

Lake Cities Community Church  
Series: Advent 2007  
December 2, 2007  
Pastor Craig Schill

## Highway of Hope

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### Introduction – Faith, Hope and Love

Paul said in 1 Cor 13:12-13 concerning the Christian life, “Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I have also been fully known. But now faith, hope and love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

If you wanted to sum up the most important characteristics of Christianity, it would be the trinity of faith, hope and love. That has been our target this Fall. We looked at love through the beautiful narrative of Ruth – *hesed* – God’s lovingkindness toward us. Without love, there is no hope. Without love, there is no Christian faith. Then, over the past several weeks we have explored faith – the meaning of faith, the power of faith to transform lives and the role of faith in times of suffering. Our faith gives us hope and our hope gives us confidence to trust God’s promises.

Hope is our topic this morning as we prepare during this Advent Season. What is hope anyway? It sounds a little wishy-washy. Someone might say, “Gee, I hope I get to go to heaven?” or a teenage might exclaim, “I hope my parents gets me a video i-pod for Christmas!”

In terms of a definition – often when we use the word casually – like I just did “hope” can express a level of doubt and uncertainty – We hope things may work out a certain way, but we are not sure. But, when we are talking about biblical hope it is just the opposite. Here is a definition of biblical hope I’d like to suggest: “hope is a confident, joyful expectation of good things in the future because of our faith in Jesus Christ.”

I would like for us to explore this definition by creating an image of an imaginary highway called the Highway of Hope. So let's get in our imaginary car together and head that way. I like the image of a highway because like a highway - hope takes us into the future –down the road we have a destination. But like all good road trips, we don't get there immediately, but we have to wait and be patient. We have to hear the cry from the backseat – “Are we there yet?” and the answer – “No, child, but we are on the way!”

### **Object of Hope**

In order to get onto highway of hope we have to stop at a gatehouse. We didn't think it was a toll road – but OK. “How much?” we ask? “Oh there is no toll”, the young man says, the road is free, but you can't be on the Highway of Hope unless you have a good reason. That seems like an odd thing, but you suggest, “Well, I have a good career and prospects for advancement, my health is good and my children obey me all the time.”

“Nope” the man says – those things are not good enough. “Why not?” you ask. “Because they are on the non-qualifying list of reasons” he says as he hands you a sheet of paper. You read:

“Hope does not come from yourself or your abilities. Hope does not come from your bank account or your skills. Success at work does not bring hope. Well-behaved children are nice but they do not bring hope. Doctors with medicine and hospitals with sophisticated treatment centers do not bring hope. The ability to run a marathon does not bring hope. Volunteering at the homeless shelter does not bring hope, or doing good works at church. None of these things will let you on the Highway of Hope.”

“What does qualify?” you ask, surprised. “Turn the sheet over,” the young man suggests. And you read, “Hope comes from faith in Jesus Christ.”

You see, you can’t be on the Highway of Hope unless you have put your faith in Jesus Christ. Paul said, “Eph. 1:12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.” In the Old Testament the Psalmist said, Psa. 31:24 Be strong and let your heart take courage, All you who hope in the LORD.

So you ask the young man – “All I need to do is belief in Jesus Christ and I can get on the Highway of Hope?” That’s right, he replies. What if I do not want to, you ask? There is another road over there called the Tollway of Despair. It is the road apart from Jesus Christ. It is not paid for – you have to pay yourself and the cost is very high – it costs you your own life. And the traffic – bumper to bumper. It can be fun for a while – but in the end it leaves you with despair.

Look at our definition of biblical hope: “Hope is a confident expectation of good things in the future **because of our faith in Jesus Christ.**” The source, foundation and object of our hope as Christians is Jesus Christ and Him alone!

### **Direction of Hope**

You have put your faith in Jesus and so you and your family get on the highway of hope and after driving a little way you ask the question, “What direction are we going?” You have just gotten one of those cool GPS systems in your car, but it doesn’t seem to be working right – you tap it and do not see the N,S,E,W directions – but only one word comes up – “future.” The direction of the highway of hope is into the future!

Hope is all about the future. Our definition reads: “A confident expectation of **good things in the future** because of our faith in Jesus Christ.” Paul said in Romans 8:24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees?

Our hope looks not at what we have in hand today – but what we anticipate in the future. The Christian has the hope of eternal life. Titus 3:7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life. Of Christ’s return. Titus 2:13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus. Hope of a future resurrection. Acts 24:15 having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

Hope for the Christians says that this is not all there is. Hope answers the biggest questions that life can ask including, “What happens after you die?” How many of you have someone in heaven that you just can’t wait to see? That is the hope we have in Christ. My mentor John Reed lost his adult daughter to cancer and he told our seminary class: “If you have never buried a child – then you don’t really understand the hope that we have in the resurrection. We have great hope in that hope.” Dr. John Reed (who lost his child – now age 78), 9-21-04. Maybe you have had a buried child, or suffered the loss of a close friend, or a parent or a brother or sister. And if you and and if they had their hope based in Jesus Christ then we know that our separation is only temporary! What a hope we have!

The Christian has this hope – but you will not find it on the Tollway of Despair. In 1982 then Vice President George Bush represented the United States at the funeral of former Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, Bush was deeply moved by a silent protest carried out by Brezhnev’s widow. She stood motionless by the coffin until seconds before it was closed. Then just as the soldiers touched the lid, Bezhnev’s wife performed an act of courage and hope, a gesture that

must surely rank as one of the most profound acts of civil disobedience ever committed: She reached down and made the sign of the cross on her husband's chest. There in the capital of secular, atheistic power, the wife of the man who had run it all hoped that her husband was wrong. She hoped that even now they might get off the Tollway of Despair and onto the Highway of Hope. She saw that the atheistic life did not have any hope for good things in the future, but the Christian faith offered everything and perhaps Jesus might yet have mercy on her husband – Gary Thomas in Christianity Today 1/3/94 in “My Memoirs” by Barbara Bush, 194.

### **The Impact of Hope**

And so you travel on the Highway of Hope for a time – thinking about your glorious future. Then you look in the rearview mirror and see someone yawn. Waiting for the future can be kind of boring. What about life today? Look again at our definition states “Hope is a **confident, joyful expectation** of good things in the future because of our faith in Jesus Christ.”

A hopeful person is a confident person and a hopeful person is a joyful person! Because you are on the Highway of Hope – and because you know where you are going – what a blast you can have today – You don't have to worry about the destination, so you can enjoy the journey!

Heb. 11:1 reads: Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. There is a confidence and assurance for the Christian that is an absolute gift of God. How sad it is when Christians continually doubt and waiver in their faith – that is the enemy's work, not God's work! Paul said to us Rom. 5:5 Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. We

have a confident expectation of good things for the future! And what joy this should bring to our lives.

Paul said that hope give us an occasion for rejoicing! Rom. 12:12 rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer. The Christian should be the most joyful person on the planet – as the hymn writer wrote: Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth, Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide; Strength for today and bright **hope** for tomorrow, Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

No such confidence or joy can be found on the Tollway of Despair. Don't get me wrong – the Tollway can be fun for a while – but at the end there is no joy or confidence in where it takes you. D.L. Moody relays the story of two atheists. One was dying that he appeared very uncomfortable, very unhappy and frightened. Another atheist who stood at his bedside said to him: "Don't be afraid. Hold on, man, hold on to the last." The dying man said: "That is what I want to do, but tell me what I am to hold on to?"

### **Conclusion:**

**The Highway of Hope.** You need a good reason to get on – in fact the only reason that will do is putting your faith in Jesus Christ and trusting Him with your life. You do that and the road is free and clear – he paid for it fully. Where will this road take you? Into the future – good things in store for those on this road – eternal life, reunion with loved ones who are in Christ, resurrection, and for us today a life of confidence and joy.

You may not have known it, but when Jesus was born in Bethlehem – that is the hope that was unleashed on the world – for any who will take it.

How about you this morning? Are you ready to get off the Tollway of Despair and onto the Highway of Hope? Jesus died on the cross to pay for the punishment of your sin – as your substitute. He doesn't want you to pay your own way – he has paid the price. You can't get to heaven by being a good person, being a good parent, going to church. The Bible says "For God so loved the world that He gave – as a gift – His only son that whoever believes in Him. That person will not perish but have everlasting life. Have you ever taken the time to tell God that is what you would like to do? Don't wait until your funeral when a loving friend might make the sign of the cross on your chest – the Bible says that there is a time appointed for man to live, and after that comes judgment. Life is too short to wait – Join us on the Highway of Hope this Christmas season – let's pray.