

Sunday Worship Service 3_13_2022

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SPEAKERS

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00:05

Son for us to get a little bit more deeply into God's Word together. So as I invite you to do every week, I hope you will have a copy of scripture out and open in front of you. If that's a personal Bible or Bible app that you'd like to use, I'd invite you to get that if you need something to read Bibles and all the pews. Once again, we'll be in the book of Romans this morning in the New Testament, about the middle of chapter 15, getting pretty close to the end of that letter. Romans 15, verses eight to 13. That's what you this morning. abandon hope all ye who enter here that's the proverbial inscription that is in front of the gates of hell. According to the classic 14th century literary work, the inferno by the Italian poet, Dante, it's also the expression I think a lot of people expect to find on the front of their day planners, or maybe the first banner that will pop up on your news feed in the morning. But it need not be that way. I want to talk with you this morning about the idea of hope about the source of our hope about the content of our hope as Christians and what were called to do with that. Last fall, we began this study in this letter that the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in the ancient city of Rome, it's one of the most famous books in the entire Bible, it has some of the most well known passages in all of Scripture. And we're gonna see one of those verses here this morning. It's a very, very famous verse. And there's a lot of really powerful stuff in it. I'd like to show you how it's got an even bigger view in mind than we may sometimes first realize. We've covered a lot of ground as we've been studying this letter so far. We're getting very close to the end, just a couple weeks left in this series. Before we get back into it this morning, though, let me invite you once more, to pray with me. Grading Gracious God, we thank you for this time that we have to be here together today. Quiet are distracted minds, Lord calm are distraught hearts. Let us hear what it is that you have to say. And let us respond in ways that demonstrate our love for you and our love for others. And Father, I pray that the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts would be acceptable in Your sight for We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen. We are getting into the kind of homestretch here in this study that we've been looking at this letter to the Romans, there's still a lot of good stuff, even just a couple of weeks left, there's still a lot of good stuff. And what we're looking at today is following this conversation that Paul had been having with the congregation at that point, we spent a couple weeks with him, trying to help them sort through these questions of how do you balance your love for your neighbor with the freedom to hold personal convictions, and he gave him some guidelines there because these are really heavy questions are still quite relevant questions, even for many people here today. And as he wrapped up that discussion, and he springboards into this next part by reminding them just how good the good news is, just how big this Good News of the Gospel is. This is

Romans chapter 15, verses eight through 39 Veda, listen again, now to the word of the Lord. For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written, therefore, I will praise you among the Gentiles and sing to your name. And again, it is said, Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people. And again, praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him. And again, Isaiah says, the root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles in him, will the Gentiles hope, may the God of hope, fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit, you may abound in hope? There are some really important Christian words in their terms and concepts. In fact, all in verse 13, we see some of the three big ones joy, peace, and hope. And I know you know what those words are, I know you know what they mean. But there are some some biblical characteristics to those things that may be a little bit different than some of the ways that we typically use those words, or engage in those concepts. So right off the bat, I just want to sketch that out for you as we prepare to look at that specific verse, but then also this broader section, some of the biblical characteristics of these kinds of terms of joy and peace, and hope. Joy is more than simply a reaction to our circumstances. That's what you could call happiness. Things are good things are going well. We respond in a positive way. That's happiness. Joy, biblically, is deeper than that. It's a subtle delight that comes from experiencing the grace of God in Jesus Christ. In fact, in John 16:22, Jesus is with his disciples and this is right before he is about to be killed right before he is about to be arrested and crucified and Jesus says this to his disciples. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. Jesus has shown himself shows that joy is connected to this relationship with him. He says you're gonna have sorrow, but when I see you again, you will rejoice and no one will take that joy from you. So Joy biblically, is not just a response to our circumstances, but it's a relationship with our Savior. That's what it is. Peace is also a much richer concept than we sometimes think we tend to think of peace as simply being some level of calmness or tranquility. And it can't be that it as a good thing. It's more than that, though. In a lot of his sermons, Martin Luther King Jr. would differentiate between what he called negative peace and positive peace, negative peace being simply the absence of conflict, which is a good and fine thing. But positive peace being the presence of healing and restorative wholeness through the work of God's Spirit. That's an even better thing. When the Bible speaks of shalom, that's what it's getting at this flourishing that happens when things are as they should be, through the work of God. So that's peace, biblically. And then he talks about hope here. In fact, he mentions that twice in verse 13. He mentioned the term hope shows up twice and just that one verse. So defining that and understanding that biblically is really important here. There are a lot of ways that people have attempted to define this or understand the concept of hope, about about 300 years or so before Paul wrote this letter, the Greek philosopher Aristotle famously said that hope is a waking dream. Hope is a waking dream. In other words, it's relocating an act of your imagination, or an aspect of your desire onto the real world around us, it's just the kind of a wish projection may or may not happen, it may or may not be tethered to anything. In reality, it's just an expression of a longing or a want, that you have. And we use the word that way all the time. We say things like, I hope this weather will sort of settled itself out over the next few days, I hope this sermon won't go too long, and you have no control over either of those things. We use it as this expression of wish we don't know if it's going to happen or if it's not going to happen. But biblically, it's deeper than that. At the other end of the spectrum, there's a definition that a lot of people use, it comes from the work of a man named Charles Snyder, he was a psychologist at the University of Kansas, he pioneered a lot of research into the concept of hope. And he said that there's three characteristics to it and involves goals, pathways and agencies, agency. So he would say that hope is identifying something that you want to happen a goal or a name, and figuring out how you're going to get there, what it's going to take to make that happen, and then going about making that happen. So it's really about you accomplishing something that you want to see be true. So if Aristotle's definition is somewhat utopian, then Snyder's is somewhat utilitarian. And biblically, we see something different than either of those. Biblically, the concept of hope is I know I've shared with you many times, is the shore and

certain expectation that God is going to make good on his word. That's what biblical hope is, it's the shore in a certain expectation that God is going to do what he has said that he will do. And it has a very specific fulfillment, the things that God has promised to do in and through Jesus Christ, there's nothing uncertain about it. It's the expectation that God is only going to make good on his word. That's what hope is, biblically speaking. So I wanted to sketch that out first, before we get into particularly verse 13. But then use that to look at some of the rest of that. So let's look at that verse. It's a very, very famous one. I'll read it to you again, he says, May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit, you may abound in hope? The first wonderful reminder of this passage is that the God of hope brings you hope. The God of hope can bring hope to you. It's all expressed in this little passage, or one of the real signature verses of this letter, there's a lot just packed into that one little sentence or the God of hope. God Himself is the source and the content of our hope, says, will fill you with all joy and peace, fill you with this settled delight that comes from knowing and being known by God and experiencing the fullness of His healing and restorative presence, fill you with all joy and peace in believing. That's the means by which we experience these things. Faith lays hold of Jesus Christ, He is the One in whom we find this joy and peace and hope. And he says, God will enable you to have bound in hope, more than just a passing sentiment or a fleeting feeling that you have one time and then never again, we can bound in this conviction, the settled conviction that God is going to do what he has said he will do. What is it that God has said he will do? What's the content specifically of our hope? Well, God had promised that he was going to send a savior, one who would be the perfect prophet and priest and king We're told that in the fullness of time, Jesus, the very Word of God took on flesh and made his dwelling among us. And He is the one who offered up himself one time for all time for seeing that he is the one who has risen and reigning now, over all things, all of those promises God has fulfilled in Jesus Christ so you can rest in those ones. God has also promised things in Christ that are still out in front of us. He's promised this same Jesus will come to judge the living in the dead, to resurrect all those who belong to him to usher in the fullness of his new creation. Those are the aspects of our hope that still lay out in front of us. So cling to those resting the things that God has already fulfilled and clinging to the things that he has said he will do, and yet we know are still out in front of us. This is the content of our hope that things that God has said he was going to do. So look, come back to these truths again. And again, come back to these things when life is hard. And when you feel burdened. Come back to these things. When you feel wearied or worried. Come back to these things. When you feel discouraged or despondent. Come back to these things when you feel like there are no constants in life and there is nothing that is well, and this is not a blind optimism, or some kind of irrational idealism, joy and peace and hold. These are not hashtags that we just try to promote through our own efforts. These are the gifts that we receive from the God who loves us, and has given us all things in Christ. The God of hope can bring you hope, when you rest in what he has done, and what you cling to what he is yet to do. So verse 13, is all about the God of hope, bringing us hope, we need to know that it's a wonderful promise. It's a wonderful promises incredibly beautiful. But as with any verse of scripture, context is important. None of these things just came to us floating out there all entirely on their own. There's a conversation, a discussion that Paul is having here. And it opens us up to something even broader and more beautiful than that. After my undergraduate studies, I spent some time I was teaching English on in China. And one point we got to visit part of the Great Wall, just north of the city of Beijing is incredible. Some of the pictures from the time we were there is critical entry gate and these guard towers that were there, we got to walk maybe about a mile or so of the wall at that particular point, we were just all amazed by the grander, the splendor, the majesty of this whole thing and what it must have taken to accomplish that. And there are a lot of estimates on how big this thing actually is a 2012 archeological study estimated they're about 13,000 total miles of construction about this. It's astounding. I mean, I was amazed by the part that I saw, I was overwhelmed by this thing that we saw. And yet when you realize how much bigger it is, that doesn't take away from how incredible the party you see is fact that makes it even bigger, you realize just how much more there is to this. So verse 13, is this promise that the God of hope will bring you hope, and that is incredible.

There's a majesty and splendor and a beauty that that can never be overcome. But I want to show you that it's part of something much, much bigger. And that doesn't take away from this promise that God will bring you hope. But it adds to it shows you how big this thing actually is. Because this whole section a letter is about Paul saying that the God of hope will bring hope to the nations. The God of hope will bring hope to the nations in in through this same Jesus. In the passage we read there he saw a bunch of times the term Gentiles and I know I've shared with you before that, that Greek that translate the Greeks translates the Greek word ethnic, it's where we get ethnic or ethnicity. So it's a way to refer to distinct people groups usually marked by having their own language, or their own customs. But it's a way of just saying to the nations to all peoples people of every tribe, and language as Revelation seven, puts this whole section about what God has promised to do for the nations in and through this same Jesus. He starts off in verse eight by saying that Jesus this Jesus has come as a servant to the circumcised to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, a servant to the circumcised to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, it's you saying this is the one who fulfilled the promise that God gave to Abraham. God said, Abraham, one of your descendants is going to be a blessing to the nations. He said in this Jesus, we see the confirmation of God's promises there that he had made centuries and generations before. Every one of us has promised to do something at some point that we I'm sure we have not followed through on. Maybe it was an accidental cause of not following through on it. Maybe it was intentional. Maybe there's something as trivial as saying you would take out the trash but not doing it. Or maybe it's something with a whole lot greater consequence in your life. But every one of us has said we're going to do something and then not followed through on it. It's never the case with God. God said Abraham, one of your descendants is going to be a blessing to the nations and we see here that God confirm that promise in In through Jesus Christ, that's one of the major themes of this entire letter. If you've been with us for any part of this study, or even you just know the book of Romans, when the major themes is that the same Lord is Lord of all Jew and Gentile, and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. All of scripture points to this, all of it. In fact, what Paul does here is really pretty incredible. We're not going to notice it quite as much the Christians who have come from a Jewish background on and picked up on this immediately, he gives for Old Testament quotations right in a row, just right, one after another back to back to back to back for Old Testament quotations. That was a technique that the rabbi's would sometimes use called Pearl stringing, like you're putting together a beautiful pearl necklace is one right after the other just stringing together these verses. Here's what else is really interesting. One of those is from Deuteronomy. Two of them are from the Psalms, one of them is from the prophets. That's the law of the prophets and the writings that is the whole of Scripture. As far as the Jewish people were concerned. He was very intentional in what he quoted, there was very intentional in saying all of scripture points to this promise, that through Jesus, the nations will be blessed. It's really powerful there. He is the One in whom the nations will hope you see that in verse 12. In particular there in him, will the Gentiles hope in Him will the nation's hope. Now there's two aspects to that. Two aspects to this idea of Jesus being the hope of the nation's here's the first one. Jesus is the hope of the nation's because through His death and resurrection, God brings mercy and forgiveness to everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord. See that in this letter a couple different times through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, mercy and grace and forgiveness come to everyone who calls upon him, the gospel is not some local tradition, it's not regional news. It's not the intellectual property of some small organization. Second Corinthians 5:19 says that in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself not counting their trespasses against them. Jesus is first and foremost the hope of the nations because he has called people to Himself from every tribe and language. And people, everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. This letter has said several different times Jesus is the hope of the nations because of that. He's also the hope of the nations. Here's the second reason he's the hope of the nations because with his return, God will make good on his word to bring judgment to the nations. I'm gonna tell you why that's a good thing. With his return, God is going to make work good on his word to bring judgment to the nations. You see that in verse 12, also where it says, even he who arises to rule, the Gentiles, even he arises to rule the Gentiles.

That party there is a quote from Isaiah chapter 11. We read Isaiah 11 earlier, there's a reason that we did this. When you're reading through the New Testament. And if you see a part of the New Testament where a verse from the Old Testament is quoted, think about like a hyperlink, you should click on it and go back and read the whole article and find out why did they reference that particular verse, there's always a reason for it. So we read that's one verse from Isaiah chapter 11. Ken read a big part of that section earlier, and I hope you noticed some of the stuff in there is a very, very famous passage as well. I'm gonna point out just a couple of those parts in there and Isaiah 11, it is speaking about Jesus, when it says that there shall come for the shoot from the stump of Jesse, the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon him a spirit of wisdom and understanding a spirit of counsel and might the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. And what does it say that this one will do? So what it says in verse four, with righteousness, He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth, He shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips, he shall kill the wicked, saying, Jesus come to address all of the wrongs in this world, to make all of those things right, to bring judgment where it needs to be, and to establish righteousness in the ways that only he can't. That's a good thing. All the Scripture also points to that Philippians two is where it says that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow in heaven, on earth, and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Second Corinthians 5:10 says that everybody is going to appear before the judgment seat of Christ and the rest of that passage in Isaiah that portrays all that beautiful stuff, Lion laying with the lamb, children playing and places of previous danger, everybody experiencing the fullness and the flourishing of God's Kingdom in the way it should be. Where it says, there will be no harm, no more hurt no more death on God's holy Name. All of that good stuff is a result of the fact that this Jesus has set everything right. He's the hope of the nations because He will FILL God He will fulfill God's word to judge the wickedness of this world. This is good news. In fact, we need this news. I mean, when we are confronted with the wickedness of our fallen world on any level, when we see people suffering over in Ukraine through the violence air, we see the continuing persecution of the Uighur people when we see any form of hatred that one group people or person in implements on another day, this can be individual institution or international level, whatever. We've got to remember that God's not going to leave wickedness unaddressed, he's not going to deal with it. That doesn't mean that we just sit back and wait for that day to happen. We are called to bear witness to the light and life and light, a love that we have in Jesus Christ. And our actions are meant to be advanced signposts of that we're just pointing ahead to the things that only Jesus can truly accomplish. But when we look around, and we see the wickedness that is in our own hearts, or in the world around us, and we feel the way the psalmist does, and we say, Lord, how long are things going to be this way? We remember that Jesus is the hope of the nations precisely because He will establish righteousness, and justice. He's the hope of the nations because through Him forgiveness and grace, and mercy and peace come to all those who call upon Him in faith. And he's the hope of the nations because he is the only one who will make things right, and establish God's Kingdom in the end. So at a personal level, whenever our sin or our shame burdens us, remember that in Jesus Christ, you have that forgiveness, and in whom you will be raised in the end. And when the injustice or the atrocities of this world just overwhelm us remember that Jesus Christ is going to call everything to account in the end and make all things new. The God of hope brings hope to you, and the God of hope brings hope to the nations. That's the whole picture that is in view right here. The trouble? Is it not everyone knows this. And so you can perhaps sense where the gap is. And what that means. For us, it means that we have a calling to make the hope of the nations known to the nations as part of our calling as followers of Jesus to make the hope of the nations known to the nations made remember the famous section back in chapter 10 of Romans. That's where Paul is talking about that point. He says, Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved the same Lord, as Lord of all everyone who calls in the name of the Lord will be saved. And he goes through that process where he says, You can't call on someone you haven't believed in. You can't believe in someone you've never heard of. You can't hear someone if nobody told you about them. Remember that section. This is showing us where we are to be engaged in this particular time to make known

who Jesus is what he has done, what he is doing and what he will do. Our call was to point people to this hope. Here's a great verse that kind of maps it all out for us is First Peter chapter three verses 15 and 16. It says this in your hearts, honor, Christ, the Lord is holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. You do it with gentleness, and respect. Great little Blueprint here, if you just walk through that, the first thing is make sure you're making sure that in your own hearts you have set apart Christ the Lord is holy, that you know who he is and what He has done, and what that means for you. And then it says, always be prepared to make a defense, the word that's used, there was like a courtroom witness, you may be called to testify to these things. So be ready to do so. Always let people know about the hope that you have. It says I can be it can be overwhelming. I know it can be intimidating to be thinking that we've got to share some of this stuff. Look, you don't have to have a PhD in systematic theology. You don't have to have memorize the chronology and genealogy of the northern and southern kingdom of Israel. You just need to know why you have hope. And be ready to tell somebody that say I have hope because my sins are forgiven in Jesus Christ, I have hope. Because the same Jesus is coming again to make all things new. That's my hope, says just be ready to tell people that and to do so with gentleness and respect, not with vitriol, not with anger, not with disdain or condescension, but in a way that sees others as bearing the image of God and yet also in need of the redemption of God. So do you know the good news of Jesus? Are you finding your hope in Him? If you aren't, that's where it's got to start. But then we asked, do the nations know the good news of Jesus? And the answer is no, not all do. But look, you and I here this morning can't address the full scope of that problem. So let's start a little closer does your neighbor know? They have any indication that you have hope, and what the content and source of your hope was. We never hesitate to tell people about our favorite restaurant or book or Netflix show, but how often have you told somebody why you have hope? And what that hope is? Do you know that you have hope? And what that hope is? Verse 13, again, wonderful verse reminds us that the God of hope brings you hope it's a part of a bigger, bigger thing here. Maybe you can think of it like if you've ever gone to one of those observation decks or a scenic overlook where they have those mounted binoculars, you know, you can zoom in on like one particular part. It's fine. You can focus on a particular aspect of the scenery or the skyline that's there, but it's also good to just back up and realize just how big this whole thing is out in front of you. So take verse 13 as a source of personal comfort, please Do so I've preached on that verse by itself several times before, but just remember that it's part of a much bigger panorama, that the God of hope will bring you hope and that the God of hope brings hope to the nations. That's the good news of the gospel that all peoples will extol the one who has risen from the dead and ruling overall that's our hope. And it cannot be washed away by the wickedness of this world, or the wickedness of our own hearts. because hope is the shore and certain expectation that God is going to make good on his word, just as he always has. Let's pray together. Majestic and merciful God we give you thanks for your Spirit, by whose power and presence we are able to bound in hope, deepen that hope in us today. draw us closer to you, so that we may then be sent out ready always to bear witness to that hope among others. It's in the name and for the sake of Jesus, we pray these things. Amen.