

## "Behold, He Comes to Give Us Hope" Romans 15:4-13 Advent 2 2022

Dear fellow redeemed,

What do you hope for today? Is it peace on earth? Is it goodwill to men? Do you hope for warmer weather or even an end to the snow? Are you hoping that the sermon this morning will be short? Regarding the last question, you take what you get. As for the others, those will eventually happen—some sooner, some later. What is the hope of the Christian? At the very least, what should the hope of the Christian be? The blessed apostle St. Paul addresses this when he writes, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to the Philippians, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain”. Paul believed it was better for him to die. Why? He wanted to be with his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He knew in whom he believed, and he knew and firmly believed in what was awaiting him: eternal life with Jesus in heaven. That was his hope. This hope he wrote about in his Epistles. He boldly confessed his Savior, for, as he also writes, “we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God”.

This same Christ was foretold of by the patriarchs and prophets, the Christ who in infancy submitted to circumcision as a witness to the Jews and who at the start of His public ministry became baptized for

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the sake of the Gentiles. It was in Him that Jews and Gentiles were to place their hope. But the Jews rejected Him. Saint John writes in his Gospel: "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him, and again, this time quoting Jesus: "Salvation is of the Jews". Jesus' saving work on the cross completed for, and rejected by, the Jews, the Gospel was there for the Gentiles. There was their Hope—Jesus Christ, "And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in Him the Gentiles shall hope". And "again he says: 'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!' And again: 'Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!'" . Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel—to you, O people of Zion—to you, redeemed by the blood of Christ.

It's easy for us to forget that Jesus our Emmanuel, our God-with-us, has come to us because we don't look for Him. Our minds are focused on so many other things, much like Martha's was, neglecting the one thing needful. Go here. Shop there. Do this. Do that. Put up the tree. Wrap the presents. The to-do list in December can become quite lengthy. We are so wrapped up in seeing the baby Jesus in the manger that we lose sight of the incarnate Christ in His Word and Sacraments—today, as we pray Matins, in His Word. We are so enamoured with the wrapping and the trappings that come with this month that we forget about the blue and the purple that are prominently placed around here: blue, the colour of royalty, and

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purple, the colour of repentance. We forget about the King who comes to save us and our need for this King of kings and Lord of Lords.

But behold! He comes! He comes to give you hope: hope in the resurrection of the body and the life of the world to come...hope for the here and now. He gives you hope as you experience trials and afflictions, sadness and anger, grief and loss. He says to you this day, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light". Again He says to you, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me". And again, "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life". From the cross He spoke for you; He prayed for you: "Father, forgive them!" As your Lord and Savior was dying on the cross, He spoke to you the three greatest words you could hear: "It is finished!" The work needed for you to be forgiven—to be saved—has been completed in the death of Jesus Christ. He took your hopeless situation of facing eternal condemnation and put it upon Himself, carrying it with Him out of the Jordan River all the way to the cross, where He bled and died to take away your sin and the sin of the whole world. And to give you the certainty of the hope of eternal life, Christ rose from the dead. Sin has been defeated. Death has been beaten. The power of the devil our

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Lord has made impotent. The risen and ascended Jesus has sent us His Holy Spirit, so that we would believe the Word proclaimed, and believe IN the Word-become flesh, that we would live in this blessed hope, both now and in the world to come. God says through the prophet Malachi in our Old Testament Reading: "But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves", feasting on the Bread of Life who also comes to us in, with, and under the bread and wine, in His body and blood. "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit". Amen.