

Bible Study: Abound in Hope/Abunden en Esperanza (Part Two)

Friday afternoon, February 17, 2012

108th Annual Council of the Diocese of West Texas

Colossians 1:4-6, 13-23, 25-27 (NRSV)

We have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of *the hope laid up for you in heaven*. You have heard of *this hope* before *in the word of the truth, the gospel* that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God...He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible...He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him – *provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard*, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven...I became its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. To them, God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of *this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory*.

Questions for Discussion:

- 1.) Mrs. Barrington reacts angrily (though not out loud) when she sees that the upcoming sermon is entitled, "Abound in Hope." This, after her friend Lupita is beaten and "so much is in chaos" and "the world is falling apart." Abound in hope? "Abandon hope would be far more relevant," she thinks. How is this a perfectly understandable and reasonable response, and yet not a faithful one?
- 2.) What is "the hope promised by the gospel" that Paul is talking about? What makes it difficult for Mrs. Barrington to hold on to that hope? What makes it difficult for you?

- 3.) Hope is continually looking forward to eternity without overlooking today. Consider what hope renewed in Mrs. Barrington might mean for her present circumstances in the neighborhood and in St. Aidan's. How does our hope in the Good News shape our living, day by day?

- 4.) **BONUS! PRIZES AVAILABLE!** (You may have already won...) Paul tells the Colossians that Christ is "in you," and that they are, in Christ, "the hope of glory." You are the guest preacher at St. Aidan's this Sunday. How will you help this congregation understand its identity and its call? How will you give them hope? P.S. Mrs. Barrington is going to be sitting in the front pew.