

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth  
Sunday, November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
Rev. Gerry Gallant**

**Hope  
First Sunday of Advent  
Romans 5:1-5**

**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**

#### **Week 1 – The Candle of Hope**

**Leader:** In the beginning, God created light out of darkness.

**People:** **Today we gather in hope, trusting that God’s light still shines in the darkness.**

**Leader:** We light the first candle of Advent—the Candle of Hope.

**People:** **As the prophets awaited the Messiah with hope, we await the coming of Christ with expectant hearts.**

#### **Reading:**

The prophet Isaiah spoke of a child who would break the yoke of oppression and bring everlasting peace. Hope is not passive waiting; it is confident trust in God, who acts, saves, and restores. In every age, God’s people have clung to this hope—when exiled, when wandering, when longing for deliverance.

**Leader:** The light of hope shines in the promises of God.

**People:** **And the promises of God never fail.**

#### **Prayer:**

God of hope, as we light this candle, kindle in us a holy longing for Your kingdom. Lift our eyes from the weariness of the world and fix our hearts on Your faithful promises. May Your hope sustain us, steady us, and send us forth as bearers of Your light. Through Jesus Christ, our coming King. **Amen.**

### **Call to Confession**

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

### **Prayer of Confession**

Merciful God,  
we confess that we have not lived as people of hope.  
We have allowed fear to overshadow faith,  
impatience to eclipse trust,  
and sin to cloud our hearts.  
Forgive us.  
Renew us.  
Turn our eyes toward Your promises,

that we may walk in Your light and live as children of hope.  
 Through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

### **Assurance of Pardon**

Hear the good news: "The true Light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world" (John 1:9). In Christ, we are forgiven, restored, and made new. Thanks be to God.

### **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.**

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

Come, thou longexpected 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.

### **Responsive Reading**

#### **Psalm 132:1-12**

<sup>1</sup> Remember, O Lord, in David's favor,  
 all the hardships he endured,

<sup>2</sup> **how he swore to the Lord**

**and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob,**

<sup>3</sup> “I will not enter my house

or get into my bed,

<sup>4</sup> **I will not give sleep to my eyes**

**or slumber to my eyelids,**

<sup>5</sup> until I find a place for the Lord,

a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.”

<sup>6</sup> **Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah;**

**we found it in the fields of Jaar.**

<sup>7</sup> “Let us go to his dwelling place;

let us worship at his footstool!”

<sup>8</sup> **Arise, O Lord, and go to your resting place,**

**you and the ark of your might.**

<sup>9</sup> Let your priests be clothed with righteousness,

and let your saints shout for joy.

<sup>10</sup> **For the sake of your servant David,**

**do not turn away the face of your anointed one.**

<sup>11</sup> The Lord swore to David a sure oath

from which he will not turn back:

“One of the sons of your body

I will set on your throne.

<sup>12</sup> **If your sons keep my covenant**

**and my testimonies that I shall teach them,**

**their sons also forever**

**shall sit on your throne.”**

**Music Ministry: “Celebrate the Promise”**

**Prayer for illumination**

**(Congregant Prepared)**

**Scripture**

**Romans 5:1-5**

**5 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>2</sup>Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this**

**grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup> and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.**

### **Sermon**

Brothers and Sisters, as we gather this week to begin this sacred season of Advent, we stand in a world that is desperately searching for hope. We live in a world that is drowning in despair, confusion and fear/ A world where the foundations of secular society are trembling and institutions crumble. A world where people desperately seek out worldly pleasure and sinful behavior to distract them because they do not want to face the truth. They numb themselves with entertainment, drown themselves in their careers and do anything to stay busy, even scrolling through social media for hours on end to drown out the silence that exposes the emptiness that they feel inside.

It is true that the world is filled with voices that offer hope, but it is a false and empty hope- there is no substance to it, it has no authority, it lacks the power to save. However, God offers something better, a living hope that is anchored in the finished work of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1-5 is perhaps the clearest example of that offer of hope in the Bible. It is not a simple piece of text to make us feel good in the season, it is not filled with holiday cheer and sentimental warmth. It is a rock of Scripture, a solid foundation of unshakeable Gospel truth. It is Paul teaching the Roman churches what true hope really is: God-Centered, Christ anchored, spirit empowered, sovereignty secured and eternally guaranteed.

#### **Romans 5:1**

**5 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Paul begins with the word 'therefore' telling us that everything that follows is built upon what he has written in the previous chapters. So, we need to start there. What had Paul established in his writing up to this point in the book of Romans.

Paul had established that man was utterly sinful in his nature, and that no one is righteous. That every person regardless of whether they are a believer or not will be held accountable for their life by God. That everyone has sinned and falls short of the glory of God.

Then comes the good news;

**Romans 4:1-8**

**4** What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? <sup>2</sup> For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. <sup>3</sup> For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” <sup>4</sup> Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. <sup>5</sup> And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, <sup>6</sup> just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

<sup>7</sup> “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,  
and whose sins are covered;

<sup>8</sup> blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”

God justifies the ungodly, not the righteous, not the good, not the ethical and moral by the world’s standards. The ungodly, who place all their faith and trust in Him. This is the heart of reformed theology. By grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

This is where Paul is starting when he begins with therefore,

**Romans 5:1**

**5** Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have been justified by faith. Notice that the word justified is in the past tense, it has already happened, the very moment you handed your life over completely to God and the Holy Spirit began its work in you, you became justified in the eyes of God. You were in that moment fully and completely forgiven of all your past sins, all your present sins, and all your future sins. Yes, I did say future sins, just because you are a believer does not mean you stop sinning instantly.

God’s justification of his people is certain, declared by God himself, it is complete and nothing can be added to it or taken away from it, and as Paul says, it is by faith alone – not by good works, not by being a good person, not by merit, not by ritual, and not by any action that man can take. This means that the only path to salvation is faith in Jesus Christ, not just believe, not just being baptized, not just being a good, moral and ethical person, FAITH in Jesus Christ alone.

Our hope is not based on us but in Christ. It does not begin by having good self-esteem, it begins with a true understanding of our sinful nature. It is not based on our self-confidence, but instead in our confidence in what Christ has done for us.

John Calvin wrote, 'Man never attains to a true knowledge of himself until he has contemplated the face of God.'

It is not until we look upon God and see his holiness, and understand our wickedness, that we can comprehend our desperate need for His grace in our lives.

Advent is a reminder for all the faithful that God's grace has come. That God took on human flesh. That the eternal Son of God was born to a virgin fulfilling the promise made in the Garden of Eden to Adam and Eve and through his Sacrifice on the cross the debt of our sin was paid and His righteousness was imputed on each of His faithful.

This is why Advent is not a sentimental season; it is about our salvation. Christmas is not just about the birth of a baby; it is about the arrival of the king who justifies His people bringing them back into right relationships with God.

Matthew 1:21 declares,

**Matthew 1:21**

**<sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."**

If you want hope, real hope, you need to start with knowing who Jesus Christ is, and then loving him, abiding in him and obeying him. Because Justification by faith is the unshakeable foundation of the believer's hope.

Paul then continues, '**we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**' Notice it does not say we feel peace, it says we have peace, objective, concrete and covenantal peace with God himself.

The reality of this world is that you are at either with God or against God in your life, there is no neutrality. This is something the world cannot understand, on the Day of Judgement there is no section for those who tried to stay neutral and please both sides, you either stand with God in the Scripture, or you stand against God living your life the way you choose.

The only way to be with God is through the peace that Jesus Christ offers, and it is a permanent peace, not just a temporary cease fire, it is a permanent reconciliation with God.

This is the peace that the angels proclaimed at the Birth of Christ, a peace that cannot be attained in this life except through Jesus Christ, a peace founded not on how you feel, or what you do, but upon the blood of our Savior.

This is the unshakable hope of the faithful Christian – a hope that rests upon the unchangeable reality that God is at peace with those he has justified. Christians can be at peace because they have the one and only thing that matters, their relationship with God. They can lose a job and be at peace, they can lose a loved one and be at peace, they can battle a terminal illness and be at peace, because they have given their lives over to the Lord and they know that regardless of what happens in this world, their eternal salvation was purchased by Jesus Christ upon the cross.

Advent hope is anchored in that reconciliation with God that was accomplished upon that cross two thousand years ago.

**Romans 5:2**

**<sup>2</sup>Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.**

This is priestly language, temple language, a declaration of faith and confidence. Before Christ our access to God was restricted, guarded, veiled and limited. Through Christ the veil was torn, the gates were opened and all God's children stand before Him like priests, invited to enter the Holy of Holies to be with God.

Notice it says 'stand', we stand, not cower, not teeter, not stumble.

Once you have faith in Christ and the Holy Spirit in you, you do not need to be doing things to earn God's grace, it is yours already, secured by Jesus Christ for you.

This is what is referred to as the Perseverance of the Saints. Because the God who justifies is the God who sanctifies and the God who glorifies. We stand in grace because God holds us in grace.

This means our hope does not shift on the whims of human emotion, our hope does not collapse under the weight of trials, tribulations and troubles, our hope is not chorused by our failures and faltering.

We have hope because we stand in God's grace and that grace endures under God's dominion, not ours.

**'and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.'**

Hope always has an object. Worldly hope is focused on changes in worldly circumstances. Christian hope is the hope of the coming King.

True Christians Hope for:

The Glory of God to be done in the world.

That Jesus Christ would be known to all.

That Jesus would return to save his people.

That God's righteousness would prevail and that God's eternal plan would come to fruition.

Christian hope is not about possibility, it is about certainty, because Christian hope rests upon the Word of God and the promises He has made to His people.

Christian hope knows that all those God justifies, he will glorify in His coming kingdom.

Advent Hope is a celebration of the first coming when God the Son was incarnated and anticipates the glory of God when Christ returns in the events described in the book of Revelation.

Christian hope is not rooted in what we see today, but in what we know is coming. This world is not our home, we are sojourners, awaiting the day when we will go to our eternal home in God's eternal kingdom. We long for the day when the baby that was born in Bethlehem will return as our King.

**Romans 5:3-4**

**<sup>3</sup>Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup>and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,**

Worldly hope is killed by suffering, people lose hope when things do not go the way that they want. However, Paul tells us that suffering produces hope in Christians. How?

Because suffering is never random, never meaningless and never wasted. In God's hands suffering can be sanctifying.

Suffering produces endurance in the faithful, this is not 'gritting your teeth and getting through it' endurance, this is spirit-powered perseverance. It is the ability to hold fast to God, to love him, abide in him and obey him, even when everything else seems to be falling apart. Suffering strips away all the false hope we have in the world, suffering strips away all the distractions we have in this world, suffering strips away the people, places and things in our lives that don't really matter. It destroys our false idols and reminds us that our hope is not in our worldly position and comfort but in the completed work of Christ alone.

And that produces character, the tested and refined character of a true believer that has walked through the fire and found Christ faithful. The steel of sanctification, a Christian

maturity that cannot come from comfort, one that can only come from having your faith tested and the impurities and idols burned away.

And that produces hope. A hope that becomes more and more apparent as God proves Himself to be faithful, a hope that grows stronger and stronger the closer we walk with God.

Suffering shows us that we cannot trust anyone or anything in this world, suffering teaches us that we cannot even trust our own hearts in this world. Suffering shows us that we can place our trust in Christ alone.

Advent reminds us of this truth, that Jesus entered willfully into this world to suffer as we do. He was born into poverty, hunted by his enemies, misunderstood, rejected, betrayed and crucified. Jesus knew a level of suffering that I hope none of us ever has to endure, and he took it to the cross and redeemed it more powerfully than we can ever imagine.

**Romans 5:5**

**<sup>5</sup> and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.**

Paul finishes with a final declaration.

'Our hope does not put us to shame'

Christian hope is not a hope that disappoints, it is not a hope that embarrasses the faithful, it is not a hope that will collapse under the pressures of life, it is not a hope based upon circumstance and wishful thinking.

Instead, it is a hope that is guaranteed, **'because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.'**

It is not a drizzle of hope or a trickling of hope, it is an outpouring of hope, straight into our hearts by a God who loves us.

It is a hope that is given to the faithful by the same Holy Spirit who regenerates us, seals us up, dwells within us, sanctifies us and assures us that God loves us with an everlasting love we will never fully comprehend.

This is why Christian hope is certain.

It is a hope that is held up by the love of the Father, accomplished by the work of the Son and confirmed by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Advent hope is a trinitarian hope, a covenantal hope, a sovereign hope and an eternal hope.

It is a hope that calls for us to look back to the manger where the eternal Son of God humbled himself, born as a man. A hope that sees a prophecy fulfilled, where the Word became flesh and walked among us.

However, it is also a hope that looks forward, to the return of Jesus Christ our Saviour, to the resurrection of the dead, to the Eternal Kingdom of God, to a time when every tear will be wiped away and a time of glory beyond our understanding.

Advent is not a season of sentimentality, it is a season of eschatology, a reminder for us that the story is not over yet, there is still more to come, the King has not finished. The one who came in humility the first time will return at his appointed time in all His glory, and every eye will see him and every knee will bow to Him and every voice will declare him their Lord.

Advent Hope reminds us that we are to stand firm in the Word of God, to not be drawn in by the false hopes of this world, but to live our lives in the solid rock of our justification through faith alone.

Advent hope reminds us that when we are suffering God is at work in our lives, it helps us to discover our idols and see God's love poured out upon us in our lives. It allows us to testify in the way we think, the way we act and the words we choose that we belong to God.

Advent hope teaches us to look back with gratitude, see the present with confidence and look forward to the future with expectation.

Advent hope is a hope that cannot be taken away, a hope that is rooted in our faith and his justification. A hope that flows from our peace with God. A hope grounded in his grace and not our behaviour. A hope that is assured by the Spirit. A hope that was unveiled at Christ's first coming and is guaranteed in His second coming.

This is the hope of Advent.

This is the hope of the Gospel.

This is the hope of the faithful.

This is the hope that does not put us to shame.

The Baby in the manger is the King upon the throne.

The Lamb who was slain is the Lion who will return.

The Saviour who came is the Judge who will return.

This is our hope, because he came once, he will surely come again. So go out and declare your hope in this season of Advent. Go and be the Salt and Light of God's Word, testifying though your faith the hope you have in your Savior Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let us Pray,

***May We always Watch and 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

**Invitation to Offering**

**Offering**

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship.

**Offertory Prayer**

**(Congregant Prepared)**

**Closing Hymn #118: "Hark the Glad Sound"**

Hark the glad sound! The Saviour comes,  
 the Saviour promised long;  
 let every heart prepare a throne,  
 and every voice a song!

You come the broken heart to bind,  
 the wounded soul to cure,  
 to bring the treasures of God's grace,  
 good tidings for the poor.

Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,  
 your welcome shall proclaim,  
 and heaven's eternal arches ring  
 with your most honoured name.

### **Pastoral Prayer**

We come before You with humbled hearts, grateful for the hope You have revealed to us through Your Word. We thank You for reminding us that our hope is not found in the shifting sands of this world, nor in the false promises that surround us, but in the unshakable truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Father, we thank You that through faith in Your Son we have been justified—fully, finally, and eternally. Thank You for the peace that is ours, not a feeling that comes and goes, but a covenant peace secured by the blood of our Savior. Strengthen us to stand firm in this grace, to rejoice in the hope of Your glory, and to trust You even in our suffering, knowing that You are shaping our character and deepening our faith.

Lord Jesus, we praise You for Your first coming—born in humility, fulfilling every promise, taking on our flesh in order to save Your people from their sins. And we look with longing for Your return, when You will come again in power and glory, when every tear will be wiped away, and when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that You are Lord.

Holy Spirit, pour Your love into our hearts afresh. Root us deeply in the hope that does not put us to shame. Help us to walk as people of light in a world overcome with darkness. Let our lives testify that we belong to You—through our words, our actions, our endurance, our joy, and our unwavering confidence in Christ.

As we leave this place, send us out as bearers of Advent hope—boldly proclaiming the gospel, standing firm in truth, resisting the false hopes of the age, and living as those who know that the King who came once will surely come again.

May Your grace uphold us,  
 Your peace sustain us,

Your love fill us,  
And Your glory be our joy.

We ask all this in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Benediction**

As you go from this place, may the God of all hope fill you with strength to stand firm in His grace, courage to walk in His truth, and joy to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in a world longing for light.

May the peace secured by the blood of Christ guard your hearts.

May the love poured out by the Holy Spirit sustain your faith.

And may the certain hope of the coming King lift your eyes above every trial.

Go now as people justified by faith, anchored in Christ, empowered by the Spirit, and awaiting the glory that is surely coming.

**Amen.**