

# Hopeful People

On this past Sunday we began to light the Advent Candles. Our first was the Candle of Hope. As the reading and prayer took place my mind wandered onto the theme of hope. Hope is an often evasive concept. Is there more hope or more hopelessness resonating in the hearts of most people? I believe at my core, that because we are made in God's image, we are hardwired for hope. You and I are always putting our hope in something. If you listen, you will realize that we communicate with the language of hope all the time.

**"I sure hope it doesn't rain today."**

**"I hope she isn't mad at me."**

**"I hope I can do what I promised."**

**"I hope they win the World Series."**

**"I hope they can get along for once."**

**"I hope this sickness isn't something serious."**

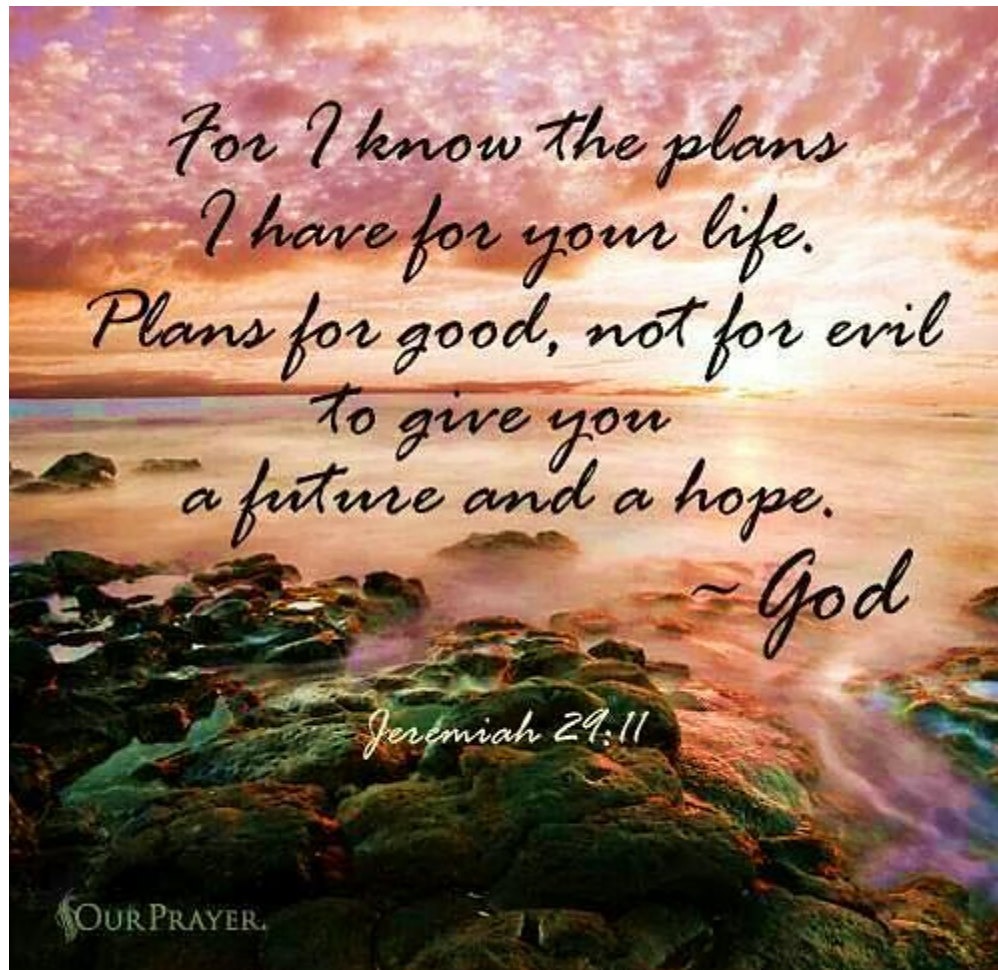
**"I hope when I get home, there will be something to eat."**

**"I hope to make something worthwhile out of my life."**

**"I hope what I've believed in proves to be true."**

**"I hope my family and friends will be proud of me."**

The language of hope is on our lips because we live in a world where hope seems temporary or is often dashed. Let's be honest we often wonder what is the next shoe to drop. In our personal lives, our families, and in society at large, we deal with so much broken hope. It is not unusual for the thing in which we willingly placed our hope to fail us. In fact, we get to the place where we might even be afraid to feel hope. Yet we can't stop hoping because God created our lives to be propelled and directed by hope. He meant our capacity for hope to drive us to him.



I believe the Christmas story, at its essence and core, reminds us that hope will never be found if we look purely on the horizontal. True hope must have a vertical focus. It is not enough to say that God gives hope. What the Christmas story declares is that God is hope. That hope is attached to glorious aspects of his character. He is Holy, Just, Righteous, Sovereign, Loving, Wise, Forgiving, Immutable, Pure, Truthful...The more we dwell upon and explore these aspects of His character, the more engulfed in vertical awe we become. This vertical focus begins deliberately and mentally. Our minds are thought factories and we can make choices about what our thoughts and contemplations produce. Paul reminds us in Philippians

*4:8 “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”*

This is more than a silver-lining attitude, more than seeing the cup as half full rather than half empty. This is an admission that unseen and favorable forces populate the affairs of humanity. When we develop a Bible based vertical focus we realize our hope is grounded in the very person and work of God. We start to see with faith more than flesh, and since faith begets hope, we become more hope-filled. For we know that there is much more to

**life than meets the eye—we realize yet again that our Creator is ultimately sovereign and in complete control of the sphere of human history—and our own individual lives. We embrace that He will bring things to fullness in His plan and in His time. We embrace the truth that *“He who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”* Philippians 1:6. These words make me very, very, hopeful indeed!**

**He told me to tell you!**

Faithfully,

Pastor Robert Zimmerman