

Advent - HOPE

I love fall. The turning of the leaves bring a blend of yellow, orange, and red with each new day. The huge oak tree in our backyard begins dropping acorns which is a delight to the squirrels and offers such a satisfying crunch under our feet. Each acorn represents the hope of a new oak tree some day. There is a sadness that comes with fall. The summer is over. The exuberant plantings of spring have brought forth their blooms and the vibrant colors of flowers have given way to shriveled brown sprigs. The leaves begin to fall and the cold sets in. Summer will be missed. Yet mixed with this melancholy feeling of loss, there is an excited waiting for the first snow. Cold nights make the warmth of the house and fireplace so healing. The chill ushers in a slowing of pace that strengthens and brings peace. In time, the frigid days burst into the warmth of spring and blossoms. The summer will come again.

I think this turning of seasons reflects the steady rhythm of life. We call them “seasons” for a reason. Our youth is filled with wonder and energy - so many beginnings and almost endless gains. As we progress through the years and spring yields to summer, we experience our first letting go and progress to our next stage. We leave home to begin life on our own, stepping out of what was into what will be. In big and small ways this is a journey we will take again and again as we move through life. There will be many beginnings and ends, gains and losses, joys and sorrows.

Yet, our anchor isn't in any one stage or season, but in the Lord that turns the seasons and sustains our days. Each season is a subtle reminder that all we have will go away eventually. What we see, touch, taste, and feel are all temporary in the end. It all comes and goes, yet God is. He is ever-present, unchanging, and infinitely good. In Jesus, we are anchored into a reality that cannot be touched by the changing seasons. No loss changes who He is or what He has done for humankind. Through Jesus, we have HOPE - a living hope that brings life today amid the joys and heartaches. A hope that transforms us in each season to trust Him more fully as we discover the only place we sink our anchor is in Jesus, our LIVING HOPE.

Praise to God for a Living Hope

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, **5** who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. **6** In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. **7** These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. **8** Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, **9** for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

