***Romans 8:24-25 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? 25But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.***

This morning, we continue with Advent. We lit the candle of Hope, so let’s hear about true hope from Luke 1:30-33 *Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. 32He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. 33And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”* That, my brothers and sisters, is True Hope! The Hope of Israel, the Light to the Gentiles. The angel Gabriel is standing before Mary, not announcing what has been done, but what will be done, what will happen, what will come to pass! This is our Hope and our Salvation!

Hope is a beautiful thing. Stories are told of people who have survived horrific situations by believing past the current circumstances and looking hopefully toward a future promise. Advent is all about Hope, the hopeful return of our Savior. Psalm 130:5-6 says - *I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, And in His word I do hope. 6 My soul waits for the Lord More than those who watch for the morning - Yes, more than those who watch for the morning.* My soul has the idea of my whole being, everything I am waits hopefully for the Lord, like those waiting desperately for the night to end. John 9:4-5 Jesus says - *I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”* We wait for Jesus, the Light of the world to return. We wait as strangers in this strange dark land, in darkness that cannot comprehend and flees from the Light because it doesn’t want it’s wickedness revealed and we wait for our Savior , the Light to return.

 Verse 24 starts *For we were saved in this hope.* We believe through Faith. We are saved in Hope. Through Grace, God has mercifully granted us the promise of Salvation. John 20:29 *Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”* We hope for what we have not yet seen. We wait expectantly for what we do not yet fully possess. We have God’s promise of Salvation, but promise is not possession. We wait in the Hope of Promise for the Joy of Possession.

 Verse 24 finishes - *but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?* Makes sense. A promise received is no longer a promise, but a possession. Promise becomes Presence, no longer hoped, but held. We don’t keep hoping for that which we see. If we hope to see a loved one on Christmas morning, when they arrive, we stop hoping and start enjoying. That is the idea in this verse - our Hopeful Expectation, every morning, is that maybe today is the day we will meet Jesus face to face. There will be nothing more glorious than seeing our Savior. Anything dearer is an idol being worshipped.

 Verse 25 - *But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.* We hope for what we do not possess, what is not present, so we can’t yet enjoy that which is hoped for. Makes sense. We eagerly wait. But we eagerly wait with patience. We wait with a certainty, a contentment, an assurance that the excellent promise that has been made to us is on it’s way. We believe this Hope will come to pass. 1 Peter 1:6-9 says *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen, you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.* We may now be grieved with various trials for a little while. Romans 5:3-4 *And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces Perseverance, 4 and Perseverance, Character; and Character, Hope.* Our trials are nothing when placed beside the Hope of eternity we’ve been promised. No matter our situation, we look with Hope toward the coming revelation of Jesus Christ.

This week, let’s concentrate on the Hope of this Advent Season. Our Faith, our Belief in what we have not yet seen, brings us great Hope for what we will soon possess. Romans 15:13 says *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.* This is my prayer for us all this week – May our God of Hope fill us with Joy and Peace as we wait patiently and faithfully for Christ, that we may abound in that Hope, so much so that others see it and want to have that same assurance.