

"Love hopes all things" 1 Corinthians chapter 13 verse 7

Hope is a very big word these days. People hope that the pandemic will be over before very long. They hope that the various vaccines will be effective and safe. And a whole lot of other hopes are bound up with that. Some hope that they will be able safely to meet loved ones again, that they will be able to rescue their businesses, that they will be able to socialise, or go to a football match and, of course, many Christian hope that they will be able to worship in church again without restrictions.

When these hopes are realised, they are not hopes any more, but realities, and we will probably appreciate them all the more for having been denied them so long. I always remember my mum telling me that, when the war ended, she watched a woman unwrap a large bar of milk chocolate and eat it all, ecstatically. The hope and expectation enhanced the experience when it came.

I'd suggest that the great hope of humanity is, in rather prosaic terms, that everything will somehow turn out alright in the end (I think that's Boris's Brexit strategy, actually). If we have a real reason to hope that things will work out ok, then we can deal with a lot of hardships, difficulties and obstacles. If we don't have such a reason to hope, we may well become cynical and despairing.

But if our lives are rooted in the love and grace of God, and if we are living out of that love, then we have every reason to hope that everything will ultimately work out for the good universally as well as in our own lives. God is the almighty creator, sovereign over all things. Although we live in a fallen creation, marred because of human rebellion against God, nothing can stand in the way of his plan for the satisfactory outcome of history. Even all the evil in us and in the world will one day be seen to have contributed, albeit unconsciously, to God's eventual purpose.

We don't see this right now, but we know that everything that God has promised in the past has come to be, right up to the return of the glorified Jesus to heaven. So we have every reason to believe that God can bring history to a perfect conclusion. Paul reminds the Roman Christians that God has a plan to redeem his groaning creation, and our own lives, and he tells them (and us), "In this hope we were saved, but hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what he sees? Now if we hope for what we do not see, we wait eagerly for it with patience."

Prayer.

Father, we look at the condition of the world around us and wonder how it can even survive under its burden of wickedness, corruption and sin. But then we look to your word and our faith and we see that you are guiding every event towards the culmination of the redemptive plan that you have for the whole universe. Help us to live in and from your love and grace, so that we can enjoy the certain hope of the future that you have for us, and offer it to those who have no hope. In Jesus' name, amen.

All these devotionals can be found on our website inghamitechurch.org on the 'Resources' page. Click on the link to go there.