

### ***“Hope in Christ” (topical)***

For Your Life in Christ the First Wednesday Service in Advent,

November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Saint Paul’s Lutheran Church of Irvine, CA (LC-MS)

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#### **Introduction: Modern Ideas of Hope Like the Ancient Greeks**

- A. The word in these contexts and cultures is not very impressive.
- B. The word in these non-Christian contexts = “Expectations and hopes are man’s own projections of his future.” (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 2, 518)
- C. This sense of the word is constantly verified:
  - 1. “I hope the economy gets better.” But Scripture says:

**Psalm 52:7: “See the man who would not make God his refuge, but trusted in the abundance of his riches and sought refuge in his own destruction.”**

- 2. “I have hope in my best efforts to live a good life and do the right thing.” But Scripture says:

**Ezekiel 33:13: “Though I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, yet if he trusts in his righteousness...none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered.”**

- 3. “I have hope in our latest presidential candidate.” But Scripture says:

**Jeremiah 17:5: “Thus says the Lord: Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord.”**

- D. In all of these cases, “hope” (so-called):
  - 1. Makes the future dependent on the present like the money you have now, or the efforts you make now, or the leaders you know now.
  - 2. And this makes the present and future perceived as something that you can control, but this is the highest illusion and arrogance.

#### **Part I: True Hope Does Not Rest in Man, But in God**

- A. Such a hope therefore is always in connection to faith.

**Hebrews 11:1: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”**

- B. And such a hope is always connected to our salvation.

**Romans 8:24a: “For in this hope we were saved.”**

- C. And this hope is grounded on God.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 1:10: “He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.”**

#### **Part II: But what is Our Assurance that We May Hope in God?**

**Answer: Jesus!**

- A. His first coming was a historic fact. Christmas is not mythology, but a real event that Jesus of Nazareth was born into the world.
- B. His life is not mythological, but actual. His death actually happened. Ever wondered why in the Apostle’s Creed we say, “Suffered under Pontius Pilate”? Real history, a real foundation for a hope that is dependable.
- C. His resurrection had empirical, historical, actual results: people were transformed, Sunday replaced Saturday in worship, and the Christian Church exploded with growth.
- D. ***Jesus makes our hope objective, and not simply subjective. It is based on God’s Word that has already been fulfilled in Christ...therefore you can count on the rest being fulfilled as well. This is not about man’s projections, but God’s promises!***

**Conclusion: A Prayer from Johann Gerhard (from *Meditations on Divine Mercy*, 100): “Sometimes my heart is tossed around like a ship on the sea. Grant me the sure and firm anchor of hope (Romans 15:13; Hebrews 3:6; 6:19). I ask You, the God of hope and all consolation (2 Corinthians 1:3), to hold me steady as I am tossed around by temptations and doubts. The hope within me can be as sure and immovable as the truth of Your promises. I depend on Your promises.” Gerhard goes on to list the three things which calmed his anxiety and made hope certain and strong: 1. God’s love by which you are His adopted child; 2. The truth of His promise; and 3. His power to deliver what He has promised! In Christ, these are true...your hope is certain and true!**