

MORE THAN WISHING

...we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. (Hebrews 6:18-19, NIV)

MASTERS WEEKEND DRAWS CLOSER. The start of spring is days away, and the greens—the very hues—at Augusta are sharpening. Maybe you can't wait.

A lineup of hopefuls can't wait either. With nine Masters victories among them, Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson, and Bubba Watson are oozing good form right now. Rory McIlroy may be scuffling, but dreams of completing the career Grand Slam certainly dance a jig in his Irish mind. And then there are players like Rickie Fowler and Tommy Fleetwood, who ache for a first major to add to their otherwise strong résumés.

What does it mean to hope like this? Is it only wishing, not much more than a child's penny tossed in a fountain? Or is there good reason to believe?

We cannot speak for golfers. A Danny Willett might be lurking around the corner, waiting to surprise us all. But we can assess hope in its biblical sense. When we turn the pages of Scripture and land on the idea of hope, are we chasing dandelion petals in the wind or securing our investments in blue-chip stocks?

If you have already reflected on today's passage, you know that the hope given to us by our Savior, Jesus Christ, is of the latter variety. In fact, it is "an anchor for the soul, firm and secure."

The writer of Hebrews, however, was not speaking of hope in a general context. Rather, he was pointing specifically to the hope salvation gives us: the hope of eternity with God made possible by Jesus' going before us as our lasting sacrifice and our great high priest. Where the Jewish high priests made sacrifice of an animal outside themselves, Jesus made sacrifice of himself. His cleansing blood—given in what we call atonement—is the initiator of our hope.

So we do not hope in a dreamy sort of way. Nor do we hope in our own strong faith or good morals. No, "our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness," as the old hymn is sung. Then it is secured by his resurrected and ascended body, for now he reigns with God and the day will soon come when he calls us to join him as brothers and sisters. Now this, friends, is a certain win!

Opening questions What is your favorite golf tournament to watch each year? Do you root for certain players to win? What does it take for you to think they might actually get it done?

READING Hebrews 11:1-16; Titus 2:11-14

The engine of our hope (Hebrews 11)

As we have read today, Christ's blood initiated our hope. But here in Hebrews 11, we find an engine for keeping hope established. What is it (v. 1)?

What were the ancient men and women of God hoping for (vv. 10 & 16)? How do you think their faith and hope fed one another?

Would you say your own faith or hope is greater? How might you increase both?

Hope's outcome (Titus 2)

Hope produces great outcomes, both now and in the future. What are these outcomes? How does your knowledge of them change the way you see Jesus and live for him?