

Romans 8:22-25 - We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already see? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

I have heard it said that hope is the interval between God's promise and its fulfillment. Here we are, right in the middle of Advent, the season of hope and anticipation at the coming of the Christ child. But are we anticipating everything in the days ahead in the light of His coming as our Redeemer and Healer? Or are we dreading some of the events to come and seeing them through lenses of fear instead of faith? Do we see dark clouds on the horizon - or do we look for the Sun of righteousness peeking through, rising with healing in its wings?

What if we were to say, "Lord, I am so excited to see how you are going to bring yourself glory through this mess I'm in!" Or, "Jesus, thank you for never failing to help me through tough times. You came so that I would never have to go through them alone." We need to anticipate His actions on our behalf and live in the knowledge and security of His ongoing presence.

Let's do that now as we share one of my favorite Christmas carols, *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus* by Charles Wesley.

*Come, Thou long-expected Jesus, born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.*

*Born Thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever, now Thy gracious Kingdom bring.
By Thine own eternal Spirit, rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all-sufficient merit, raise us to Thy glorious throne.*