

*“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.”*

*Isaiah 9:6*

## **The Hope of a Savior** by Ros Prestwich

Chapter nine of Isaiah promises us a “Wonderful Counselor,” a King whose reign will be one of peace which will endure forever. What an incredible promise! The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob come to earth to be with His people as it was in the beginning. This Advent Season we await our Savior, whose humble birth we celebrate, who will come “Riding on the clouds! Shining like the Sun!”

A humble birth in a stable, lain in a feeding trough, with shepherds as witness: Not quite the picture Israel envisioned for the Messiah. God’s people longed for a conqueror of their enemies who oppressed and enslaved them. They did not realize that it was they who were their own worst enemy. The chasm between Man and God was so wide and deep, because of sin, that only God Himself could bridge it. Their greatest enemy was not he who could kill only the body, but their Transgression against Him who Created them.

Our own sin would keep us, too, from Eternal Life, but for our Savior, God’s one and only Son. On one hand, we seek Him whose atoning Sacrifice redeems us to our Father; on the other, we want a conqueror to bring about world peace, put an end to hunger and poverty, and improve our earthly lives. However, Jesus tells us, in John 16:33, “In this world you will have trouble.”

The uncertainty we live with today—record unemployment, unrestrained national debt, terrorist threats and catastrophic weather—is temporary. But our Hope and Trust is in Him whose Promise is eternity with our Creator. Whatever our woes in this life, whether divorce, addiction, or fear, Jesus would have us “Take heart! For [He has] overcome the world.” Jesus Christ is the “Wonderful Counselor!” When you put your Faith in God, He will deliver you from your enemies. It’s a promise!

### **PRAYER:**

*Heavenly Father, thank you for Your promise  
Of an eternal King in Christ Jesus, who will reign  
on David’s throne in righteousness forever. Amen*

## **We Rejoice In The Hope Of The Glory Of God** *by Forest Holmes*

**Romans 5: 1-2** *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.*

Have you ever hoped to gain access to something, but were not able to? It may be something like the most awesome concert of the decade, the opening night of a blockbuster movie. Or it could have been the hot night spot in town. Okay maybe in some town other than Pocatello, Idaho. You may have stood in line for hours only to find that it was already sold out, or were not able to allowed inside the door. I'll bet you were more than a little disappointed. We live in a society where having access to something exclusive is considered important. It gives us a desired status in our community. It elevates us above those who merely hope to get inside. In these situations there is always some standard that has to be met to be admitted. The people in charge of some of these settings raise the bar pretty high in order to exclude those who in their view are "undesirables". Unless you are a bona fide "celebrity", do not even show up at the door.

When you contrast that with the Romans 5 passage above, how different a life in Christ can be to life in the fast lane. A life in Christ is not about belonging to an exclusive club. God does not want us standing in line in some vain hope of gaining access to His Glory. Rather, he wants us to gain access. What's more, He promises us access. He gives us a ticket for entry by giving us the faith we need. He does not hold out these tickets for only a select few. His desire is for all of us to be there with Him. So, our life in Christ is a life of hope based upon the promise of God. It just does not get any better than that. Yes, friends of the Savior, a life in Christ means you are part of an inclusive club. And after all, isn't that a better club to belong to?

**PRAYER:** Father in heaven, we are truly blessed by Your enduring love. We are humbled by Your grace. We stand in awe of the magnitude of Your love for us. Help us as we reach out in love to others who are lost. Guide our efforts so that Your glory may be seen in our humble efforts. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## Hope Through Trusting in the Lord *by Forest Holmes*

**Jeremiah 17:7-8** *“But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”*

Much has been said lately about the trees lining the Portneuf River. Depending on your perspective the trees are either a thing of beauty, or they are an imminent threat to the welfare and safety of those living along the Portneuf River. Their branches and leaves provide shade for people living or visiting the riverside. The shade cools the water that flows by, thus building a better habitat for fish and wildlife that live in and on the water. And by some accounts, these same trees have roots that compromise the structural integrity of the river dikes and could cause a breach and flooding during periods of high water levels. I can relate to the perspective of the trees. If I were planted near a source of water in an arid climate, I would definitely put down roots and want to stay. After all, that is what trees do.

In many respects, our lives in Christ place us into the perspective of the trees along the Portneuf. We are firmly rooted alongside the source of living waters. We know from John Chapter 4 that Jesus is the source of all living waters. And just like the trees along the Portneuf, our very presence as those who have a life in Christ begs for us to be cut down. For Satan looks at us and sees an opportunity to turn us into firewood. (Please do not misunderstand me. I am not equating the US Army Corps of Engineers to Satan. I am merely using the current situation in an analogy.) Satan looks at us as a fat target. He sees us by the river side and looks for opportunities to tempt us. He looks for ways to weaken our root system. But we know that by having a life in Christ, we can withstand Satan’s attacks. We must stay connected to our source of living water if we are to survive. And we do that in a number of different ways. We stay connected by keeping in the Word through a daily bible study plan. We stay connected by being part of a Grace Connection Group where we gather with fellow believers by the river’s edge. We stay connected through worship services. And last, but certainly not least, we stay connected in prayer. These are just a few of the ways we stay connected to Christ, our source of living waters. Another result of our staying connected to Christ is that others, who are not connected, can see how we thrive. They can see our growth through having roots in the living waters. And this will draw them closer. Friends of the Savior, that is the fruit God wants us to bear. Imagine an endless river filled with the living waters of Christ, lined with believers whose roots drink from those same living waters. That is what God sees in our lives in Christ. Let’s stay rooted in the living waters. Amen.

**PRAYER:** Most Merciful God, You shower Your love for us through the living waters of Your Son. Help us to stay deeply rooted in those living waters today, and every day. Amen.

## Hope of Salvation *by Forest Holmes*

***Psalms 119:81*** *My soul faints with longing for your salvation, but I have put my hope in your word.*

How many times have you seen someone faint? Like in a movie, or in real life. Weddings are great places to catch someone fainting. A person locks their knees, and then it is all over but the falling. Funniest Home Videos usually has one or more episodes each year where this happens. My own personal experience with fainting came while standing at attention in the marching band at a Memorial Day celebration in 1974. I remember it well. The place was the cemetery in Tawas City, Michigan. A Michigan politician was speaking at length over the virtues of returning the day we celebrate Memorial Day to the original date, not a convenient Monday. As he droned on and on, his diatribe finally did me in. I got bored, forgot what I had been taught, and locked my knees. Things went blurry, then dim, and then the lights went out. That turned out to be the salvation from the endless discourse for myself and many others. You see, when the speaker saw that people were dropping in their tracks, he finally decided enough was enough and cut his speech short. Praise God and hallelujah! The captives were set free!

Seriously folks, we do not have to lock our knees and faint in longing for our salvation just so that God will see us and save us. And not to make light of a serious situation, for fainting is not something to be taken lightly. People get hurt fainting. Fainting is not for the faint of heart. Lucky for me I bumped into a fellow band member on my way down or it could have led to a trombone embedded somewhere in my body. But in looking at the scripture, the hope we find is not in a fainting soul, rather God's Word. But what word or Word does the Psalmist refer to? Is it the bible where we find lots of words from God? Is it the promise God gives us with His Word of an assured salvation for all believers in Christ? Interesting questions to ponder over. I have to believe it is both the bible and his Word. For in the bible we find comfort in times of trouble. We find hope for the hopeless and directions for the lost. We find the path to salvation laid out right there for us to follow in faith. And we also find the promise of salvation from God through faith given freely to us. We find in the grace of God his promise (His solemn Word) of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. And there you have it. Salvation through his word and by his Word. Nothing so complicated as fainting. Just the simple path to salvation by taking God at his Word as promised in His words from the bible. Okay, enough of this play on words. And to that I say Amen.

**PRAYER:** Lord, we thank You for Your gift of grace. We thank You for the path to salvation You have chosen for us. We thank You for that hope of salvation that rest upon Your Word. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

## Hope By The Power Of The Holy Spirit

**Romans 15:13** *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Trust is one of those intangible things that is difficult to define but easy to understand. It can be something of limited, or great value. What if trust is a relative thing and not an absolute? What if trust is situational in nature? Trust lost is seldom regained. And losing trust in someone is the end result of our frail and sinful human condition. Can you trust your spouse? Can you trust your best friend (on Face book or in real life)? Can you trust our elected officials? Who can you really trust? That is the question that drives into the heart of every living person on the face of the earth. Our answer is printed for all to see on the back of the United States dollar bill. "In God We Trust."

Advent is an interesting time of year. It reminds me of watching a movie for the second, third, or umpteenth time. I know how it is supposed to end, and sure enough it ends the same way every time. In Casablanca, Bogart always tells Claude Rains "Louie, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship." And then the credits roll. Do you watch movies or read a book more than once? We go back because we might have missed something in the movie or book from our earlier viewing/ reading? We are looking for something which jumps out at us and gives us an "Ah ha!" moment. That little surprise which makes it all worth our time. And that is what happens during Advent. We know that in the end, we celebrate the birth of our Savior. We know that Wednesday nights we will have advent services. We know that Grace will be packed to the rafters with people on Christmas Eve. What about the rest of the Advent story? That is where trust and hope come in. You see, dear friends of the Savior, we trust God every day of our lives that what began on the first Christmas will see is through to the end of our lives here on earth and all the way to our eternal salvation through Jesus Christ. We trust the ending we have read, and heard about for our entire lives. And we trust in the Holy Spirit to give us that "Ah ha" Advent moment. These spring out when you least expect it. They may come in the form of a new friendship, or a renewed relationship. It may be in the form of a new or renewed sense of purpose in ministry. It may also come in the form of a fresh insight into a particular bit of scripture you have heard every Advent for many years. And when that moment happens, you know it because there is a tremendous sense of overflowing love, faith and trust because your eyes have seen and your ears have heard that Jesus Christ is truly Lord. You have a new hope and it was poured into you by the Holy Spirit until your heart overflowed. This may sound a little charismatic, but even Lutherans have "Ah ha" moments. All it takes is opening your eyes, ears, mind and heart. Believe that the God of hope will fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him. Amen.

**PRAYER:** Lord and giver of life we ask for your Holy Spirit to be poured into our hearts this Advent season. Open our eyes, ears, minds and hearts this Advent season. Amen.