

HOMILY Third SUNDAY of ADVENT

December 13, 2020

Our theme for Advent this year is: “Our Hope is in Jesus,” so I want to talk about this today. What do I mean when we say “hope?” I want to start by saying what I do not mean by hope. Hope is not wishful thinking. I may wish that I will win the lottery, but that is not a source of hope. Hope is not optimism. I may be a glass half full kind of guy, and that may make me pleasant and positive to be around, but that is not the source of hope. Hope is not a positive diagnosis based upon a skillful examination of the facts. A skillful examination of the facts could just as easily end with a negative diagnosis. Our hope is in Jesus, that he came into the world two thousand years ago and gave us an example of how to live, that he suffered on the cross and died because he loved us so much, that he has redeemed us, that he rose from the dead, that he is Emmanuel, God with us, that he is walking this journey with us and will never leave us, and that he is loving and caring for us all of the time. That is our source of hope.

Jesus works in our lives in ways that we do not understand while we are going through them, and much of this is a mystery. As we walk through this pandemic, scientists all over the world have joined together and worked cooperatively to discover a vaccine that is safe and effective in record breaking time. Scientists all over the world freely shared their research and worked cooperatively to achieve. How many people in this country have been unable to cooperate with anyone? I think God must have had a hand in this. I am not sure

how God accomplished this, but I just cannot believe that a bunch of people just got really smart and cooperative by coincidence. This is a source of hope for me.

In the readings today, we learn how God works in the world and how he gives us hope. In the first reading today, the people acknowledged that God led them out of slavery in Egypt, but now they are questioning why God returned them to their land that has been destroyed and desecrated. They have lost hope. We see what happens when we lose hope. When we lose hope, we become indifferent at best or negative and complaining. Once we lose hope, we stop looking for solutions. We stop working with God. Once we lose hope, we are destined to stay where we are or regress. God sent Isaiah to his people to restore their hope, to announce a year of favor from the Lord. Once their hope was restored, they could start working to make things better. They could start cooperating with God again rather than being stuck in the complaining mode. It seems as though we have been stuck in the desert for the past 9 months. We may have lost hope, but we need to be reminded that Jesus is walking this journey with us, he is in charge and it will be ok. I had my doubts during these past months, but I never lost hope that things would get better, that this was just temporary and that things would be ok. And this hope did not come from wishful thinking, a positive attitude or a skillful examination of the facts. My hope came from Jesus.

In the Gospel reading today we see people who were hopeful. They had been waiting for the Messiah for many years, and they were hopeful that God would do what he promised. Why else would so many people go out to the desert to be baptized by this wild man who was living on bugs and honey, telling them to repent? From the Gospel account, he seemed like

an unlikely messenger from God. And they did not know who he was. They went out to the desert to question him. John tells them that he is not the Christ, Elijah or a prophet. John just told the people that they had to prepare for the coming of the Messiah, and those who had hope were baptized with water. Jesus wanted the people to prepare for his coming, and he was working with John the Baptist to give him this message. The people who had hope could see the light at the end of the tunnel and so they prepared. Do we have hope in this pandemic? Can we see the light at the end of the tunnel? We know what we need to do to stop the spread of this virus until we can receive the vaccine. Are we willing to do it? Our hope is in Jesus.