

Sermon Notes

Romans 15:4-13

4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. 5 May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, 6 so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. 8 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, 9 and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

“Therefore I will confess you among the Gentiles,
and sing praises to your name”;

10 and again he says,

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people”;

11 and again,

“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,
and let all the peoples praise him”;

12 and again Isaiah says,

“The root of Jesse shall come,
the one who rises to rule the Gentiles;
in him the Gentiles shall hope.”

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Last week, we looked at the first of four forms of work we can do while we are waiting for Christ's return. We are called to *Pursue the Peace and Prosperity of Your Community*.

This week, we look at the second task: **Fan the Flame of Hope in One Another**.

Here the opening lines of Isaiah chapter 11 again:

**A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
And a branch shall grow out of his roots.**

With these words, Isaiah intends to fan the flame of hope in his readers. Yes, the dynastic legacy of King David, youngest son of Jesse, appears to be all but dead and gone. In response to the disobedience and rebellion of successive kings – especially Ahaz – God the Master Forester has cut the tree down. Only a stump remains. But from this stump, Isaiah promises, new growth will come. The end is not the end. New growth and new life will come. God will provide a new king. When we look to Jesus, we see a King described in Psalm 72. We see someone in charge who will rule with justice and establish righteousness – especially for the poor and the

oppressed. Isaiah invited an exiled people to not only believe they would return home some day, but that God's promises to them would be renewed as well.

It would be hundreds of years before Isaiah's prophetic vision would be come to reality. That's a long time to wait. That is a very long time to keep hope alive.

When you have to wait that long, it's easy to become cynical. It's easy to let your gaze drift down, down, to the ground and then stay there. When that happens, you can't just revive hope by yourself. **Fanning the flames of hope is something we have to do for each other.**

This is the work you have had to do for a long time now. You have a vision for what the future can hold... a vision for planting a new congregation and leaving a lasting gospel legacy on the corner of Miller and Bollinger. The journey up to this point has taken a lot longer than you thought it would... or should. And there's still further for you to go. The only way you can get there is if you do this work **for each other.**

In our reading from Romans, Paul mentions activities that help us keep hope alive. He reminds us that **"was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope."**

In other words, **We are to continue learning and growing from Scripture** with each other!

Then Paul offers this blessing: **May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, 6 so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

We are to continuing worshipping God, together, in unity, as God grants us to the grace to do so!

Then Paul gives an important reminder: **Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.**

This welcoming work has a particular expression here at West Valley Pres. It has been part of our DNA since this church was planted. It's right there at the top of our webpage! We are a church...

**WHERE STRANGERS BECOME FRIENDS,
FRIENDS BECOME FAMILY,
AND TOGETHER WE SERVE
THE COMMUNITY IN CHRIST'S NAME**

And this is done every Sunday, but especially when we gather at the Lord's Table...