

Second Sunday before Advent Enduring Hope 1 Thessalonians Ch 5 v 1-11

The poet Alexander Pope wrote "Hope springs eternal in the human heart." People are always hopeful but the objects of hope can change from one situation to another. When life is hard and unpredictable people need something to hope for. Gambling can give one an opportunity to dream about something which just might change one's situation. This week the world rejoiced that a vaccine has been developed to counter Covid 19 raising hopes that life may return to something near normality and family ties can be restored. Apart from the pandemic people hope for a better life and a resolution to their concerns. Sometimes these hopes are fulfilled sometimes not. Undergirding life itself we seek a hope that will endure whatever we face, providing an anchor point for us as we face the challenges of life.

We are now approaching the Season of Advent, the season of hope. Hope is essential to life. We all face times of anxiety, even darkness at times. As Bishop Robert has written "It is sometimes hard to hold on to our belief. So many things seem to militate against it. But ultimately we all stand before the judgement seat of One who has loved us from all eternity." One who has loved us from all eternity. This is the foundation of our hope, a foundation personified in the incarnate life of our Lord Jesus Christ who said "I am the light of the world", illuminating the world with the presence of God and His enduring love for humanity

Christian hope therefore is an openness to God and an attitude to life and to people. It seeks to bring hope to those who feel they have no hope. In a world where people snatch at spurious hope or turn to despair we need to recall the words of Psalm 46, "God is our hope and strength, a very present help in trouble, therefore we will not fear though the earth be moved and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea". There will be times when we feel down but then we can recall Jesus' words, "I am the light of the world." St Paul builds on this when he wrote, "You beloved are not in darkness for you are children of light ...Encourage one another and build one another up as indeed you are doing." Here St. Paul recalls Jesus' words "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." In St. Matthew Ch 25 we have the parable of the Talents. Our Lord's story implies that whatever talents we have, what matters is how we use them. As children of light we are called to reflect the light of Christ bringing light and hope to the world. No doubt you can think of many who have been lights of Christ often in quiet and unspectacular ways. The pandemic has seen many deeds of self-sacrifice and dedication in caring for others. Each act however small brings hope to people. C.S. Lewis wrote, "I believe in Christianity as I believe the sun has risen. Not only because I can see it but because by it I can see everything else." In other words our Faith and our witness to it acts as a lens, diffusing the light of God's love to touch and warm peoples' lives bringing a hope which will endure during the hard times.