

Looking Back, Looking Forward

- At the bells, do we look back or forward - or both?
 - muse on that for a while!
- Everyone seems to want to attach significance to the stuff that has happened to them:
 - to say whether it was good or bad
 - to have some sense of how it plays out in the wider story of their life, of who they are
 - we want what has happened to us to have some kind of meaning or significance!
- Mention what folk say at hospital bedsides, or at funeral visits, "Well, everything is for a reason, isn't it..."
 - we want some kind of **hope**, some kind of reason for moving forward, for not simply despairing... something that makes life worth living
- Then on the dictionary definition of hope:
 - "feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen"
 - something yearned for, desired, **but not certain**

Romans 8:

- Creation is groaning - our present sufferings - there is a problem!
 - but that groaning is not without future!
 - akin to childbirth, there is joy at the end of the pain
 - something that is coming, but has not yet arrived - more sure than anything that is already here - this is biblical hope
- Changes how we can live now:
 - not naive - this passage is full of the reality of the troubles life brings...
 - steady certainty in security that comes from God's love for us

Begin a New Year

- Begin this New Year with security
 - we don't know how all redevelopment will work out
 - we don't know whether we'll get a Careforce worker
 - we don't know what illnesses will come our way
 - we don't know which loved ones we'll lose in the year ahead
 - we don't know whose jobs or livelihoods will come under threat
- But we do know that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ:
 - shown on the Cross
 - secured by the resurrection
- We do know that the Holy Spirit lives in us **now**, helping us in our weakness...
- We are loved... and therefore...?