

# Hope

"What We're Waiting For" Series, November 29 & 30, 2025 (Advent 1) | Romans 8:18-25  
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## **We may have misplaced our hope.**

### **Living simply and equitably sounds refreshing.**

Imagine a leader who proposes a vision of living simple, agrarian lives—attached to the land and producing plenty of everything we need. Imagine that leader proposing that everyone would be equal—like a great big family. Imagine that leader saying that it was time to reclaim your place among the nations—free from outside influence and domination—a chance to breathe free and be proud. Imagine that leader saying that history would start again. The past was over. The future was now. It was a new "Year Zero". That leader was Pol Pot of Cambodia. His plan sounded like the dawn of hope, but he brought great darkness.<sup>1</sup> It's easy to misplace hope in big talkers and big promises.

### **Hope is more than wishful thinking.**

Hope is not just a vague belief that today is going to be a great day. Nor is hope blind faith in tomorrow, in your own abilities, or even in politicians' promises. Wishful thinking is like dieting by believing that tomorrow you will wake up thinner as if by magic.

### **As a chronic over-committer, I get wishful thinking.**

I always believe I can do more than time allows, so I overfill my calendar and make too many promises. So, I live thinking that once I get the current round of appointments and tasks complete, then my life will be manageable. I tell myself that I am living with hope, but it's really wishful thinking. Wishful thinking is just one way we misplace hope.

### **How do we misplace hope?**

We misplace hope by placing our hopes in politics. Some of us are walking around thinking that hope would dawn if the leaders we like were elected. But that's placing hope in people and in today. Sometimes we hope in stuff, thinking that if we get one thing more, life will be right. We hope in finishing school, getting a better job, meeting the right person, or having a baby. We're equating hope with happiness, but happiness isn't hope. It's misplaced hope.

### **Hope is waiting expectantly for God to replace suffering with resurrection glory!**

Hope is pointed toward the future, waiting expectantly for that future—inspiring us to do bold things and sustaining us when we're discouraged or hard pressed. Hope is personal, pointed at God; it's a trust that God will keep doing what He has done before, that He will still be who He is, and that He will do what He has promised to do. Hope looks at the darkness and sees it passing away. Hope is the belief that the resurrection of Jesus is just the beginning; it's our future and the cosmic future as well.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://retrospectjournal.com/2024/03/10/unravelling-the-khmer-rouges-motivations/>

### **We are waiting for hope.**

Advent is the season before Christmas. It is a season of waiting. We remember what it was like to wait for Jesus to be born and look ahead to His return. We are living in the gap between Jesus' first and second comings. And we need hope, genuine hope. So, how do we get it?

## **Hope reaches from the kingdoms of this world for the Kingdom of God.**

### **Romans 8:18 draws a sharp distinction between suffering and glory:**

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

The contrast couldn't be starker. Suffering and glory are two opposites, two realms, two ages, and two realities.

### **"Suffering" is everything painful about life in the kingdoms of this world.**

Suffering is what we are living through now, in a fallen world broken by the power of sin. Suffering is the darkness closing in. Suffering is a young dad who is driving home from work and gets hit by a drunk driver and killed, leaving behind a grieving wife, two young children who will grow up without their dad, and two parents who are asking why. Suffering includes pain, tears, sickness, brokenness, mourning, violence, and death. Suffering is the world before Christ and without Christ. It's the realm of Satan and evil. It's the kingdoms of this world.

### **"Glory" is the presence and power of the coming Kingdom of God.**

Glory is what's coming for disciples of Jesus and creation. Glory is the light dawning and shining defiantly. Glory is a woman who has been addicted to pain killers for years and whose marriage is on the rocks and whose children won't take her calls any longer. But she meets Jesus, finds forgiveness, breaks the chains of addiction, and walks in newness of life here and now. Glory is forgiveness, adoption, comfort, healing, freedom, peace, and life. Glory is seeing the returning Christ face to face. It's resurrection, the reign of Christ, the defeat of sin, the toppling of evil, the destruction of death, and eternity dawning. It's the Kingdom of God!

### **Suffering can't hold a candle to the galaxy of glory that is coming!**

Suffering may seem to have the upper hand because it is right in front of us. It demands our attention and occupies our thoughts. But glory is weightier by far. Glory displaces suffering. Glory lasts while suffering vanishes. Hope is seeing glory invading suffering.

### **Hope reaches for the Kingdom of God like a baby snow monkey reaching for life.**

Snow monkeys live in the mountainous regions of Japan. Their babies are adorable. When they're tiny, they cling to their mothers relentlessly. As toddlers, they reach for their mothers with almost adorable desperation. Then, as they grow, they learn how to jump from branch to branch in the trees early on. They're so young when they start that their first attempts look death defying. The babies learn to jump for branches because that's often where they get food. Plus, it's how they escape danger. And when the snow monkeys are on the move, they jump into the trees and follow quickly or get left behind. And

freeze. Baby snow monkeys reaching for the trees are fleeing death and reaching for life. That's what hope looks like, reaching eagerly for the Kingdom of God and life.

## Creation is caught in futility but groans in hope.

**Romans 8:19-22** tells us that creation is caught in futility but groaning in hope.

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

What does creation's groaning look like?

### I think of Dennis Wry.

Dennis was a long-time member of this church. He fought cancer for the past few years. He had multiple surgeries and multiple rounds of chemotherapy and radiation. Some of the treatments were quite drastic and left his body scarred. That's groaning with creation under the weight of futility. But Dennis was also groaning in hope. Dennis was a fundraiser for Biblica. He raised money to translate and distribute the Bible. He knew that having the Bible brought the Gospel to people and gave them access to eternity. Dennis' life verses were **Revelation 7:9-10 (NIV)**:

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

Dennis could see that day coming. He worked toward people from every ethnic group on earth having access to the Bible right up until four weeks before he died. That's groaning under the weight and groaning toward the goal! That's what creation is doing!

### Creation is subjected to "futility", an emptiness we can't escape.

The word translated as "futility" is the word the Greek Bible would use to translate **Ecclesiastes 1:2**,

Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

Futility. It's like vanity, breath, and vapor. Creation is subjected to an emptiness and meaninglessness that we can't escape. It's another way of describing suffering. When we sinned, God subjected creation to futility. Yes, it's a consequence of sin, but it's not just to punish. Futility causes us to hope—to yearn, long, and reach for the Kingdom of God.

### Creation longs for us to be resurrected and become who we were created to be.

Creation longs for the day when Christians will be resurrected and reign over Creation. Free from sin ourselves and glorified, we will reign as God would. Instead of taking and harming, we will nurture Creation and bring life right beside our Creator. But that's just the first part of Creation's hope. It longs for more!

### Creation's groaning is like childbirth leading to the miracle of its own rebirth.

When Jesus finally and completely defeats evil, Satan, sin, and death will be destroyed in the lake of fire. Creation will be resurrected, too! Old Heaven and Old Earth will dissolve, and New Heaven and New Earth will be born. So, Creation's pain now is like birth pains. Yes, they hurt, but something new is being born. New Creation will be GLORIOUS! Perfect. God's dwelling place with us. Our home forever. That's hope for Creation and for us!

## **We can't help but hope!**

### **Romans 8:23-24 says that we're groaning too!**

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. For in this hope we were saved. ...

### **We have the Holy Spirit as a downpayment on eternity.**

The Holy Spirit is God's presence with us now. The Holy Spirit is the life of God, the Kingdom of God, and eternity pulsing within us now. The Holy Spirit is fitting us for eternity. If we are like a block of raw marble, the Holy Spirit is chipping away at everything that doesn't belong in eternity, revealing the image of Christ in us, and breathing new life on what was otherwise a heart of stone. Eternity is invading us now!

### **We groan like Creation because the Holy Spirit is praying with us in ways too deep for words!**

Sometimes we just don't have the words for what we need. God the Holy Spirit knows our hearts and minds and prays in ways that are beyond words, deeper than words, the perfect words—it's like a groan. Paul addresses this next in **Romans 8:26**,

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

Hope comes out in a groan!

### **Salvation whets our appetite, making us hungry for more!**

We have been forgiven, reconciled to God, adopted as children of God, and given the Holy Spirit. Our hearts are new and now they long for more! We long for the end to suffering. We long for the darkness to pass. We long for an end to sin, sickness, violence, destruction, decay, death, and tears. We have tasted eternity. Now that's all we want!

### **We are living the trailer, waiting for the blockbuster.**

Trailers give you a little taste of what a movie is about. Movie studios put them out hoping to get you excited to see the movie. We are living in a trailer! We have just enough of Christ, just enough of the Holy Spirit to know that resurrection glory is our desperate desire. We want to be rid of the effects of sin like a snake shedding its skin. We want to be clothed in resurrection bodies—free of suffering and full of glory. We are ready to say goodbye to sin, evil, and death forever. We want to walk streets of gold surrounded by the tree of life basking in the glow of God's glory.

## What, then, are we really waiting for?

### **The web of false hopes Pol Pot spun unraveled in the killing fields.**

After he came to power, Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge closed the borders of Cambodia and emptied the cities. Anyone who seemed like an intellectual or an elite was eliminated—sometimes just for wearing glasses or being able to speak a foreign language. Religion was banned. Families were torn apart. Everyone was sent to farms, but many were worked to death and starved. Over his four years in power, nearly 2 million people died.<sup>2</sup> That's what happens when we pledge allegiance to hope that isn't real.

### **Let's not settle for imitation hope online that captivates and divides us.**

Some podcasters, posters, and pundits are making money by keeping our attention. But what keeps our attention? Sensationalism. Naming difficult problems, proposing shocking solutions, and speaking with a directness that masquerades as courage. When you expose yourself to that stuff constantly, it may feel like you are plugging into hope. Someone understands you and "tells it like it is." But you're not hooking up to hope. And the way it makes you feel should be a warning sign. You walk away feeling anxious and angry. Because that's not hope! That's false hope.

### **Romans 8:24-25 warns us to avoid false hopes we can see or grasp for ourselves:**

... 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.

Hope that we can see isn't hope at all. Hope isn't found in perfect politics. Or the perfect Christmas. Or the perfect family. Or the perfect job. Or the perfect relationship. That's all false hope. Something we can grasp for ourselves.

### **Our Returning King is our only real hope.**

Advent reminds us that Jesus' coming fulfilled centuries of hope. And it reminds us that we are still hoping for the return of Christ. Our hopes are fulfilled in Christ! Only in Him! Now, we come back to where we started: **Hope is waiting expectantly for God to replace suffering with resurrection glory!** We are waiting expectantly for Jesus. He is the only One who can make the world right. That's hope. Real hope.

### **Waiting for Him may test your resolve regularly.**

As you fight an illness that may take your life, it isn't easy. As you watch a loved one struggle with the chains of addiction, it isn't easy. As you hear someone you care about spouting a philosophy that's really darkness, it isn't easy. As you see victims of human trafficking and wonder why such evil is still possible in our world, it isn't easy. Hope isn't easy. It's easier to give up and settle for something less.

### **But let's hold out for the real thing.**

Jesus, Who is God with us, is the real thing. Jesus, Who is risen from the dead, is the real thing. Jesus, Who is coming again, is the real thing. He is hope! We are living with the hope that comes from seeing

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-10684399>

that He has kept every promise He has ever made. We are living with the hope that comes because He has already begun to change our lives and our world. And we are living with the hope that comes from knowing that He is coming again and that we will be with Him face to face forever. That changes everything, and that's hope.