

The second week of Advent leads us into a time of hope as we look forward to the coming King. Hope is a curious thing because it's something we all have. However, there is a difference between a temporary and an eternal hope, that difference being the object, idea, or person in which we place our hope. When we were younger, we hoped for simpler things: "I hope the tooth fairy comes. I hope Santa knows what I want. I hope I make the team." As we get older, we still cling to nearly meaningless wishes, but gradually the deepest desires of our heart bleed into hope: "I hope I have a lasting marriage. I hope my children follow Jesus. I hope I am able to provide for my family. I hope my life has meaning. I hope I am not alone." These are all very noble desires, but they also have the ability to disappoint. The hope of Christ, however, is not just wishful thinking. The hope of Christ is permanent and it will never disappoint. In times of failure, sadness, unmet expectations, and even in the depths of despair, it is the hope of Christ that gives us a glimpse of heaven. It brings the promise of salvation. It sets our sights on the reality of the resurrection. And it focuses our hearts on eternal life. Even when the world around us is falling apart, and we recognize that nothing in this life can bring us lasting hope, we cling desperately to the hope of Christ, our perspective turns heavenward and our present situation dissipates at the thought of Christ's return. Come, Lord Jesus, the hope of humanity.

Sunday:

Prayer: Pray this prayer throughout the day. Every time you sit down at a meal or sit at a red light, breathe this prayer and allow God to use you as an instrument of his hope on earth. This week, pray this anytime you find yourself longing for a break from work or thinking about Christmas gifts. Let Christ bring you lasting hope. "Father, teach me to remember the hope of Christ, and help me to be an instrument of Your hope."

Readings: • Jeremiah 33:14-16 • Psalm 25:1-10 • 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13 • Luke 21:25-36

Discussion Question: What is the last thing you hoped for? Did it happen or become as you hoped?

Monday:

Prayer: Father, give me the hope of Christ, and help me to be an instrument of Your hope.

Scripture Readings: • Psalms 1-4, 7 • Amos 2:6-16 • Matthew 21:1-11 • 2 Peter 1:1-11

Discussion Question: What are some things you worry about? How can true hope change your disposition?

Tuesday:

Prayer: Father, give me the hope of Christ, and help me to be an instrument of Your hope.

Scripture Readings: • Psalms 5, 6, 10, 11 • Amos 3:1-11 • Matthew 21:12-22 • 2 Peter 1:12-21

Discussion Question: How can you regularly bring the hope of Christ to your family? Your neighborhood? Your community?

Wednesday:

Prayer: Father, give me the hope of Christ, and help me to be an instrument of Your hope.

Scripture Readings: • Psalms 12-14, 119:1-24 • Amos 3:12-4:5 • Matthew 21:23-32 • 2 Peter 3:1-10

Discussion Question: Do you have temporary hopes for this next year? How can the hope you have for those things be more centered around Christ?

Thursday:

Prayer: Father, give me the hope of Christ, and help me to be an instrument of Your hope.

Scripture Readings: • Psalm 18 • Amos 4:6-13 • Matthew 21:33-46 • 2 Peter 3:11-18

Discussion Question: What hope does the second coming of Christ offer?

Friday:

Prayer: Father, give me the hope of Christ, and help me to be an instrument of Your hope.

Scripture Readings: • Psalms 16, 17, 22 • Amos 5:1-17 • Matthew 22:1-14 • Jude 1-16

Discussion Question: What is an area of your life or a particular time of the year where it seems like you need more of Christ's hope?

Saturday:

Prayer: Father, give me the hope of Christ, and help me to be an instrument of Your hope.

Scripture Readings: • Psalms 20, 21, 110, 116, 117 • Amos 5:18-27 • Matthew 22:15-22 • Jude 17-25

Discussion Question: Why is hope important for us to have?

Sermon Discussion

1. What one idea, concept or point stood out most prominently for you?
2. What questions remain about hope after hearing this sermon?
3. What one thing have you been challenged to do (to put into practice) through this sermon?

Weekly Application:

1 Timothy warns us to command those who are rich to not put their hope in wealth, but to put their hope in God. With the measure God has blessed you, let Christ be your hope, and use your means to bless others. This week, go to the store and buy a couple toys to add to a local toy drive. Share the hope of Christ with those in need. Hope is something that keeps our perspective from crumbling when we are faced with difficulties. Think of someone in your life that is going through a rough time. Consider a way you can lighten this time for them—bring their family a meal, offer to take the kids for an evening, send them an encouraging note, or perhaps find a way to be generous with your resources. Spread the hope of Christ by offering someone a bit of relief.

Children's Corner:

Hope = Believing that something good will happen! With mom or dad (or by yourself) come up with a list of some things you hope will happen. Even with all the stuff you hope for, how can Jesus give us all that we really need? What good things does Jesus promise will happen?