



Links Players

Advent Fridays, 2022 - Hope

...remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (Ephesians 2:12, ESV)

Hopeless! Ironically, when we use the word “hopeless,” we tend to mean something like “improbable.” No matter where we plot our circumstances between 0 and 1, we tend to mean something akin to: “It looks unlikely, but we will find a way to succeed.”

For example, if you are seven down with seven to play, what used to be called “dormy,” while it looks hopeless, there is still a chance for you to “halve the match.” Or, that’s what they used to call it. I understand the guardians of the game no longer like using “dormy, or “halved.”

Some words morph over time. Words that meant one thing one hundred years ago mean something entirely different now. Once upon a time, the word “awful” meant “worthy of awe.” Years ago, various cultures would say, “God is awful in his majesty.” Of course, they meant God is worthy of awe! Now, the word awful means something horrible.

These days, the word “hopeless” often suggests that even though our circumstances look impossibly bleak, we reason: “There has to be a way out, around, or over whatever obstacle is blocking our progress.”

But when Scripture uses the word “hopeless,” as it does in today’s verse, it means no chance—null! Put more simply, Paul is saying our chance of receiving anything from God the Father apart from a relationship with his Son, Jesus Christ, is zero!

Paul is at pains to obliterate the silly idea that we can “hedge our bets” with the Almighty by approaching him based on our moral rectitude. To think that way is to infinitely undetermined the holiness of God. It also grossly overestimates our goodness by a zillion miles.

As one Reformer put it, “...it is one thing to feel God as our Maker, supports us by his power, governs us by his providence, nourishes us by his goodness, and attends us with all sorts of blessings—and another thing to embrace the grace of reconciliation offered to us in Christ.”

In other words, to know God exists because we recognize his goodness in creation falls woefully short of what it means to know Christ for salvation.

What, for us, is hopeless; is, for him, the opportunity to demonstrate his love, grace, power, and wisdom. He comes to us from glory to redeem, reconcile and restore—he bridges the unbridgeable chasm!

All the benefits that the Father offers, including hope, are brought to us in a baby boy wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger. Jesus is, indeed, Immanuel, God with us! Have you surrendered your life to him?

Prayer: Father! Teach us that we must be united to Christ to receive anything from you.

READING - 1 Peter 1:3-5; Ephesians 1:16-21 Ephesians 2:11-16.

OPENING QUESTIONS: Reminisce about a time when all looked hopeless in a match only to turn around.

1. In First **Peter 1:3-5**, we are given the reason that our hope is more than wishful thinking. What does he tie our hope for a certain future to? Discuss.

2. In **Ephesians 1:16-21**, Paul prays. He asked the Father to give the church _____ and _____ so that they might see _____, _____, and _____. Again, what historical reality does Paul tie his confidence to? Discuss.

3. In **Ephesians 2:11-16**, Paul explains our plight. We are separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants. Consequently, we are without hope and God in the world. What happened that reverses all of that? Discuss.
