Colossians 1:15 - 2:5. Hold on to true hope.

Last week, if you were here, we talked about my wisteria and how the flowers on the tree attracts bees. We likened it to Spiritual fruit, that we need to produce the fruit in readiness for when people are drawn to us to show the kingdom of God.

And in the letter that Paul wrote to the Colossians he states that the fruit is a produce of hope in the Gospel. Hope is foundational and not to be underestimated.

A question for you – what is your hope? What is the hope of this church? You do not have to speak it out!

I believe that each of you, even if you have more than one hope, would have included for this church to grow in numbers.

I agree, that is also my hope. But Paul has not stated that in any of the scripture that we have heard in his underlining of what hope is or what it is for. In the first part of the chapter read last week he does speak about the hope of the Gospel being received around the world, so the spread of the Gospel is implied. But the hope is paramount for each individual, because it is the hope of salvation.

And the hope stems from knowledge of Jesus – and accepting that knowledge.

Paul states that Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God. Now, I do not believe that means that God looks the same physically as the Israelite Jew that Jesus became whilst on earth – but His character and love for everyone is exactly the same as God – an exact representation.

Jesus was there at creation and, with the fullness of the power and authority of God, reigns supreme over everything. Paul stresses this sovereignty in this passage – the authority of Christ over everything.

He also re-iterates that Christ is sovereign of the church, that He is the head. Without Christ being the central focus, the church body has no use to the world.

It is difficult to accept perhaps, that if you have all the body parts, but do not have the head, the parts would not function. But can a head function without a body?

Quite apt for Great Missenden, I was brought to mind one of the Tales of the Unexpected – majority written by Roald Dahl. I did not read the books but I did watch the T.V. dramatisations.

One of them showed a brilliant man, a scientist of one sort or another, who was world renowned for his brain, the most clever of his field. It also showed him as a husband, always telling his wife not to smoke as he did not like it, not to listen to the music she liked, as he did not like that either, and not to drink too much.

Unfortunately, one day he died, and the wife mourned. Weeks later she was called into his old laboratory by one of his colleagues, who had somehow managed to keep his brain alive, kept in a glass container, all wired up to other machines and such like, able to hear everything with one eye that could not close.

The wife was allowed to take her “husband” home with her eventually, and you were left with the image of her standing above the container, so the eye could see her, with glass of wine in one hand, a cigarette in the other, with loud music playing.

All her married life she had been told not to do something because it did not suit her husband, and she had compromised because of his growing anger. Her revenge was to make him suffer for the rest of her days.

Is that how we can sometimes imagine Christ? The head that sees and hears all, and getting angrier and angrier at things that we do that are not in accordance with His desires? Do we become more and more resentful of losing ourselves, our freedom to make choices?

Paul was writing to an oppressed, minority church. He was bringing comfort in his message of the sovereignty of Christ – but it may have been frustrating too. It is likewise for us still today – we hold that Jesus has authority over everything, every power, and yet so often we cannot see Him acting to bring immediate justice. So is He simply seeing and hearing, getting angrier and angrier, preparing to bring punishment to all who do wrong?

But we see in the writing of Paul that this is not the truth. He uses the word “reconcile”. He states that when Jesus died upon the cross, it was to reconcile those who accept Him back into relationship with God.

That is the hope that Paul is asking the church in Colossae to hold onto. The relationship between themselves and God, through Christ.

Paul again uses the word “peace”. The Greek word is shalom, which does not mean to have external, peaceful surroundings, but to have an inner harmony.

That is the hope that we are being encouraged to hold on to, and also to speak to others. Paul is writing to the believers, corporately but also as individuals. He is giving them encouragement, and that is exactly what we are called to do. To speak the truth of our hope to those whom we know.

To pass on the Spiritual fruit of joy, faithfulness, peace, kindness, self-control, patience, goodness, gentleness and, above all, love.

We all believe in Jesus, the Son of God. We believe that the Holy Spirit dwells within us, guides and speaks with us. So we are well equipped to bring hope to others. Those who accept Jesus fully as the Son of God have His glory living within them. Able to bring a portion of His kingdom to earth now, in our deeds and actions, when guided by the Holy Spirit.

The hope of a personal relationship with a God who does not simply see and hear, and get angrier and angrier, but a God who sees and whose heart becomes more and more grieved, who’s longing to enfold His children in His arms.

The hope in a God where our resentment can melt away when we know we can repent our sins to Him. Our shame and guilt no longer a barrier when confessed, as we are assured of His forgiveness.

The hope that, just as Jesus came to take the sins of the world, so He will come again, to bring His glory fully to earth. Where justice will be served and God’s love become tangible to all who turn to Him, through Jesus.

We of course will continue to hope that the bees come to this church because of our fruitfulness, but even if Jesus does not send them – our true hope in Jesus must remain.