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Hope Anchors The Soul

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Introduction

Hope is a wonderful topic to consider, especially during this season of advent, when we more carefully remember the birth of Jesus and the grace that has been given to us through Him. Advent is a hopeful season: a time of celebration! It is a season of sharing, when we find ourselves reciprocating love, enjoying special meals and spending precious moments together with family and friends.

We are often very busy in our daily lives, struggling to accomplish many tasks and fighting against numerous deadlines, but towards the end of the year, we put more effort into making time for others. We can see this is also a trend in our culture as we attend *bonenkai* (忘年会, year-end parties), write *nengajyo* (年賀状, New Year cards), and join our loved ones to contemplate special Christmas illuminations such as *Kobe Luminarie* (神戸ルミナリエ).

The season of advent is also a time for sharing dreams and future goals with one another. It is when we start looking into the upcoming year and when we start formulating our New Year resolutions. It is a happy time, when families and friends often come together, giving and receiving many things, but above all, love and happiness.

Optimism as a Key to Happiness

However, in order to enjoy such a precious season and truly be able to share love and happiness, we must already have these things in us! We must already be filling our hearts and minds with goodness on a daily basis. Actually, a very simple way to do this is to focus on positive things. Remaining optimistic at all times and hoping for the best outcome in any situation are ways in which we can store up joy in our inner being. As a result, we will radiate positive energy and everyone will want to be

near us. Everyone will want a bit of the joy we have.

Imagine a beautiful flower. When you look at it, you are enchanted! It is so pretty. It smells so good. In no time, you want to get closer, you long to touch it, to feel its softness, to smell its perfume. You want to take a picture of it. This is exactly the image we should have regarding our influence on the people around us. All of us can become like such a flower!

Hope as an Anchor to the Soul

One of the key factors in living a fulfilled life is hope. The Bible teaches us about hope and shows us the foundation of a hope-filled life. Hebrews 6:19 says: "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." The Bible compares hope to an anchor. But what exactly does this mean?

An anchor is something that holds a boat in place. It keeps the boat steady and preserves the location of the boat while preventing it from drifting away. When the captain reaches his destination, he puts the anchor down. He wants to stay safe. He does not want the boat to drift away and end up somewhere he did not intend to go to. Even if winds and waves come, the captain is not worried because his anchor is down. He knows he will not get too far away. He can sit back, enjoy life and relax for he knows that as long as his anchor is down, he is in peace.

The Bible says that hope is the anchor of our soul! It is what keeps our soul in the right place. No matter what happens, no matter what comes our way, we must not worry! If our anchor is down, hooked onto hope, we must not give up. We cannot allow ourselves to be discouraged. We can trust God! We can trust that God will help us, no matter the circumstances.

In tough times, we must make sure to keep our anchor down. If we lift it up, we will drift into negativity, self-doubt, depression, bitterness, and eventually, we might even sink.

Maybe our dream looks impossible. People tell us that we cannot accomplish it, that we are not good enough or smart enough. But we must guard ourselves from such negative influence. We must not allow anything or anyone convince us to pull up our anchor. The anchor of our soul must be kept down, hooked onto hope, firm and secure.

At times, we might wonder: Why hope? When everything is going wrong, when everyone is telling us to let go, to lift up our anchor and give up, why should we still hope? Well, the answer is simple: Why NOT hope? If we have nothing to lose, then

why not give it a try, why not give it to God and see what He can do as we wait expectantly for a breakthrough?

The truth is that when we have nothing, when all is lost, all we really have left is hope. Hope is always available if we choose to hold on to it. In every situation we can choose to be hopeful. But once we let go of hope that is when we really do start to lose everything!

Hope as Foundation for Faith

The Bible goes on to say that faith is the hope of what we do not see. Hebrews 11:1 says: "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

We cannot say that we have faith or that we believe in God if we do not have hope. As the Bible says, first comes hope, then comes faith. Without hope, there is no faith! Therefore, hope is not only the anchor of our soul, but also the anchor of our faith.

Reflection

Let each of us reflect on the following questions: Where is my anchor today? Have I lifted my anchor and allowed my soul to drift away? Have I allowed myself to drift into self-doubt? Loneliness? Bitterness? Self-pity?

Let us not lose hope! As the Bible says: All things work together for the good of those who love God (Romans 8:28). But what does this mean?

The reality is that nothing is a surprise to God! Our disappointments might be a surprise to us, but they are certainly not a surprise to God! He holds the whole world in the palm of His hand. Our problem is nothing. It is so insignificant! God is so much bigger than our problem. And, the Bible assures us that everything will eventually work out for good! We may not understand it now, but God sees the whole picture. From the day the universe was created until it comes to an end, He knows it all and He is coordinating everything for our good. All we are asked to do is to put Him first in our lives and stay anchored to hope!

So, get back on track! Trust God! Let us proclaim this upon ourselves:

All Things

Work Together

For My Good

Because I love God
And He has Called Me
To His Purpose

Yes! God has a purpose for each of our lives! Let us not get distracted! Let us choose to hold on to hope.

Conclusion

Maybe you used to be excited, loving, kind, and fun! But now, you are sour, bitter, tired, stressed, and hopeless. The good news is that you can get back on track. Life is too short to be negative all the time and having no hope will limit what God can do in your life.

Life is also too short to be anchored to the wrong things. Follow your dreams! Have hope that great things will happen! Do not give up easily! Know that God is working behind the scenes to make everything fall into place. Hold on to that dream that looks impossible and believe it's possible. God is the God of the impossible!

Do not believe in the lies. Do not listen to those who tell you that you cannot do it! The Bible says you can do ALL things in Christ who gives you strength. Allow your soul to be anchored to hope! It will change your life!

Everyday is a new beginning. Everyday is an opportunity to start again, to believe again, to renew your commitment to hope! NOTHING can strip you from your destiny! With God on your side you can go places you never dreamed! Welcome to a life of hope!

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