

TIS THE SEASON ... TO BE HOPEFUL

But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart (Luke 2:19 NIV).

Life has a way of coming behind us and snatching away our hope.

When spouses lose hope, they give up on their marriage. When workers lose hope, they become lethargic in their job. Parents give up on their teens. Leaders give up on their people. People become discouraged. There is no hope.

Howard Hendricks gave a potent definition of discouragement: "Discouragement is the anesthetic the devil uses on a person just before he reaches in and carves out the heart."

When people lose hope, they lose their ability to see and to dream. Despair replaces joy. Fear replaces faith. Stress replaces prayer. Insecurity replaces confidence. Today's dreams become tomorrow's nightmares. Exasperation overshadows hope.

The greatest gift of the Christmas season is the positive proof that God is active in the world. He has not abandoned us. He fans into flame the fire of hope.

- I. **WE HAVE HOPE IN LIFE AFTER DEATH (Luke 24:13-35)**
 - a. The resurrection was predicted in the OT Scriptures
 - b. The resurrection was confirmed by personal experience
 - c. The resurrection was proclaimed by passionate hearts
- II. **WE HAVE HOPE THAT THERE IS NO CONDEMNATION (Romans 8:1)**
 - a. There is no condemnation; the Law is appeased (Romans 3:21-26)
 - b. There is no condemnation; relationships are restored (Romans 5:1-5)
 - c. There is no condemnation; life is sanctified (Romans 8:1-6)
- III. **THERE IS HOPE FOR US ALL (1 Thessalonians 4:14-18)**
 - a. We believe that just as Jesus rose again, God will bring back to life those Christians who have died (v14)
 - b. We believe these things will happen because God has given us His Word (v15)
 - c. We believe that Jesus will return to earth (vv15-16)
 - d. We believe these events will usher in an eternity in the presence of the Lord (v17)
 - e. We should encourage each other with these teachings (v18)