



hope

AN ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

Merry Christmas!

Welcome to an Advent devotional series called HOPE. The Orchard Church staff designed this resource to be a reminder of the hope we have in Jesus and as a way to keep Christ our focus during this busy holiday season. Scripture is filled with the theme of hope, and these 21 passages will highlight a different aspect of the hope we find in Christ.


There is a card for each weekday leading up to Christmas plus one for the weekend that contains an activity to enjoy with family or friends. The last two devotion cards are for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Every card has a beautifully designed focal verse on the front from the suggested Scripture reading on the back. Devotions conclude with a question for reflection that can be used for personal reflection or discussed with family or friends.

So, hit pause for just a few minutes during this busy time of year and let's explore the HOPE found in Jesus and the difference this makes in our lives. May God's peace dwell richly in your heart as Christ is exalted and God is glorified. The staff of The Orchard Church wishes everyone a merry, Christ-centered, hope-filled Christmas!

You are loved,
The Orchard Staff



THE ORCHARD CHURCH



ALWAYS
BE
PREPARED
TO Make a defense TO
Anyone
WHO ASKS YOU
FOR A REASON
FOR
the hope
> THAT IS IN YOU <
yet DO IT WITH
gentleness
AND
Respect

• 1 Peter 3:15 •

1

1 Peter 3:13-17*By: Shawn Chandler*

The classic Christmas hymn “O Holy Night” exclaims, “A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices!” The truth of the Gospel is the source of this hope. Believers in Jesus are born again into a living hope—a hope that surpasses the things of earth—but many people don’t see it (yet!). Prayerfully, others will see this hope in us and as today’s verse says, we need to be ready to tell them about it!

We quickly get the picture in his letter that Peter’s hope is what keeps him going. It’s what drives him to follow Jesus even to the point of suffering (and eventual martyrdom) for the faith. As believers, we should not be surprised when suffering comes our way. We learn in both James and Romans that God allows suffering because it develops in us endurance, perseverance and hope that does not disappoint. In the midst of suffering, a hope like this will definitely get peoples’ attention. That’s when we need to do what God’s Word commands us to do: “be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks for a reason for the hope in you.”

We should ask ourselves, “Is anyone asking me for a reason for my hope?” If our hope is in a living, gracious, all-powerful Savior, that hope should overflow out of our lives in a way that people notice. The Christmas season is so full of hope for us as believers; that hope welling up within us should be overflowing and enriching the lives of people around us. Let’s work together and encourage one another to be ready to share the reason for our hope!

*How can you and
your family share
hope with others this
Advent season?*

Activity:

Share an Advent
Devotional with a friend.



THE ORCHARD CHURCH

theorchardchurch.com



Rejoice

IN OUR AFFLICTION

BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT AFFLICTION PRODUCES

Endurance

ENDURANCE PROVIDES PROVEN

Character

AND PROVEN

CHARACTER PRODUCES

Hope

- ROMANS 5:3-4

Romans 5:1-5*By: Holly Joyner*

I don't know about you but it's not very often—if ever—that I “rejoice” in my sufferings. My rejoicing is often replaced with questioning: “Why do I have to go through this?” “What are you trying to teach me?” “Can you please just take this away?” It's only after I endure suffering and see God's plan come to fruition that I realize how He was holding me the whole time.

This passage tells us that God uses our hardships to draw us close to Him. Without struggles, we tend to pull away from God. The enemy tricks us into thinking, “I've got this” until our world starts falling apart. Then we quickly fall to our knees.

God allows our struggles to produce in us endurance—the power to fight without giving up. Depending on God's strength to get us through builds our character and with that character comes hope! Hope is confidence or looking forward to something that you know is going to happen. Hope in God never disappoints. He is faithful and always comes through. When we put our faith in God, it leads to our salvation. With this salvation, comes deliverance from evil. Thank you, Lord!

We know that evil is on the prowl and comes in many different forms, but our God is big. Remember, especially during this season, as stress takes hold and tries to steal our joy, we can choose HOPE. Hope that frees us to surrender and let God be in control. Hope that we can lean on Him, even when things get unbearable. Hope that God is guiding us through this journey.

What struggle are you currently facing that you need to relinquish to God? Remember God's faithfulness in the midst of previous struggles you've endured.

**THE ORCHARD CHURCH**theorchardchurch.com



I will put *enmity*

BETWEEN YOU AND THE WOMAN,
& between your offspring & her offspring;
HE SHALL BRUISE YOUR HEAD & YOU SHALL BRUISE HIS HEEL

Genesis 3:15



3

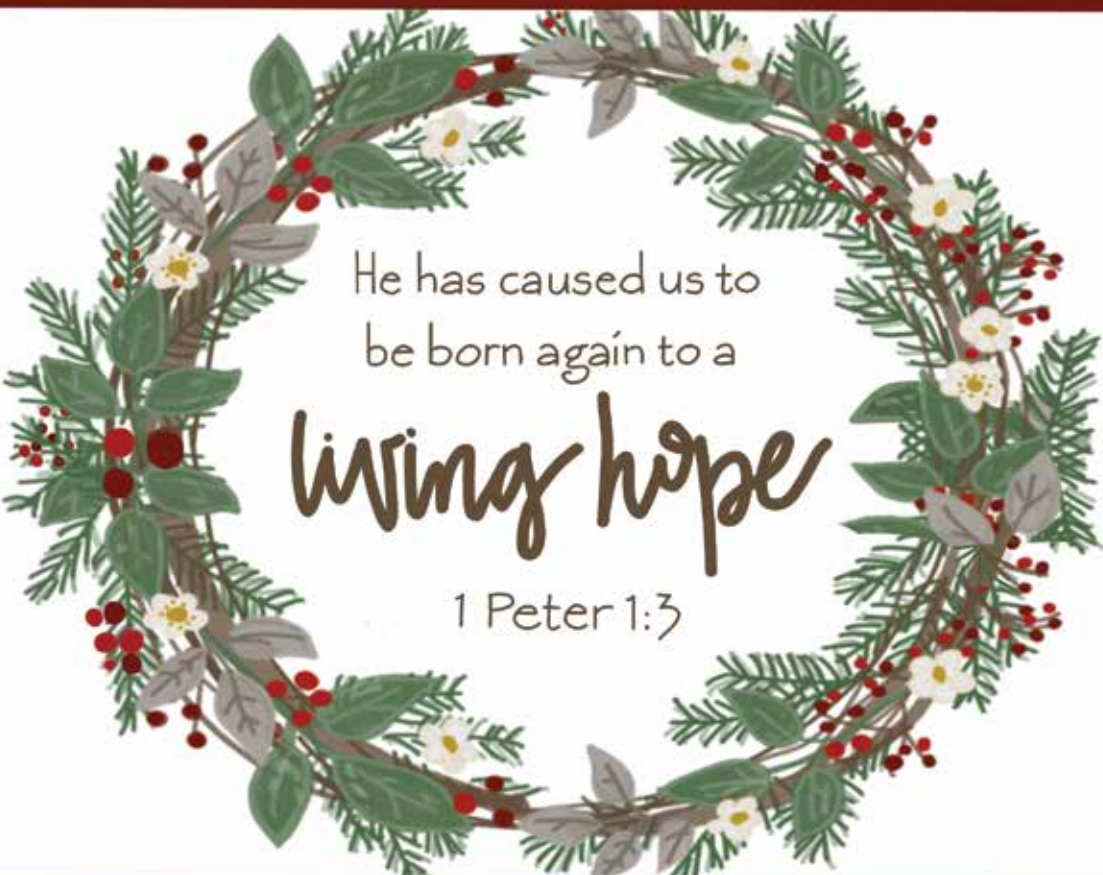
Genesis 3*By: John Nix*

Hope seems distant when darkness, difficulty, and failure are close at hand. Adam and Eve's rebellion came with colossal consequences, and the paradise of Eden was lost. Sin brought war and death, and it seemed that all hope was lost, but God would not leave His creatures in that dreadful state. God gave the promise that a baby would ultimately bring salvation and defeat the serpent.

In 1809, Napoleon was engaged in a military campaign on the north bank of the Danube while the world waited with bated breath for news of the war. Nevertheless, life continued, and babies were born but who could think about babies while battles were raging? Unobserved in 1809, politicians, writers, musicians, and poets were born. Gladstone was born in Liverpool, England, Tennyson at Somersby, Oliver Wendell Holmes in Massachusetts, Mendelssohn in Hamburg, Germany, and Abraham Lincoln drew his first breath in Kentucky. Not many people thought about babies because most were thinking about battles. Yet, which of the campaigns of 1809 mattered more than the babies that were born in 1809? We seem to believe that God is at work in the BIG things and we seem to miss the reality that God is always at work, even in the small things that seem unimportant. At Christmas, we are reminded that Jesus is our hope and he is the fulfillment of God's promise long ago. King Jesus was not born in a palace, but in a manger at the heart of the Roman empire. Unnoticed by everyone except a few shepherds and a young married couple we find our Savior, the hope that God promised long ago.

*What is your favorite
promise from God?*

**THE ORCHARD CHURCH**theorchardchurch.com



He has caused us to
be born again to a

living hope

1 Peter 1:3

At my prior church, my boss would often say, “If you believe in a dead savior that is exactly where you will end up, dead.” This is one of the main differences between Christianity and every other religion, we have a living Savior, not a dead one. Muhammad, Confucius, and Buddha are all dead and if you follow them that is exactly where you will end up, too.

This passage should provide encouragement to all believers because Jesus Christ is our living Savior and hope. We can't earn it, we don't deserve it, but this hope is given to us freely. It is part of our spiritual birthright when we turn from our sin and place our faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. As Christ followers we are born again into this living hope.

This hope is not only a living hope, but an everlasting hope. All Christ followers are guaranteed this imperishable future inheritance. Colossians 3:3 assures us that, when we decide to follow Jesus, our lives are hidden with Christ in God. We can't lose our salvation because it is not based on anything we do, but on the faithfulness of God. No hostile forces can steal or take away your salvation—it will not spoil, decay, or fade in any way. Your inheritance is kept by God under lock and key and nothing can snatch you from His hand.

*When you face trials,
do you place your
hope in circumstances,
in other people, or
in the living hope
provided to you in
Jesus Christ?*



THE ORCHARD CHURCH

theorchardchurch.com



Now the Lord said to Abram,

"go from your
COUNTRY

AND YOUR KINDRED & YOUR FATHER'S HOUSE
to the land that I will show you."

... *"in you all*
THE FAMILIES

of the earth shall be blessed."

Genesis 12:1

Have you ever thought about what it took for Abraham to “Go” as directed by God? He literally left everything behind (everything familiar—family, land, friends) and to go where? He was just to set out and go to the place that God would show him along the way. How do you think you would respond in this situation?

God told seventy-five-year-old Abraham (Abram at the time) that in doing so, He would bless him and make him a great nation. God’s plans were so much bigger than Abraham’s—yet he obeyed and went. And because of his obedience, God told him that in him all the families of the earth shall be blessed (v.3). Did you get that? From the very beginning, God knew that Jesus would be the descendant of Abraham and that everyone who trusts in Christ would become an heir to Abraham’s promise. That’s incredible hope.

So, no matter who you are or where you are from, you, too, can have this hope by trusting in Christ—the confirmation of God’s promises. Will you trust Jesus with everything—whatever, whenever, wherever – and be willing to obey? You have hope. His promises are secure. By trusting in Christ, you are an heir to those promises. You are not alone and His plans are greater than yours. Rest in that today as you celebrate the coming King Jesus (this time we await His return).

*What is holding
you back from truly
trusting Christ –
not only with your
life, but also the
details of life?*



THE ORCHARD CHURCH

theorchardchurch.com



FOR I CONSIDER THAT
THE
sufferings
OF THIS
PRESENT TIME ARE NOT WORTHY
TO BE
Compared
WITH THE
GLORY
THAT'S
REVEALED TO US.

•Romans 8:18•

The moment sin entered in this world all of creation felt its utter devastation. From that point on, there has been inescapable suffering for all creation. Paul was persecuted for being a Christian. Some of us haven't been exposed to those kinds of trials, but I'm sure you have experienced suffering, whether from illness or disease, a family member or friend with cancer, mental issues, or daily struggles with sin and its consequences.

Many times, I'm overwhelmed at the circumstances before me without any thought of the future glory that's coming. God can use our momentary trials to build up genuine faith in us. 1 Peter 1:6-7 says, "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Paul knew this all too well. Writing from a personal place of suffering, Paul had every chance for his mind and spirit to be defeated by circumstances, but Paul chose to have perspective, and in this perspective, He encourages us. He says, "these present sufferings are not even worthy to be compared to the day when Christ will return and make all things whole." Trials and suffering are unfortunately inevitable. But as believers, our eternal hope supersedes anything this world throws at us. 2 Corinthians 4:17 says it like this "For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison".

*Are you seeing your
current situation as
a genuine faith
builder?*



THE ORCHARD CHURCH

theorchardchurch.com



SEE WHAT GREAT

love

THE Father HAS

lavished ^{ON} US
THAT WE SHOULD

- be called -
CHILDREN OF GOD

1 John 3:1

You matter! If you are a Christ-follower, then by God's grace, He calls you His own. You are a child of God! How incredible is that? That's why verse 1 talks about what kind of love the Father has given us. Amazing, right? The Creator of the universe calls you by name as His child. You are loved.

How does that make you feel? For some of us, that image reminds us of the warm, protective environment of our childhood. Yet for others, it's more of a struggle to recall positive memories from their early years. Even if your childhood doesn't bring fond memories, you can rest in the fact that God is the perfect father. We can rest in this hope that we are His children.

And guess what? Because you are His child, He will not leave you abandoned. We shall be with Him. That's incredible. God is your creator. He made you. He cares about you. And, He sent Jesus to be the perfect sacrifice for you. That's how much you matter. That's how much you are loved. So, over this season celebrating the birth of Jesus, get excited. By trusting Jesus, by God's grace, WE WILL see Him again. That's hope, and I am already excited. Today, let's celebrate that together.

*What father-like
quality do you
appreciate the most
from God? Rejoice.*

Activity:

Spend time being fully present with your family. Watch a Christmas movie and enjoy hot chocolate. Make memories with your family and celebrate together!



THE ORCHARD CHURCH

theorchardchurch.com



Christ
HAS BEEN
RAISED
from the dead,
THE FIRST FRUITS OF THOSE
WHO HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP.

1 Corinthians 15:20

1 Corinthians 15:16-22

By: Shawn Chandler

In the longest passage on resurrection in the Bible, Paul has a point to make: If Jesus has not been raised, we are hopeless. But if Jesus has been raised, hope is alive with Him. And Paul says emphatically, Jesus has been raised! And since He has been raised, we who place our hope in Him will also be raised with Him! That is incredible news, for sure. But it's easy to lose that hope when we take our eyes off Jesus. We accept resurrection as a historical fact (for Jesus) and a future reality (for those who believe), but we fail to see what resurrection means for the present.

It is the certainty of Christ's resurrection which tells every failure that the ultimate victory is already won. It is the guarantee that we will rise with Him which offers us peace in the midst of confusion, calamity, sickness, or trial. It is confidence in a risen King that emboldens us to stand strong in the face of temptation. It is His life that has made us alive here and now, freeing us from the tyranny of sin, death, and self-absorption. There is not a thing over which Jesus is not Lord, because Jesus is not dead but alive! No doubt, how pitiful we would be if Jesus had not been raised, but HE HAS. So, live in victory, not defeat. Rest in peace. Obey with confidence. You are alive in Him, and He is alive in you!

Is there anything in life that holds you captive right now? Think about how the hope of the resurrection can speak into that situation.



THE ORCHARD CHURCH

theorchardchurch.com



AND THE **WORD**
BECAME **FLESH** AND
DWELT AMONG US

JOHN 1:14

Have you ever given any thought to where we would be if Jesus Christ wasn't born? What if He was never incarnated as fully man and fully God through a virgin birth? Without Christ taking on flesh—meaning human nature—we would not have an example of how to live our lives today in a way to honor and glorify God. Without His incarnation, we wouldn't have a sympathetic high priest. To be sympathetic to our weaknesses, Jesus needed to wrap Himself in flesh and experience temptation without sinning. Without an incarnate Christ the revelation of God would not have been personalized in a way that opens the door to eternal life. Without His incarnation we would have no Savior.

The incarnation is the reason why Christ followers celebrate Christmas. Without the birth of Christ, the cross and the resurrection never become a reality. We remain dead in our sin, we remain lost, we never receive the Holy Spirit to guide us, we are not born again, and we will have to pay the penalty of our sin when we die. We can find great joy in our Savior's birth because of everything His birth accomplishes for broken and undeserving people. We can find joy in believing that our Savior brought light into this dark world. We can find joy in that Jesus revealed God to us, because He himself was God. We can find joy in that the God of all creation, the Alpha and Omega, put Himself into the place and condition of men so that He could ultimately lay down His life, so that we could find our eternal life in Him.

*What are some
practical ways you
can keep an eternal
perspective and a
joyful holiday spirit
this Christmas?*

**THE ORCHARD CHURCH**theorchardchurch.com



walk
IN A MANNER *worthy*
OF THE *calling* TO WHICH
you have been
called

Ephesians 4:1

How often do you think about your “calling” or purpose in life? Do you question your job choice, decisions you’ve made, or do you long to do something or be something different? If your answer to this is yes, then be at peace, you are human. If God created us all with a purpose, it’s only natural that we would want to know our calling and follow His plan for our lives. Sometimes we stress too much over decisions that we have to make when it comes to our calling or purpose. I want to let you in on a little secret. You cannot mess up God’s plan for your life. There is never a decision that you will make that will cause God to say, “Man, now I have to rewrite my plans for you.” Praise the Lord, that’s not how it works!

I want to encourage you, that no matter where you are in life or what your daily routine looks like, you can live out your purpose when you’re walking with Christ and walking alongside others on their journey to Christ. What would your life look like if you walked “in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called”? Christ has first and foremost called us to be His disciples. Our purpose here is to bring Him glory in everything that we do. We are His family and He wants only the best for us. So, if we are bearing the fruit of the Spirit, and living life in community with believers, we can have HOPE that He will always be walking with us as we carry out our calling.

*In what ways are
you carrying out
your calling?*



THE ORCHARD CHURCH

theorchardchurch.com



ISAIAH 9:6

FOR TO US
A CHILD IS BORN
to us a son is given

AND THE GOVERNMENT WILL
BE UPON HIS SHOULDER.

And His name shall be called

WONDERFUL
COUNSELOR

✦ Mighty God ✦

Everlasting Father
PRINCE OF PEACE

The Son of God, Jesus, who had existed before the beginning of time, came to earth and was born a baby just like us. The God of the universe personally knows us and our limitations. Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." Ultimately the perfect Jesus chose to die on the cross for our sins. This is why He is given these four names:

Wonderful Counselor

"Who is like you Oh Lord? Majestic in Holiness, Awesome in glory, working wonders." (Ex 15:11)

Mighty God

He is powerful. Yes, He rose from the grave, but he is also humble. The name "God" here means the one who chooses to dwell with us. Not powerful and distant, but strong and loving, mighty but also available to us.

Everlasting Father

He is the eternal giver, who has gone to prepare a forever place for us.

Prince of Peace

Ruler of our wholeness. The one whose final words to us were, "I've told you all this so that trusting me, you will be unshakable and assured, deeply at peace. In this godless world you will continue to experience difficulties. But take heart! I've conquered the world."

Let's thank Jesus for coming to earth as a baby to demonstrate His great love for us. Praise Him for all He has done in your life this year and for what He will do in the coming year. Remember that His free gift of grace enables us to have a personal relationship with Him. He wants to be close with us, no matter what, and promises to be our peace no matter the circumstances.

*What wonders
have you seen the
Wonderful
Counselor perform
through your life
this past year?*

**THE ORCHARD CHURCH**theorchardchurch.com



LET
YOUR
STEADFAST *Love,*
O LORD
BE ON US
EVEN AS WE
HOPE ^{IN} *you*

Psalm 33:22

"The reason for the season" has become one of our favorite phrases this time of year. But how often do we say it with a list of things to do and buy scrolling in our minds? If we're honest, this time of year almost always gets the best of us. We go to parties. We shop. We give and receive gifts. We spend time with family and grieve over loved ones who can no longer join us.

There's so much on our minds and schedules that we end up buried under it all. We find ourselves leaning on things, our successes, or even family and friends, as our functional saviors. Here's what I mean: we seek our satisfaction, our self-worth, even our protection from things or people who cannot meet our needs. Even the "remembering the reason for the season" stuff (e.g., songs, traditions, church programs, etc.) can become distractions.

In Psalm 33, the psalmist reminds us that nothing can hold us up like God. Even the affairs of the nations do not fall outside of His command. Our stuff, our abilities, our people, our country - these things cannot rescue us the way we need rescuing. God is the only source of true hope. It is God's love that is steadfast. It is God who can meet both our spiritual and physical needs. It is nearness to God that makes our hearts glad. God has always known these things, and He has loved us enough to make sure we can draw near through Jesus.

So, when you find yourself overwhelmed this season, remember the steadfast love of the Lord, spoken of in the Psalms and incarnated in a manger.

*How is God uniquely
able to love and
satisfy you? How
have you experienced
His steadfast love
lately?*



THE ORCHARD CHURCH

theorchardchurch.com



MAY
THE

GOD OF

Hope

FILL YOU
WITH ALL

JOY & peace

IN

Believing

SO THAT
BY THE

POWER

OF
THE

Holy Spirit

you may
abound

IN

Hope.

Romans
15:13

It's wonderful to visit friends and family during the Advent season. The anticipation of the visit approaching. The happy heart which comes from being welcomed into their homes. We feed the senses an unending buffet of treats as music serenades, Christmas lights twinkle, decorations sparkle, and delectable smells fill our noses and entice our appetites. These visits fill our minds with memories we can cherish, our hearts with love for special people, and our bellies, which will require cutting back in the new year. The welcome we anticipate from loved ones will sometimes come from what we have received in the past. These verses remind us that the gospel of Jesus Christ welcomes sinners and makes us friends and family. We should show kindness and hospitality to those around us for the glory of God.

In Romans 15:13, Paul prays that God would fill His people with all joy and peace as they trust in Him, so that they might overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. The more we trust God, the greater our joy, the greater our peace, and the greater we experience the hope that God has for us. The hope we experience as Christians is not something you get all of at once, it is a hope that increases in its magnitude and in its proportion. As we grow in grace, the Holy Spirit works within us, increasing the depth, the breadth and the intensity of that hope in our souls which should result in us loving and welcoming others.

*Who do you love
to visit during the
Christmas season
and why?*

Activity:

Deliver some Christmas goodies to a neighbor or friend as a way love them and show the way that Christ has welcomed you.



THE ORCHARD CHURCH

theorchardchurch.com



FOR THIS LIGHT
momentary
affliction
IS PREPPING US FOR AN ETERNAL
WEIGHT OF *glory*
beyond all
COMPARISON...

2 CORINTHIANS 4:17

2 Corinthians 4:13-18

By: Holly Joyner

One of my favorite verses since childhood is Matthew 5:16. It encourages us to live our lives in a way that people notice something different about us. When they see our fruits, we get no credit, but God receives all the glory. Everything good in us comes from Him. We cannot even bear fruit if we aren't His children. So, everything about us that is Christ-like, makes us shine for Him.

This season should be the time of year where it's the easiest to shine our lights for Him. So why does it seem like it's getting harder and harder? Commercialism has ruined so much of the "magic" of the season. The magic doesn't come from Santa and gifts, obviously, because they fade so quickly and easily. The magic of the season comes from the birth of our Savior, sent to save us from ourselves. Two of my closest friends have recently said to me that they no longer like the Christmas season. It's too rushed and greedy. It's stressful and full of tension. How can that be? This season is meant to be a time of joy. A celebration of life and not just any life. Jesus, left His throne and came to earth to be truly man because He loves us. If you believe this, then it shouldn't be kept a secret. We need to be sharing the good news of Christ every chance we get, no matter where we are.

Shine your light this Christmas season. Look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. Our "light momentary afflictions" are temporary and carry no weight compared to the "glory beyond all comparison". The glory that we will be in, when we are in the presence of Jesus.

*What are some steps
you could take to
minimize the busyness
of the season?*



THE ORCHARD CHURCH

theorchardchurch.com



BLESSED BE THE
Lord God
OF ISRAEL, FOR
HE HAS VISITED AND
REDEEMED
His people

• Luke 1:68 •

Silence often makes us uncomfortable and we will try to fill it with something. We use idioms like “the silence is deafening.” We try to manipulate people by using the silent treatment. It is so frustrating when we speak to someone, and they don’t answer. Have you ever felt like God was silent? How did it make you feel? Silence was the experience of God’s people for centuries. We know that God is never completely silent because He is always speaking in creation, but there had not been a prophet or a clear word from God for a very long time. Zechariah found himself unable to speak for months because of His lack of faith. Can you imagine the frustration he faced every day? Zechariah’s ears worked fine, but his lack of faith left him unable to speak. Zechariah finds his faith tested again when the family decides that the baby should be named Zechariah, but when Elizabeth refuses, they go to Zechariah who surprises them when he supports naming the baby John.

Zechariah’s obedience shows that he has experienced a change of heart and the silence gives way to praise as Zechariah, through the Spirit, understands that through these events, hope lives. God has kept His promise, and He has come to visit, redeem, and save His people. The birth of John the Baptist is a unique moment in history as God acts on behalf of His people bringing forgiveness and salvation. Zechariah’s son will be the prophet of the Most High and prepare His way which was part of God’s plan to give us hope, and he is no longer silent.

*Is there something
in God's word that
you are struggling
to believe because
you don't want to
get your hopes up?
Why?*



THE ORCHARD CHURCH

theorchardchurch.com



John 10:27

MY SHEEP
hear my Voice
And I know them

Do you ever wonder if God really knows you—and knows you intimately—not like your friends or acquaintances who may only see snapshots of your life? Here is some wonderful news: He really knows you. He knows every hair on your head. He knows the number of days you will live on Earth prior to being formed in your mother's womb. He knows when you sit down and rise up. He not only knows you, but He wants you to know Him, too. Did you catch that? The God of the universe that created everything wants you to know Him! How awesome is that?!

Everyone knows that relationships take work. You can't expect to have intimacy with someone if you don't spend quality time with them. It's the same with God. He wants us to know Him, but we have to come to Him and spend time with Him to know Him the way He invites us to know Him. When we seek Him with our whole heart, we will find Him, and best of all, He promises to reward those who earnestly seek Him (Heb. 11:6).

God is ready to do the work, but we need to be honest and ask ourselves if we are ready to do the work. Jesus said that His yoke is easy and light, but we must come to Him first. Action on our part is a necessity. True sheep hear God's Word and respond to it and live in it. They follow Him, wherever that may lead them. Jesus is the Good Shepherd, follow Him in all you do, and know that He is always faithful to guide you and reveal Himself to you in increasingly breathtaking ways.

*How can you take
your relationship
with God to the
next level?*



THE ORCHARD CHURCH

theorchardchurch.com



Christ

IN YOU

THE HOPE OF *glory*

Colossians 1:27b

Christ in us. It's an inconceivable concept. The God who said, "Let there be light" and then light appeared, wants to have a relationship with us.

And He wants that type of relationship with each person He has created. Eugene Peterson says, "God wanted everyone, not just Jews, to know this rich and glorious secret inside and out, regardless of their background, regardless of their religious standing." So, no one is exempt from Jesus' reach. His desire is for all to know the mystery Paul speaks of in the passage above.

So, what is this secret or mystery? It's the Gospel. Jesus died for our sins on the cross. He rose again. Jesus longs to have a friendship with us and is coming back one day to make all things right and live with us in heaven forever.

This Gospel truth is everything. It means we can live everyday with hope. Hope that one day we won't struggle with sin anymore. One day we will be healed of every mental and physical impairment. One day, we will see Jesus, our creator face to face and nothing else will matter in comparison.

In order to live in light of this powerful truth, we must keep an eternal perspective. Pray and ask God to open your eyes to eternal things. Ask for His strength to live in light of the gospel every day during the advent season. When struggles comes (and they will) don't try to take matters into your own hands or do things in your own strength. Place the full weight of your hope on Christ who lives in you and promises you the hope of future glory.

*Take a moment this
advent season and
reflect on the impact
the gospel has had
in your life.*



THE ORCHARD CHURCH

theorchardchurch.com



We have this
hope

AS A SURE & STEADFAST

anchor FOR THE *soul*

Hebrews
6:19

"This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast (NASV)." What powerful imagery. An anchor is meant to be secure. Picture a ship in a violent storm. As the winds blow and the waves crash, the anchor holds the ship from being toppled and destroyed by the sea. If there's one thing that offers resolute security in the storm—it's the anchor.

Our hope in Jesus is indeed like that same anchor. In fact, this hope is the anchor of the soul. No matter the storm we face in life, we are secure. Secure in what? We are secure in Christ's promises. These promises are sure because we know that they will absolutely happen. And these promises are steadfast because we know that they will absolutely not change. It's an incredible hope. It's the anchor of the soul.

Just as He followed through with His promise to Abraham, He is sure to keep His promise to us. So be encouraged. Rest assured, Christ-follower. God cannot lie. He cares for you. You are His. You have hope.

Over these weeks as we focus on the birth of our Savior, Jesus (The living hope), be certain that you are rooted like an anchor in the hope of His promises for you. It's an anchor of the soul and it's yours in Christ. Sooner or later the storms will come in life. And when they do, anchor down in the hope that is found only in Jesus. Celebrate!

*What is one of
God's promises
that you can cling
to today?
You have hope.*



THE ORCHARD CHURCH

theorchardchurch.com



Matthew 2:10

WHEN THEY
saw the **STAR**

they Rejoiced

➤ exceedingly ➤

WITH GREAT

Joy

Hundreds of years before Matthew 2, Isaiah prophesied that a light would shine in Israel and nations would be drawn to it. The light would cut through a thick darkness resting over all peoples. Isaiah painted a picture of what that might look like; one image he presented was of camels descending on Israel laden with gold and frankincense. Fast-forward to Matthew 2 and we find wise men being drawn to Israel by a star in the sky, riding camels laden with gold and frankincense. They leave home, bearing expensive gifts, following a star.

We're not certain how these non-Israelites knew of the coming Messiah, or how they knew the star was the sign of His coming. But I'm certain they were filled with hope upon seeing that star, hope that a true light had come that could cut through the darkness. And it's such a beautiful picture when they arrive. Their hearts are full of joy as they draw near, and they fall down in worship before the child, believing they had indeed seen the light that would change everything.

Let us learn this from the wise men: true hope may require leaving the familiar, offering up what is valuable to us, and humbly bowing in worship. And when we set out, the end destination may not be clear. But rest assured: this hope will not disappoint. We will find unexplainable joy in the approach. And like the wise men, we'll have no trouble falling down in worship before the Light who cuts through the darkness.

*How has the light of
Christ cut through the
darkness of your life?
What darkness can you
see Jesus shining into
right now?*

Activity:

Get your whole family or a group of friends in the car and go enjoy some Christmas lights together!



THE ORCHARD CHURCH

theorchardchurch.com



For **WORLD**
so loved the THAT HE
GOD gave His
ONLY SON
THAT believes
whoever IN HIM SHOULD NOT
perish but have
eternal life

John 3:16

After graduating from college all I wanted to do was to be a law enforcement officer. I went through interview after interview for many years, until one day I received a call that I was in. However, I was newly married and had to spend several months away for training. The timing was not right, so I turned down my dream job because I loved my wife more. My sacrifice was love in action. But there is someone who loves my wife and you with even a greater love than I loved my wife. In fact, the most incredible act of love is the reason why we celebrate Christmas.

Today's reading in John is one of the clearest explanations of the gospel in all of Scripture. In fact, it may be the most famous Bible verse in the world. Jesus was born because God loved us. Jesus stepped down from His throne in heaven knowing He would have to die for our sins, even though He never committed any sins. This great act of sacrificial love is the single greatest gift we can ever receive because this gift gives us eternal life and removes condemnation that comes from sin. There is no greater love than someone laying down their life for yours.


There are many people around the world who may not get gifts this Christmas. Some of us will be disappointed in the gifts we receive while others get exactly what they want or even something better. But know this—we all have the greatest Christmas gift ever in Jesus Christ. This gift stays with us forever and won't break or wear out. This gift will love us unconditionally with a never-ending love. This gift should give us hope, not just for one day, but every day.

*How are you going
to show sacrificial
love to someone
this Christmas?*



THE ORCHARD CHURCH

theorchardchurch.com



FOR UNTO YOU
is
born this day
IN THE CITY OF DAVID
a Saviour
WHO IS
Christ
THE
Lord

LUKE 2:11

Merry Christmas from The Orchard!

This is a special morning and an opportunity to make memories with people you love, but what does Christmas Day mean? One year I wanted a Swatch, and I aggravated my parents until my father issued his final threat, "If you mention that watch anymore you will never get one from me." So, one evening when it was my turn to pray, I said, "I would like to quote Scripture tonight before I begin my prayer – Mark 13:37, "I sayeth unto you what I have already told you before, watch." Everybody at the table started to laugh, and when I looked at my dad, he had a big grin on his face.

Today we celebrate the glorious Light of the World who dispels the darkness of and makes it possible for us to be part of His kingdom of light. The greatest HOPE someone can have is to be united with Jesus unto everlasting life and Christmas Day shouts we are loved. God loves you, and the birth of Jesus is the ultimate yes and amen to God's oldest promise. Jesus is the hope that was deferred from the very beginning with Adam and Eve when sin and death entered the world. However, there in Bethlehem, darkness, and death had a cosmic collision with the glory and light of Christ the Lord. If God kept His oldest promise, will He not keep all of His promises? Of course, He will, and that is why we have hope.

Advent means coming, and as we celebrate the first coming of Jesus, let us now shift our focus to the second Advent of Christ and consider how we can live every day with expectant HOPE of His glorious appearing.

Today, tell your friends and family that Jesus is proof of God's love and He is the reason we have HOPE!

