Prayer**

#### **(Congregant Prepared)**

#### **Closing Hymn #125: "People, Look East" (V 1,2,4)**

People, look east. The time is near  
 of the crowning of the year.  
 Make your house fair as you are able;  
 trim the hearth and set the table.  
 People, look east and sing today:  
 Love the guest is on the way.

Furrows, be glad; though earth is bare,  
 one more seed is planted there:  
 give up your strength, the seed to nourish,  
 that in course the flower may flourish.  
 People, look east and sing today:  
 Love the rose is on the way.

Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim  
 one more light the bowl shall brim,

shining beyond the frosty weather,  
bright as sun and moon together.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love the star is on the way.

### **Pastoral Prayer**

O King of nations,  
your reign spreads through all the lands,  
you defend the cause of the poor  
and plead for the wretched of the earth.  
Fashion us into an obedient people,  
that we may spread the good news  
of your reign of perfect peace and justice,  
until all creation will finally rejoice in your perfect will,  
until all bend the knee to the King of kings and Lord of lords,  
in whose name we pray, even Jesus Christ, your Son and our Savior. **Amen.**

### **Benediction**

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely;  
and may your spirit and soul and body  
be kept sound and blameless  
at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
The one who calls you is faithful,  
and he will do this.