

**Friday, December 1**

**Scripture Reading:** Romans 5:1-5

**Text for Today:** Romans 5:5 “... *and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.*”

Recently, I paused in front of the beautiful matted and framed cross stitch hanging in our living room that was lovingly crafted by our daughter-in-law, Kerrie, and given to us as a gift. In large words across the top of this needlework is the sentence “HOPE lights the candle in the darkest of despairing hearts.” Beneath this declaration is an open Bible with a cross placed on the left side and a tall lit candle shining brightly in front of the right side.

As I viewed the Bible, I was reminded that the gospel of hope fairly exudes from its pages; however, for a moment, I thought that for this Advent season I would have preferred that the cross be left out of the picture. I wanted to experience the tenderness and the awe of the moment of Christ’s birth without the dampening effects of the looming crucifixion. That thought quickly passed as I remembered that the Christ Child and the cross are inextricably linked! They are the Alpha and the Omega of the gospel - the cornerstones of our faith and hope. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Rome, “Hope, based on the love of God, cannot disappoint us.”

**Prayer:** Oh God, our eternal source of hope, we thank you for sending your perfect Son into this world for the forgiveness of our imperfections. Empower us, through the inflowing of your Holy Spirit, to do your will and your work here on earth. May we bring the hope of your gospel to those who are without hope. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen!

*Larry Chapman*