



# DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

## Second Sunday of Advent (A) – Romans 15:4-13

Focus: *Hope*

### **word of life**

**“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.”** (Romans 15:13 NRSV)

Read Romans 15:4-13

Hope! That is the theme of this passage from Apostle Paul’s letter to the Romans. Whether we are strong or weak, we are to place our hope in Jesus Christ. “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.” (Romans 15:4 NRSV)

Take a moment to think of the Old Testament’s description of those who lived before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Consider the words of prophets who both comforted and challenged the people of Israel. Focus on those who had hope.

1. *What scriptural passages from the Old Testament encourage you and give you hope?*
2. *What individual in the Old Testament inspires you? How so?*

It is the prayer of Apostle Paul for the church in Rome to live in harmony with each other. Paul offers this prayer, “May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 15:5-6 NRSV)

Apostle Paul envisions followers of Jesus having a single voice to give glory to God. “To live in harmony” and to act “with one voice” is a wonderful goal of the church. This goal is not obtained by the work of Christians, but by the Holy Spirit at work in the life of believers.

3. *What makes it easy or challenging to live in harmony with other Christians?*
4. *How important is it for the church to strive to “live in harmony”? Explain your answer.*

Hope is not reserved for Abraham and his descendents, but God extends hope to the Gentiles. This inclusive vision of God is both expansive and radical. Apostle Paul is not the first to mention God’s grace for the Gentiles; the seeds of hope for the Gentiles are planted in the Old Testament.

God chooses to use the Jewish nation to proclaim the promises of God to an audience beyond the descendents of Abraham. Romans 15:9-13 includes a series of Old Testament quotes to support this conclusion. “...and again Isaiah says, ‘The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope.’” (Romans 15:12 NRSV) Although the roots of the family tree of Jesus include David and his father Jesse, the branches include both Jews and Gentiles.

Paul’s prayer concludes with his words, “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.” (Romans 15:13 NRSV)

5. *What does it feel like when the God of hope fills us with joy and peace?*
6. *Describe what it means to abound in hope.*

## **Word among us**

The choir took their place in the front of the sanctuary of the small church and prepared to sing their anthem. Just as the introduction was being played on the piano, a young female adult with some visible learning problems enthusiastically skipped up to join the choir. Immediately, the choir welcomed her and gently helped her find her position. It was abundantly clear how much the choir loved this enthusiastic singer.

The choir sang exceptionally well, despite the various sounds sung by the young woman. She smiled broadly as she lingered on a favorite word or note. Whatever notes she sang, she offered them with great gusto and joy. The anthem was memorable, but not because of its musical qualities. No doubt there are other church choirs with more talent and training, but it is doubtful to find a choir with more genuine love for each other. Most importantly, this choir modeled how to sing with one voice and glorify to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—despite not being on the same page.

1. *What was more important to the choir than a perfect performance?*
2. *How did the choir bear witness to the love of Christ?*

Paul prayed to God for believers “to live in harmony with one another... so that together you may with one voice glorify God...” (Romans 15:5-6 NRSV) When we think of harmony and having one voice, we often think of choirs. So many times choirs inspire us with their music, but we forget the collaborative and prayer-filled effort to blend individual voices to create one voice.

3. *What often prevents a congregation from becoming one voice?*
4. *What lessons might a church learn from an effective choir?*
5. *What role does the Holy Spirit play in creating a community which lives in harmony?*

## **faith practice in daily life**

### **Hear God’s Word and share in the Lord’s Supper**

As we hear God’s Word, there are several themes which ring consistently. Hope is clearly one of those themes. But hope does not come alone; it is coupled with joy and peace in believing. It is God alone who is the sole Source which instills hope in us through the Holy Spirit. We are invited to hear God’s Word and turn to the God of hope.

As hope touches each of our lives, it spreads to brothers and sisters in Christ. By the grace of God, we become a community of individuals voices molded into a single voice offering praise and glory to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

6. *How does the hope of Christ shape a community into a single unified voice?*
7. *What is attractive about someone who has hope in Christ?*
8. *How might your hope in Christ impact your decisions in the upcoming week?*

### **Prayer**

Gracious God, grant us to live in harmony with one another so we might glorify you with one voice.  
Amen

## ***last word***

Pay attention to the opportunities this week  
to live in harmony with others.