Sermon: **If we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.** (Romans 8.25)

Do you remember being a child at Christmas, or watching a child at Christmas?

“Christmas is for children”; those who say this long to recapture their eager excitement. Sadly lost. Why?

Have their hopes been dashed too often? Have they become too cynical? Have too many Christmas-times been ruined by burnt food, unpleasant family rows, rotten weather?

Fundamentally Advent/Christmas is a period of hope.

Hope is that which looks forward positively. Something instilled in a child, though often with a disagreeable self-centredness. For Christians this hope is less materialistic, more spiritual/emotional.

Israel, as I explained last week, was looking for a Messiah, someone who would bring the people back to God, and sort out all the wrongs and evils of life. For many, this was expressed in military/political terms.

Though not for all. Not for Jesus. Kingdom of God (K/G) was his way of describing that hope. Israel had waited a long time, but now K/G is near (Mark 1.15) – so wait with patience. TEXT.

Two things to notice:

[1] Jesus was not unrealistic

UK election – manifestos, promises, speeches often feel unrealistic - promising more than can be delivered.

Children at Christmas can become demanding - a big box might contain a disappointment.

The true hope of Christmas is often understated; what does Immanuel (God with us) really mean? = K/G.

[2] Hope was based on God, not humanity

A wife might say to her husband “do you trust me?” as might a surgeon to one facing an operation.

The hope instilled is often used of people, whereas it properly belongs to God alone.

It’s not that we can’t place our hopes in others, but that sometimes despite best efforts, they fail. Not God.

Which is why Jesus emphasised K/G, which even today is not fully present, still hoped for.

TEXT – there are times when we cannot sense God’s presence, or God’s promises seem far away.

Hope is what can keep us going in the face of God’s absence, or when God’s promises seem unfulfilled.

What are you hoping for from God? Ability to face suffering, declining powers, death? TEXT.

This is no cure-all, but it is the true hope for Advent/Christmas.