**Romans 12:9-13 9*Let* love *be* without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10*Be* kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; 11not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.**

This morning, we lit the candle of Hope. Hope… what a beautiful word! Not the hope of this world, but the Hope of the Cross. We read 5 verses this morning, but I’m only going to focus on one – verse 12. The call of the Cross, the call of God. The Hope of eternity calls us, always calls us to come up higher. Come up higher. Zacchaeus climbed a tree, to see Jesus. Come up higher. We will never see the true Jesus as long as we are mired in the pit of this world. We must come up higher, we must climb, seeking God, looking for Jesus. Always higher – as long as we see everything from the point of view of the world, everything will look an awful lot like the world. When we change that view and begin to see everything like Jesus, everything will begin to look an awful lot like Jesus. Come up higher with me today.

Verse 12 sums up the Christian walk so well. Within the context of verses 9-13 - loving without hypocrisy, hating evil, loving good, giving preference to our brothers and sisters, honoring and esteeming them, never being lazy, but boiling and frothing with diligence to serve the Lord, while taking care of needs and showing hospitality, we find this golden verse to apply to our everyday walk. **It’s easy for what we’re to be to become lost in all we do.** But, as I stated last week, our focus for Advent this year is the Hope and Healing we’ve found in tribulation this year, and the real-life people sitting among us today that are great examples of the Great God we serve and the healing He provides.

Verse 12 starts *rejoicing in hope*. This holds the idea of Greeting the Expectation. What if every morning, when our eyes flutter open, and God gives us yet another day, we Greeted the Expectation of our final destination? What if our hope wasn’t for a good parking spot at Walmart, or a quiet day at work, or for less pain in that troublesome knee, but was pregnant with the possibilities of what God will use our day for today and how that might impact others for the Kingdom of God? What if our day held a pregnancy of Hope? That’s Hope worth rejoicing over! That is excitement worth living for! That’s not CNN droning from the TV, but angels singing from Heavenly Realms! Rejoice in the Hope.

Verse 12 continues - *patient in tribulation*. Hmmm… that looks familiar. *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.* The tribulations exercise our faith and produce patience. Patience comes in handy in tribulations and trials… the trials that exercise our faith produce more patience. Sounds almost like a feedback loop, a closed circle, something that feeds on itself to build us up to completeness in Christ. The Greek translates persevere under pressure. So, we are to cheerfully Greet the Expectation – cheerfully look towards our Hope, while patiently persevering under pressures of this life.

Verse 12 finishes - *continuing steadfastly in prayer***.** The Greek has the idea of persevering in worship – Persevere in worship, persevere in prayer, persevere in thankfulness… even under pressure of trials… persevere in Greeting that wonderful Expectation each and every morning – that expectation called the Hope of and Confidence in Jesus! Prayer that the knee will stop hurting, the new motorcycle will be in the driveway, the boss will be in a good mood? That sounds like we’re praying levels and levels too low. That sounds like we may be poking at prayer rather than persevering in prayer. Come up higher! Come up higher! Climb up to see Jesus! Get out of the weeds and soar in the sky a while.

This week, Philip and Kirstan lit our candle of Hope. I can only imagine the way they continued steadfastly in prayer as Philip fought for his life. I can only imagine the patience in that tribulation they endured and are still enduring. I can only imagine how their Hope turned from what the doctors said to what they knew their God could do! Romans 5:3-4 says *And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.*Find God’s glory in those tribulations… they are the very doorway leading to Hope.

This week, let’s decide to come up higher. Let’s find Hope in the trials. When we fasten our eyes on the Hope and Mercies that God provides each and every new morning, life begins to look different. Adversities become something to endure, persevere patiently through, knowing that God is completing a work in us. Dread transforms into anticipation as the adversities exercise our faith, producing patience, and giving us Hope that we will one day stand complete before God. Rejoice always in that Hope! God is producing a marvelous work in you. Come up higher, come up higher, come up higher and see.