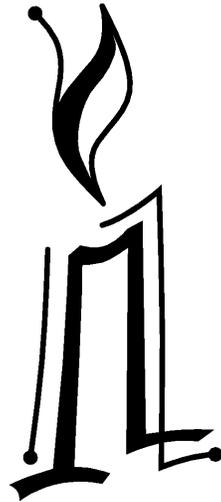


The Gifts of Advent: A Midweek Series for Advent



A gift is given freely and offered in love. In the weeks before Christmas, we often race around finding just the right gifts for friends and family. The season of Advent is itself a gift—a time set apart to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ. We give thanks for God’s gift to us in the baby of Bethlehem.

This series highlights four aspects of Advent that become blessings and gifts in our lives: patience, speech and silence, hope, and family.

OVERVIEW

Week 3: The Gift of Hope

Hope is a word on which our future rests. We cannot know what will come, but with faith we place our hope in Christ. Like Zechariah, we hope for the tender mercy of our God, light in the midst of darkness and death, and the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of our sins.

OPENING DIALOGUE

Week 3 (*Isa. 42:16, 30:26, 11:6, 35:1, 7:14*)

Hope is a candle that flickers yet offers warmth and life.

**The darkness will turn into light,
the moon shine as bright as the sun.**

Hope is a hand that grasps and reaches out in peace.

**The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard lie down with the kid.**

Hope is a song that grows and fills the world with joy.

**The wilderness and dry land will be glad,
the desert rejoice and bloom.**

Hope is a promise of a baby to be born in a manger stall.

A woman will bear a son and name him Immanuel.

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

PRAYER

Week 3 (*Isa. 40:31*)

O God for whom we long,
we thank you for the gift of hope.

Be our light in the darkness,
that we may proclaim with Isaiah:

Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;

they will run and not grow weary,

they will walk and not be faint.

We pray in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ,
your gift to all the world. **Amen.**

PSALMODY

Week 3: Psalm 33:13-22

¹³ The LORD looks down from heaven;
he sees all humankind.

¹⁴ From where he sits enthroned he watches
all the inhabitants of the earth—

¹⁵ he who fashions the hearts of them all,
and observes all their deeds.

¹⁶ A king is not saved by his great army;
a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.

¹⁷ The war horse is a vain hope for victory,
and by its great might it cannot save.

¹⁸ Truly the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him,
on those who hope in his steadfast love,

¹⁹ to deliver their soul from death,
and to keep them alive in famine.

²⁰ Our soul waits for the LORD;
he is our help and shield.

²¹ Our heart is glad in him,

because we trust in his holy name.

²² Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us,
even as we hope in you.

READING

Week 3: Romans 8:18-25

¹⁸ I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; ²⁰ for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; ²³ and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

GOSPEL

Week 3: Luke 1:67-79

⁷ Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:

⁶⁸ “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.
⁶⁹ He has raised up a mighty savior^[g] for us
in the house of his servant David,
⁷⁰ as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
⁷¹ that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.
⁷² Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,
and has remembered his holy covenant,
⁷³ the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,
to grant us ⁷⁴ that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,
might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness
before him all our days.
⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.
⁷⁸ By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon^[h] us,
⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

REFLECTION

The reflection may conclude:

God has given us eternal life,
and this life is in Jesus, God's Son.

PRAYERS

For this time of waiting and watching for the coming of our Savior,
we give you thanks, O Lord.

When the Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words,
we cry to you, O Lord.

For the hope that shines through the darkest night,
we turn to you, O Lord.

For the gift of friends and family who walk with us through life,
we praise your name, O Lord.

Here other prayers may be offered.

Gather us all under the promise of your Son,
who taught us to pray: **Our Father . . .**

LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.**

BLESSING

The peace of God accompany your waiting,
the light of Christ warm your hearts,
and the joy of the Spirit fill you with hope. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Christ is coming soon.
Thanks be to God.

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