

Candle of Hope

Scripture: Isaiah 2:1 – 5

Let us discuss 'Hope' today. 'Hope' is a wonderful word! 'Hope' is a wonderful feeling to have. 'Hope' is defined as – a feeling of expectation or a desire for a certain thing to happen or a feeling of trust.

As we start the glorious season of Advent, hope definitely is a good starting place. 'Hope' is beautiful but 'Hope' has two ugly daughters – Anger and Envy. Often when hope is not fulfilled, the two ugly daughters come out and hope becomes a negative thing! If a certain desire is not fulfilled, hope becomes anger! If our trust is broken, hope becomes envy which leads to harsh feelings between people.

We live in a difficult time! Let us be honest, 2020 has not been a wonderful year! If I put on this hat and blow this party favor, 2020 does not make us jump for joy!

The season of Advent is a time that yields both rejoicing and mourning, both peace and trouble, both fear and hope, and both love and sadness.

We live in a time of prosperity and political unrest. We live in a time of peace and racial injustice. And we live in a time of unity and division. Life is full of these binary moments. Life is full of moments that often force us to choose a side. Moments that put us at war not only with each other but with ourselves.

As we enter Advent, a season of preparation and anticipation, we settle into the notion that we do not have to choose sides. We do not have to stick our stakes into the ground to declare that our way of thinking, our denominational beliefs, our political party, or our social location matter so much that we cannot see how our proverbial swords and spears can be used for good.

In our reading from the Book of Isaiah today, the text tells us that when God settles our disputes, we will take the very things we use to destroy each other and make them into tools for good! When God settles our disputes, a sword will be turned into an iron plow to till the ground for planting good seeds. When God settles our disputes, a spear that kills will be turned into a pruning tool that rids our hearts of hatred.

Today we lit the candle of hope. Please reflect on how you might choose to walk by the Lord's light today. Where might you rest in the intersection of faith and hope? Where might you rest in the intersection of love and liberty? Where might you rest in the intersection of obedience and birthing of the newness of life?

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Let us proclaim – *Come, O House of Jacob; Come, brothers and sisters in Christ; Come BBCC (DOC), let us walk by the Lord's light!*

In Ephesians 1:22 – 23 it says – *And God has put all things under his feet and God has made Jesus Christ the head over all things for the church which is his body and the fullness of him who fits all in all!*

Advent calls us to prepare for and await the coming of the Savior. Being patient and discerning in advance of such a joyous occasion is not meant to be done in isolation. A serious contemplation of the Body of Christ teaches us to work in concert with others to accomplish the mission of God in our community in every season.

The Body of Christ also helps us to resist our own selfishness. This positive encouragement toward unity amounts to much of the power of community, the Christian community, where God by his Holy Spirit, works out his will.

In our history as the CC (DOC) unity was a major reason for the formation of our denomination. In fact, our first slogan as a denomination was – *Let Unity be our Polar Star!* So, unity means a lot for us and for God's people.

The candle of hope we lite today gives us hope for unity within this Christian community, this wonderful beach town, and this blessed nation where God's work and will can be achieved.

The New Testament image of the Body of Christ, the church, includes the teaching that Christ is our head. Just as our physical body has a head, we in the church, the Body of Christ, have one head – Jesus Christ. That places Christ in the position of leadership and places us in the position of followership.

The primary question then is for us – Toward what goal is Christ leading us? The primary answer is to be found in scripture. While the answer will not solve disagreements about the color of the carpet in the Chapel or the nature and extent of communication between the leadership of the church and congregation. The answer will remind us to exercise the fruits of the Holy Spirit in our discussions and the answer will drive us to our knees in prayer that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Let God's will be done in our church as it is in heaven. Let God's will be done in our community as it is in heaven. Let God's will be done in our nation as it is in heaven. This is what the candle of hope brings!

(leave pulpit and walk to the candle of hope)

What a wonderful light – the candle of hope brings. It truly brings hope to our church and hope to our community and hope to our nation!

Let us pray:

O God, compel us to become intentional about putting down the tools of divisiveness and pick up the tools that bring us together. As we await your coming, let your love gleam from our hearts into the world.

Lord Jesus, the Head of the Church, bring our will into submission to yours and lead our church into agreement with your leadership.

AMEN.