

+ In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti + Amen.

Text: Romans 8:24

Theme: Hope In Christ



Dear friends in Christ Jesus,

Do you have hope? Hope that sustains you? Hope that steadies you in times of adversity? Biblical, spiritual, godly hope- hope that is nothing like the world's concept of chance or luck- but the confidence that God is true to His promises. He does not deceive. God's word says, "*We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.*"<sup>1</sup> This hope is anchored by faith in the promises of God. It is not immediately tangible to us. That's why the apostle says, "*Hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?*"<sup>2</sup> In a moment you'll be approaching the altar to receive the sacrament. What do you see there- a bit of bread and wine? But you receive with it a life-giving power in the body and blood of the Saviour.

Why do we need this hope? Because the world is not the stable place, we'd like it to be. Listen again to Romans 8, "*We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*"<sup>3</sup> Here the apostle says the entire creation is groaning. It is aching for liberation. And how will it be freed? It will happen in the reverse order of the original curse. Human beings, made in the image of God, were the crown of His creation. Reflecting His glory through special endowment they were the last part of creation. But in the great reversal, at the Second Coming, in the apocalypse, they will be the first to be liberated from the power of sin and the rest of creation will follow. Then the new heavens and earth will be established.

But is St. Paul communicating something here that we can't relate to? Do we really groan inwardly for the redemption of our bodies? Or are these words written for people in those places and times when life was hard, really hard; when it was such a burden you longed to be released from it? Perhaps the creature comforts we have too easily lead us off the narrow road?

Yet, the world is a dark place. It's always been the case. The decay of the world is a foundational teaching of Scripture<sup>4</sup>. The consequences of the Fall move us inexorably toward demise. Humanity is coming unraveled. The biblical teaching on the world's transience is not limited to any particular epoch or age of history. Yes, it was initiated by a particular event. The rebellion in Eden started it all. Still, before the flood of Noah, the ancients lived for nearly

a thousand years. They possessed an incredible vitality. That fact must be balanced by the statement of Genesis 6, "*The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*"<sup>5</sup>

The plight of humanity can be depicted like a tiny boat on turbulent sea. It rides up on the crest of a wave and then down into a trough. The waves roll on and the beach is looming. Inevitably, the wave will crash against the shore dashing the boat against the rocks. We see the ebb and flow of the moral rectitude of societies over the centuries. Well-documented is the rise and fall of nations throughout history. Rome was dubbed the eternal city and the Roman Empire thought to be unconquerable. It too fell, decaying from within. Adolf Hitler wanted to establish a 1000-year Reich; it didn't last a generation.

Dynasties are established and then they fail. Why? Because human nature doesn't fundamentally change. We're talking here not about advances in technology, engineering, or medicine. We're talking about the pathology of sin, about wickedness, verses holiness, moral depravity verses godliness. The human race is not becoming more morally enlightened, it's not rising to new categories of virtue. It is only undulating on the waves of fluctuation until the close of history.

Western-style democracy is not immune to corruption and even disintegration. All societies are composed of people, including their structures of governance. People are sinners. People are fallible. Human beings have limitations, individually and collectively. The coronavirus is proving that. The Scriptures tell us to honour proper authority but not to idolize it. There is nothing either inherently evil or inherently good about government. Government involves the coordinated (and of course, often uncoordinated) actions of groups of people working within structures.

Our affluence and prosperity are not guaranteed. They are not givens. The time may come again sooner than we think when most of world will be living hand to mouth. The current challenges show how quickly things can change; how vulnerable we really are. No one knows what things will look like even a year from now. That being said, though, God will continue to sustain the world for as long as He sees fit. It's no effort for Him to extend the time for repentance, the time for the Spirit to work, for as long as He so desires. Believers aren't pessimists about these things. We already understand this world is a temporary home.

Our perspective on the future changes everything. We have security. So, we can ask ourselves such questions as, "What am I doing in life that has eternal significance? Into what or who do I invest my limited energies and resources? The Bible teaches us that we are in the world and we must negotiate its challenges, interact with its structures, participate in its wholesome activities, but do so in a way that we are giving witness to the much greater hope that we have. We are in the world but not of the world. The Scripture says, "*All that is in the world-the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life-is not from the Father but is*

*from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*"<sup>6</sup>

Our hope is not in winning this world's contest of self-indulgence or achieving a memorable legacy. We have a baptismal inheritance. Our future will be glorious beyond imagination. What hope was Jesus carrying when He climbed that hill to Calvary? Was He trying to make a name for Himself, establish a reputation as a martyr? Was He trying to set the stage for a magician's trick to be performed in three days' time? No, dear friends, He was carrying the prospects of all humanity. Because of His sacrifice, sinners would not have to be plunged into the darkness of eternal death. His death and resurrection reconciled us to the heavenly Father and opened the gate to His eternal kingdom. Satan has been disarmed. The threat of hell no longer hangs over us.

St. Paul says, "*I consider that our present suffering are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*"<sup>7</sup> The present hour is a gift of grace, an endowment in time, but tomorrow is not guaranteed. Tomorrow time could cease. We could be in eternity. And what more could we hope for? What more could we dream of...the glorified perfection of our bodies, the establishment of incorruptibly purified hearts, the complete realization of all of our faculties and senses! We have Christ and so we are never without hope. Amen.

+ In nomine Jesu +

Seventh Sunday After Pentecost  
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Reverend Darrin L. Kohrt

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 6:19

<sup>2</sup> Romans 8:24

<sup>3</sup> Romans 8:22-23

<sup>4</sup> See 2 Corinthians 7:31

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 6:5

<sup>6</sup> 1 John 2:16-17

<sup>7</sup> Romans 8:18

