

HOPE

Waiting for the Promised Messiah

READ: GENESIS 3:14-15

INTRODUCTION

The theme of hope runs like a thread through the entire Bible, beginning in the earliest moments of human history. Scripture presents hope not as wishful thinking but as confident expectation rooted in God's promises and character. From the moment humanity fell into sin, God revealed that redemption would come through a promised Deliverer. Genesis 3:14-15, often called the protoevangelium (the first gospel), records God's pronouncement that the offspring of the woman would one day crush the serpent's head. This foundational promise establishes that evil, though present, will not prevail. The Messiah would come through human lineage, suffer in the battle, but ultimately triumph over Satan, sin, and death. Hope begins in the devastation of the fall—with God speaking a future of redemption.

Centuries later, Isaiah 9:2-7 expands this promise with greater clarity. Writing to a people facing darkness, judgment, and despair, Isaiah proclaims that "the people walking in darkness have seen a great light." The description of the coming Messiah—Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace—reveals that the Redeemer will not be merely a human ruler but God Himself entering history. His reign will bring justice, righteousness, and endless peace. For Israel, this prophecy reminded them that no matter how dark their circumstances, God's promise of a Savior remained sure. For us today, Isaiah's words anchor our hope in the character of Christ, who embodies perfect wisdom, power, care, and peace.

Paul, reflecting on these promises in Romans 15:12-13, shows that Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament hope not only for Israel but for the Gentiles as well. Quoting Isaiah, Paul declares that the "root of Jesse" will rise to rule the nations and become the hope of all peoples. Hope in Scripture is never static—it produces endurance, joy, unity, and steadfastness. Paul prays that believers would abound in hope "by the power of the Holy Spirit," reminding us that Christian hope is a Spirit-enabled confidence in God's future faithfulness. This hope sustains us in suffering, strengthens us against temptation, and fuels our mission in the world.

ADVENT: REMEMBER THE STORY

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Genesis 3:14–15 shape our understanding of hope in the midst of sin and brokenness?
2. Which of the Messiah’s titles in Isaiah 9:6–7 stands out to you most, and why? How does it deepen your hope in Christ?
3. How does Romans 15:12–13 show the expansiveness of God’s redemptive plan for all people?
4. What is the difference between biblical hope and the way our culture often defines hope?
5. In what current circumstance do you need to be reminded of the hope found in Christ?

WRAP UP

From the garden of Eden to the words of the prophets to the proclamation of the apostles, Scripture reveals a God who keeps His promises. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of humanity’s deepest hope—the Messiah who conquers evil, shines light into darkness, brings peace, and rules with righteousness. As we wait for His return, the Holy Spirit fills us with unshakable hope. May we live as people who not only believe in this promise but embody it in our lives, pointing others to the Savior who has come and will come again.

Advent

REMEMBER THE STORY

PEACE

God with Us

READ: LUKE 1:26-28; JOHN 1:14; ISAIAH 7:14; ZACHARIAH 9:9-10

INTRODUCTION

The biblical theme of peace is not simply the absence of conflict but the presence of God Himself. Scripture teaches that true peace—shalom—comes only through God's intervention and presence with His people. The promise of "God with us" is at the heart of the Advent season, pointing to the arrival of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Isaiah 7:14 provides one of the most foundational promises of God's presence: "The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." In a time of fear and political instability, God assured His people that He would not abandon them. The name Immanuel, meaning "God with us," signals that peace comes not through human strength but through God entering into human history. This promise finds its fulfillment centuries later in the birth of Christ.

Luke 1:26–38 records the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary, revealing how God's promise would come to pass. Mary, a young woman of humble status, is chosen to bear the Son of God. Gabriel proclaims that Jesus will be great, will receive the throne of David, and will reign forever (vv. 32–33). Peace does not arrive through earthly power or political victory but through the miraculous incarnation—God taking on flesh in the womb of Mary. Mary's response, "Let it be to me according to your word" (v. 38), models the posture of faith that receives God's peace. John 1:14 explains this mystery with clarity: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The eternal Son of God, who existed before creation, took on humanity and lived among His people. The word "dwelt" echoes God's tabernacling presence in the Old Testament—now fulfilled in Christ. Jesus is the presence of God with His people, bringing peace through His life, death, and resurrection. In Him, grace and truth meet; in Him, sinners find reconciliation with God (Romans 5:1).

Zechariah 9:9–10 expands the promise by describing the Messiah as a humble king riding on a donkey—an image Jesus fulfills at His triumphal entry. This King "will speak peace to the nations," and His reign will extend to the ends of the earth. Unlike the kingdoms of this world, His rule is characterized by humility, righteousness, and lasting peace. The peace He brings is global in scope and eternal in nature. Taken together, these passages show that peace is not found in circumstances, politics, or personal control—it is found in the person of Christ. He is God with us in our fear, suffering, uncertainty, and hope. His presence brings forgiveness, restoration, and wholeness.

ADVENT: REMEMBER THE STORY

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the promise of Immanuel in Isaiah 7:14 shape your understanding of God's peace?
2. What stands out to you about Mary's response to Gabriel in Luke 1:26–38? How does her faith model receiving God's peace?
3. How does John 1:14 deepen your understanding of what it means for God to dwell with His people?
4. What does Zechariah 9:9–10 teach us about the nature of Christ's kingdom and the kind of peace He brings?
5. Where do you need to experience the peace of "God with us" in your life right now?

WRAP UP

Advent reminds us that peace entered the world not through human achievement but through God's presence in Jesus Christ. He is Immanuel—God with us—bringing hope to the fearful, light to the darkness, and reconciliation to a broken world. His birth fulfilled ancient promises, His life revealed the heart of God, and His kingdom extends peace to all nations.

As we wait for His return, we live in the confidence that the One who came near still dwells with His people. May the peace of Christ rule in our hearts and overflow into our homes, churches, and communities.

Advent

REMEMBER THE STORY

JOY

Christ Brings Salvation

READ: LUKE 2:8-20

INTRODUCTION

The joy of Christmas is not grounded in sentiment, tradition, or circumstance—it is rooted in the saving work of Christ. Scripture consistently ties joy to God's action in redeeming His people. The arrival of Jesus is announced as good news of great joy, because His birth signals the unfolding of God's eternal plan to rescue sinners and restore them to Himself. In Luke 2:8–20, the angel appears to shepherds—ordinary, overlooked men—to declare: "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (v. 10). Joy is linked directly to the gospel. The Savior, Christ the Lord, has been born. The shepherds respond by seeking Christ, witnessing His arrival, and then rejoicing and glorifying God. Their experience teaches that joy grows where Christ is known, trusted, and proclaimed.

John 3:16 explains the source of this joy: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son." Salvation does not originate with human effort but with God's love. Christ brings joy because He brings life—eternal life—and rescues us from perishing. The incarnation reveals the depth of God's love, and the cross reveals the power of His salvation. Hebrews 9:11–12 deepens our understanding by showing that Jesus came not merely to teach or heal but to accomplish redemption through His own blood. Unlike the priests of the Old Covenant, Jesus entered the heavenly sanctuary once for all, securing "eternal redemption." This salvation is not temporary, partial, or fragile—it is complete and everlasting. Joy is rooted in the finished work of Christ, not in the shifting conditions of life.

Hebrews 10:11–14 reinforces this truth: while priests repeatedly offered sacrifices that could never fully remove sin, Jesus offered one sacrifice for sins and then "sat down at the right hand of God," signifying that His work is complete. "By a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified" (v. 14). Real joy flows from knowing that Christ has done everything necessary for our salvation—and that nothing can undo His work. Biblical joy is therefore not dependent on circumstances but on Christ Himself: His arrival, His love, His sacrifice, and His victory. Joy is the deep, settled gladness of being reconciled to God and secure in His promises. Advent reminds us that Christ came to bring salvation, and salvation produces joy that cannot be taken away (John 16:22).

ADVENT: REMEMBER THE STORY

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is the angel's announcement in Luke 2 described as "good news of great joy"? What makes the gospel joyful news?
2. How does John 3:16 connect God's love with the joy of salvation?
3. What do Hebrews 9:11–12 and 10:11–14 reveal about the completeness of Christ's work? How does this deepen our joy?
4. Why is joy described in Scripture as something secure and enduring rather than temporary or emotional?
5. Where do you need to experience the joy of Christ's salvation in your life today?

WRAP UP

The joy of Advent is anchored in the truth that Christ brings salvation. The angels declared it, the shepherds celebrated it, and Scripture confirms that Jesus' once-for-all sacrifice secures eternal redemption for all who believe. Because Christ has come and accomplished His saving work, believers have a joy that circumstances cannot shake. As we remember the birth of our Savior, may the joy of His salvation fill our hearts, strengthen our faith, and move us to worship and witness with confidence. Christ has come—and in Him, our joy is full.

LOVE

Our Response to God's Gift

READ: LUKE 1 JOHN 4:7-12

INTRODUCTION

Love is not merely an emotion in Scripture; it is the defining response to God's gracious gift in Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches that love originates with God and flows outward into the lives of those who have received His grace. Advent reminds us that God's love was decisively revealed in the sending of His Son, and that this gift calls for a transformed way of living. In 1 John 4:7-12, the apostle John grounds love in God's very nature: "God is love." Human love does not begin with our effort or goodness; it begins with God's initiative. John explains that God demonstrated His love by sending His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Love, therefore, is inseparable from the gospel.

Because God loved us first, believers are called to love one another. This love is not optional—it is the visible evidence that God abides in us and that His love is being perfected in our lives.

Jesus summarizes this call to love in Matthew 22:36–40. When asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus declares that love for God and love for neighbor are central to the entire law. Loving God with heart, soul, and mind is a response to who He is and what He has done. Loving our neighbor flows out of that devotion. True love for God inevitably expresses itself in self-giving love toward others. These two commands cannot be separated; together they define faithful obedience.

Matthew 28:18–20 shows that love also compels mission. After His resurrection, Jesus commissions His disciples to make disciples of all nations. This command is grounded in His authority and empowered by His promise to be with His people always.

Sharing the gospel is an act of love—inviting others to experience the forgiveness, hope, and new life found in Christ. Love does not remain inward-focused; it moves outward, seeking the good of others for the glory of God. Together, these passages reveal that love is both the foundation and the fruit of the Christian life. We love because God has loved us. We love God through worship and obedience. We love others through service, sacrifice, and witness. Advent calls us not only to receive God's gift of love in Christ but to respond by living lives shaped and defined by that love.

ADVENT: REMEMBER THE STORY

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to 1 John 4:7–12, how does God's love shape the way believers are to love one another?
2. Why does Jesus place love for God and love for neighbor at the center of the Christian life?
3. How does obedience to the Great Commission express love for others?
4. What are some ways love can move beyond words into visible action?
5. Where is God calling you to grow in love—toward Him, toward others, or both?

WRAP UP

God's greatest gift—His Son—reveals the depth of His love for the world. Advent reminds us that love entered history through Jesus Christ, not to remain a distant truth but to transform our lives. As those who have received God's love, we are called to respond by loving God wholeheartedly, loving others sacrificially, and participating in His mission.

May our lives bear witness to the love we have received, so that others may see Christ through us and come to know the God who first loved them.