

The Substance

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1. The 2nd week of Advent

- The anticipated coming of the Savior of the world or so they hoped.
- They weren't sure. They thought, they believed and they hoped because the prophecies said Jesus would come.

2. We have a unique perspective

- We know He was born, lived, died, rose again and ascended in the clouds.
- Now we hope He will return in glory to take His church home. Amen.

3. Did you ever have a toy (or possibly a sibling's toy) and you just wanted to see what was inside?

- My sister had Raggedy Ann (youngers, plush doll made of fabric with button eyes).
- With scissors I dissected the doll (contained: cotton, fiberglass chips, elf magic & 1 irate sister)

4. Have you ever wondered what faith is made of?

Hebrews 11:1 (NKJV) Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen

- Building blocks of faith are the things of reality that we hope will happen.
- The Substance of our belief are things we long for that are intangible for the moment.
- These things are just beyond our grasp but real and valuable enough that we long for them.

5. Three things to help us better understand hope, the substance of our faith.

James 4:2-3 (ESV) clarifies “You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions (personal pleasures)”.

1. Things hoped for will never become a reality until we move them from thought to action.
 - a. We don't have, because we've never asked.
 - b. Prayer energizes our hope, puts our faith into action.
2. We ask amiss (wrong motives, centered on self [comfort, security, pleasure, etc...])
3. Our deepest longing needs to be a reflection of God's heart.

John 14:12-14 (ESV) “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

6. The misuse of “In Jesus name”

- I used to tack the name of Jesus on every prayer (sort of secret leverage over the Lord).
- “You have to answer my prayers because I said “in Jesus name”.
- Verse means that our heart is in unity, in sync and in harmony with the heart / mind of Jesus.
- Anything we ask in His name (would be synonymous with something He would utter).

7. Beyond that, our actions and works will be bigger and better than what even He did.

- Because we are building on the same foundation that He established.
- Our hopes, desires, requests and actions are in context with Christ and will become a reality!

8. Understanding hope by examining hopelessness

- Utterly hopeless is being overwhelmed to the point that it suffocates the heart's will to go on.
- Hopelessness usually comes from or occurs in the midst of trauma
- In WW1 the term shell shock was coined which in modern terms is synonymous with PTSD.
- Navy seals embrace trauma to advance in rank and their role as elite soldiers.

Romans 5:3-5 (ESV) Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only that, **but we rejoice in our sufferings** [trials], **knowing that suffering produces endurance** [or patience, and patience does us more good than tribulations can do us hurt] (*like steel hardened by fire*), **4 and endurance produces character** [or experience], **and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame** [cause disappointment or let us down], **because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us** [God is the one overseeing it to completion].

Proverbs 13:12 (ESV) Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

9. Finding Hope in Trauma

- First receive Christ's peace

John 14:27 (ESV) Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

- Pray about what to hope for

Proverbs 3:5-6 (ESV) Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

10. Do our desires, aspirations and hopes include others as well?

- Example: School concert and my thoughts for my fellow man were not very Godly.
- People kept talking through the performance or getting up in the middle of a piece.
- The last thing on my mind was their eternal well being.
- The real measure of a person isn't how they treat their friends, but their enemies.

Luke 6:27-29 (ESV) But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic (garment worn under your cloak next to your skin, underwear) either."

11. Are you willing to give up your choneys to your nemesis?

- The well being of the unsaved should always be on our radar.

Luke 19:10 (ESV) For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

- Seeking the lost should be a guiding principle for our life's navigation.