

Anticipation

Friday

“Hope”

Again Isaiah says, “There shall come the root of Jesse, and he who arises to rule over the gentiles, in him shall the gentiles hope.” Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:12-13)

In keeping with the covenants of the Old Testament, Jesus’ birth fulfilled God’s promise to Israel to bring forth a Messiah from the “Root of Jesse,” the father of King David. But what of the Gentiles, the non-Jewish peoples with no religious standing in Israel or the Kingdom of God...having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12)?

This is what makes this passage of Isaiah and the hope it speaks to so extraordinary! God makes a new covenant with the Gentiles, extending hope to the hope-less through the coming of the same messianic king promised to Israel. With the birth of Jesus, Gentiles would have an equal opportunity to enter into the Kingdom of God. For 21st century Christians, the release from such spiritual exclusion may be difficult to re-construct, yet should be contemplated to fully appreciate the joy and peace finally on offer from God.

Dear Lord, thank you for your New Covenant made long ago to all peoples so that they may know your unconditional love through your son Jesus Christ and enter equally into the Kingdom of God by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Practice: As we anticipate the birth of Jesus, dedicate a few moments of quiet “God Time” and put yourself in the “spiritual shoes” of our Gentile ancestors. Imagine the sense of hope they must have felt upon learning of God’s new covenant for salvation. Bring that longing and long denied hope for inclusion in the Kingdom into the present, breathing in the joy and peace that knowledge brings. Give thanks for the impending holy birth and the promises it always has and will keep.