

**THROUGH JESUS WE HAVE HOPE****Isaiah 40:1-2; Romans 8:18-25**

**Intro:** Many of us are Baby Boomers – born between 1946 and 1964. Others are Generation X – born between 1965 and 1980. A good number of you are Millennials, born between 1981 and 1996. The next generation is called iGen or, more commonly, Gen Z and they were born between 1997 and 2010. Those born after 2010 are called Gen Alpha and we have a few of them here at ABC.

Rikki Schlott is a Gen Z writer and journalist and here is an excerpt from an online piece for she wrote for VOICES OF GEN Z:

“People often ask me to explain their kids to them. They are baffled by the children that they raised and yet somehow do not know. It sounds impossible and yet makes sense—considering that the hours their kids spent under the same roof were also spent in a maze of digital crevices. These are strangers in their own home. Parents ask me: Why are my kids so anxious and depressed? Where do they go all day on their devices? How can I get them back? If you’re a parent wondering the same, I hope I can be an intermediary for you. Gen Z has inherited a post-hope world, stripped of what matters. Instead, we have been offered a smorgasbord of easy and unsatisfying substitutes. All the things that have traditionally made life worth living—love, community, country, faith, work, and family—have been ‘debunked.’ Sentiments I hear often from peers:

Love—‘Monogamy is so outdated.’

Community—‘I have enough friends online.’

Country—‘I’m embarrassed to be an American.’

Work—‘I’m quiet-quitting.’

Family—‘I’m not bringing kids into this melting world.’

Faith—‘My parents are such naive Bible thumpers. By the way, what’s your star sign?’

Of course there are well-adjusted teens in spite of the forces working against them, but the overall figures are bleak. In fact, nearly half of teens agree with statements like ‘my life is not useful,’ ‘I do not enjoy life,’ and ‘I can’t do anything right.’ Back in 2010, fewer than 30 percent of teens agreed with those statements. Something is clearly wrong. Gen Z is quietly begging for help.”

By the way, this is what we got in trouble for in 1965 . . .

Think about that, GenZ live in a post hope world. . .

This is real stuff. This is deep pain and despair. And it’s so unnecessary, but we mustn’t dismiss it because for far too many people it is very real. They are nones. They want to believe in something but they believe in nothing, except maybe themselves – and that’s scary.

This is the first Sunday of Advent, and from what Ben and I presented as we lit the candles, you know that this first Sunday is the Sunday of HOPE. As Christ Followers we have hope and our world needs it.

Our passage from Isaiah which we heard a bit ago says, Comfort, comfort! (Isaiah 40:1). That comfort comes from Jesus, because deliverance came with Jesus at that first Christmas over 2,000 years ago. So our comfort is not just some cheap imitation. Because of Jesus we have hope.

That brings me to Romans 8 which begins with, *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* Romans 8:1 (ESV). Paul needed to say that because, in the verses preceding that glorious statement is a long and seemingly convoluted description in Romans 7:7-25 of trying to live a holy life without the help of the Holy Spirit. It’s impossible! In fact, in Romans 7:24, Paul burst out with, *Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*

And then the promise, *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* Ahh! The hope! And so we finally come to my passage for this morning

Listen,

**(Read Romans 8:18-25)**

Here is the hope we have for a post hope world:

**Through Jesus we have hope for what is coming**

- God didn’t leave humanity without hope of redemption. He sent Jesus, his only son and through him he got the job done right. That is why we have hope.

- And notice how glory is the overarching theme here in these verses we have just read. Glory came with Jesus. The angels sang Glory to God in the highest. And we have the promise that glory is still coming! It is the focus of our hope, even if it is not visible.
- These hopeful promises come from Paul who did not have an easy life. People would beat him up as soon as look at him. And he spent a lot of time in jail too. But here is an example of the joyful and vivid expectation he had for the future. *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* (v. 18). The conscious hope a Christ Follower has, by its very nature, proves the reality of future glory. Glory is coming and that makes all this, worth it.
- Hope comes by faith. Ralph Martin writes that by emphasizing hope in this way, Paul doesn't discard or minimize the preeminent function of faith in the believer's salvation. Faith is the definite means of salvation and hope can emerge only within the faith attitude. The point which Paul is making here is that, by its very nature, hope testifies to the fact of future glory. Faith assures that it's not an empty pipe dream.

### **All creation is waiting with eager longing for freedom**

- All of creation is tired. All of creation needs Jesus. We need the hope that only he can give. The words of O Holy Night come to mind,
 

*O holy night! The stars are brightly shining,  
It is the night of our dear Savior's birth.  
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,  
Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.  
A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices,  
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.*
- In verse 19, Paul writes of all of nature waiting for the glory that's coming of creation waiting with eager longing, expectation and anticipation. That word, which is rendered, "eager longing", in my text, comes from a Greek word that describes the attitude of a person who looks at the horizon searching expectantly, eagerly looking in the distance for the first signs of dawn breaking to glory. All creation is searching. We have the answer for that search. As Christ followers, we live our lives in Christ and so we see beyond this crazy world to God. We look forward to God's mercy. William Barkley points out, "The keynote of the Christian life is always hope and never despair. The Christian waits, not for death, but for life." because, he writes, Jesus's coming into humanity as "a renovation of creation".
- We are saved by hope for a renovation of souls and of all creation. That's the hope we have in Jesus. Douglas Moo, takes it a bit further, "Paul specifies the content of the hope that he mentioned in verse 20, the hope that the creation itself would be set free from bondage to decay into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. Creation, helplessly enslaved to the decay that rules this world after the fall, exists in the hope that it will be set free to participate in the eschatological glory to be enjoyed by God's children." In short, eventually, creation will be set free, and that's a promise.
- In the meantime . . .

### **We wait eagerly for adoption (v. 23)**

- In the movie, August Rush, a little boy and musical prodigy, named Evan, is an orphan. Or at least that's what everyone thinks, except for Evan. He never gives up hope that his parents will return and receive him into their family. It turns out Evan is right. His parents are not dead, they simply don't know he exists (That is a completely separate and believable part of the story). But Evan is the personification of the word used here, he is eagerly longing and waiting for his parents. In an extremely poignant scene, the character, Wizard, played beautifully by Robin Williams, is seeking to help Evan find a name that will be his street name. so he asks,
 

What do you want to be in the world? I mean the whole world. What do you want to be? Close your eyes and think about that.

Evan's answer is immediate, he responds **Found**.
- GenZ kids want to be found. Baby Boomers want to be found. Millennials want to be found. Paul tells us *...we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons (and daughters).* Romans 8:23. We all want to be found . . .

### **But it's already, not yet**

- Let me read vv 24 -25 again as I wrap this up: *For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.* Romans 8:24-25. On this day when we are celebrating the hope that came with Jesus to a Bethlehem manger, Paul is reminding us that hope is no longer hope if it can realize the consummation for which it looks. Our duty, then, is to wait for the end, to endure, to exercise. Paul tells us to be patient, yes, we are saved, yet full salvation still lies ahead.
- There is a theological expression that describes this, it's called, ALREADY, NOT YET. As Christ Followers, we're saved, and with that we have hope, which, by its very nature, means that expectant and patient waiting is going to be necessary. We end up, back where Paul began this discussion. Christ followers eagerly await the hope of the glory of God.
- We're already saved. And not yet. We are here in a grieving and groaning creation waiting with the hope of glory. And with that hope of glory we need to share our hope to a post-hope culture.

**Conclusion:** We need a Savior! The world needs a Savior. A name that comes up a lot a Christmas time is the name Emmanuel, which from the Hebrew means, God with us. With Jesus, the world experiences God with us. With Jesus, we have hope. Share the hope. Amen.