Message: Hope is Rock Solid

Text: Romans 8:22-30

Theme: 1st Sunday of Advent - Hope

Date: December 2, 2012

Location: Christ Community EFC

Well, we have had so much Christmas already this morning that I want to start out by reading from a passage that you probably have never connected with Christmas.

**If you would, turn in your Bibles to Romans 8:22-30**.

Last week we looked at how we live between two great events in human history…both are Advents—Christ birth and His coming return.

The term Advent is an anglicized version of the Latin word adventus, meaning “coming.”

Advent is a season in the church calendar that celebrates the fulfillment of centuries of expectant waiting and preparation for the coming of King Jesus who came that first Christmas some 2000 years ago that the Bible promised throughout the Old Testament.

For thousands of years God’s people had heard about the coming King through the prophets and promises of God. And they waited.

And today, we should live with that same expectant waiting. We should live waiting for and expecting the second coming, or return of our King, King Jesus.

But have you ever considered that we are not alone in our waiting on the return of Christ.

Look here at Romans 8:22: **“We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.**

All of creation suffers under the effects of mankind’s fall into sin in the garden. The sin that entered into the garden has changed and twisted everything.

Nothing is as is should be, or as it will be when Christ the King returns. There are wars, sex trafficking, abuse, addictions, injustices, and more.

However, all of God’s people from the time when Adam and Eve sinned and were banished out of the garden lived with one great hope…a hope that a savior and King would one day come and restore God’s kingdom here on earth to the perfect place that it was intended to be.

Let me stop her for a minute. Traditionally the focus of the first Sunday of Advent is in fact “hope.”

Ok so what do you hope for? Not what you wish for but what brings you hope.

All too often, hope is defined as the little boy did when he said: “Hope is wishing for something you know ain’t gonna happen.”

But is there more to hope than just a wish? Is there that rock solid thing in your life that give you hope for tomorrow?

The dictionary defines **Hope** as the emotional state which promotes the belief in a positive outcome related to events and circumstances in one’s life.

The world says...I hope...this or that will happen...I hope I get the latest Switchfoot CD, a Starbucks gift card. Or maybe you are hoping for some Godiva chocolate (the big box) or fuzzy socks, or leg warmers (any color but off white. You get the point

This type of “hope” is why the lottery system is thriving in many states!

Biblical hope is more than wishful thinking and wants.

Biblical hope is “…an indication of certainty and a positive expectation of future reward. “Hope” in the Bible means “a strong and confident expectation.” It is real and certain—Christ who came is coming again!

As I said, we live between these two advents. And we live with a hope that is grounded in a Savior who has come and who will come again!

Let’s read on in Romans 8, verse 23:

**Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.**

That original sin caused a separation between man and God. Your sin, my sin has sealed that separation between us and God personally.

But Christ the Son of God came as one of us, lived a perfect sinless life, and died on the cross in our place. He died so that we might live.

He died so that we might be restored to a new and living relationship with God, a relationship that is described as being adopted into the family of God.

**24For in this hope we were saved.** [Christ Himself and the salvation He offers is our hope.] **But hope that is seen is no hope at all.**

**Who hopes for what he already has?**

**25But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.**

If you have put your faith in Jesus and His death and resurrection you are now new creature in Christ. We have faith in what Christ has done but we have hope in what He is going to do.

You are already free from the power of sin over your life and can live a righteous life with purpose and the power of the Holy Spirit.

But we still live in a fallen world. And we still see the effects of sin in our own lives and the world around us.

Our hope today is that Christ will one day return and complete the good work that He has already begun in us.

One day we will live in a new heaven and on a new earth were sin suffering and sorrow will be once and for all done away with.

Skip down is you would to verse 28:

**And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.**

**29For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.**

God knows us and has chosen us to become like Jesus.

**30And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.**

He has chosen us and called us to come to Him. He gave us right-standing with Himself and promises us His glory.

For us as Christians hope is not some pie in the sky wishful thinking. Our hope is defined as a “trustful expectation, particularly with reference to the fulfillment of Gods promises.

Hope is the anticipation of a favorable outcome under God’s guidance; the confidence that what God has done for us in the past guarantees our participation in what God will do in the future.

And in a world that drains the hope from the heart with dark pessimism biblical hope is a voice crying in the wilderness...a word of enthusiasm for life in the midst of any difficult situation you are in.

If you want to smile through your tears, if you want to rejoice through times of suffering, just keep reminding yourself that what you’re going through isn’t the end of the story.

It is simply a rough spot in a journey that leads to the right destination...Solid, stable, sure hope.

Hope to press on. Hope to endure the hardships of life.

Hope to stay focused on Christ. Hope to see new dreams fulfilled that there will be no more suffering and pain.

In the Bible the word hope describes the confidence that we Christians have in the Lord. Our hope is that we will one day be in heaven with the Lord.

This Advent Season we look forward to the second coming of Christ with anticipation and hope because we know the hope of salvation that has already come through the birth of Christ.

When I think back to that first Advent, the first coming of Christ the king, what was it like for Mary and Joseph to anticipate the birth of Christ?

What emotions flooded them as they longed to see the baby that the Angel had promised to them – and to us?

What hope that must have filled them? Did she even really know that she would give birth to the King of Kings?

Just as Mary and Joseph longed for the birth of their baby, we long for the return of our King.

Joseph and Mary were not hopeful like I hope to get an iPod for Christmas!

They were filled with a radical sort of hope which is only known by those who have chosen to trust full in God and are willing to live out drastically bold lives in the name of Christ.

Hope is powerful! Christian hope is a longing for something good, accompanied by confident expectation that God will act.

Hope is a deep and abiding sense of God’s real presence, where we trust that all things work together for good.

Look again at 8:28:

**And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.**

Romans 8:28 is not just for a bad day: I smashed my car; oh well, all things work together for good. I guess.

No, Paul is talking about a great cosmic struggle—the whole universe is in toil; there’s pain, the world’s a mess; and we along with all creation long for that day when Christ returns and He will restore things to the way they should be.

And Paul says in the meantime: don’t sweat it, don’t despair, have hope.

Because in the midst of this messed up world we see God at work.

God, in Christ, is working to make all things, in the end, to be good for those who love him.

It is this promise of this hopeful future that keeps us going.

Sometimes when we hope for something, we have to wait for it.

It can feel like God waits until the last minute to spring his plan. But you know, He always comes through in the right time.

When we put our hope and trust in the Lord, he does answer and provide for our needs, in his time.

We pray because we believe God hears us and answers.

We come to worship because we believe God is with us and because we need to hear from heaven and we need each other.

We go to our Bible study or Sunday School class because we want to learn to trust God more and cling to his promises.

That’s Paul’s point in Romans 8: the world is in tough shape—with wars and rumors of wars, and a struggling economy and all kinds of personal battles that each of us face—but in the midst of suffering and trials and the world’s problems (groans of birth pain, he calls them), we have hope.

And hope that is seen is not hope.

Who hopes for what they can see? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with expectation.

Hope says that our present circumstances or inward struggles do not have the last word. Our lives are not stuck, nor is the world, or the church.

Heb11:1: **faith is the assurance (confidence) of things hoped for…**

And then it goes on to describe a whole bunch of people who did something because of faith and hope.

They didn’t just sit around waiting for God to act, wishing he might do something; they acted on their conviction that God will act.

What do you long for this Advent season? For yourself, your family, or for the world? Know that God will act. In his time, of course.

All of the Advent promises were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Place your confident expectation in him. “The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.”

I’ve been thinking recently, it’s fitting that Christ came to us as a baby.

Babies are the personification (good representation) of hope, aren’t they?

Why would people keep having children if they didn’t have hope?

Babies represent the future, they represent potential. They represent a new beginning.

They are a symbol of hope. But they also take time to grow.

So hope requires patience, just like parenting requires patience.

Our savior did not come with a grand display of power and signs and wonders, but quietly and with humility.

But he entered right into our humanity, and meets us in our deepest needs.

Isaiah 40: Those who hope in 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.

Benediction: **May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”**