



ADVENT DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

THE CHURCH AT TRACE CROSSING

WEEK 1 // HOPE

“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” –Mark 10:45

Advent is all about preparing and waiting. It’s a way to prepare our hearts to celebrate the first coming of Jesus in his birth and a call to wait and long for the second coming of Jesus in his return. As Christians living in 2017, we are living between two advents, or arrivals. The goal of the Advent season is to focus on Jesus’ first coming in such a way that it prepares our hearts for his second coming.

Jesus’ two advents are strikingly different. In his first advent, Jesus came in humility. He forsook the glorious presence of his Father to take on human form. He who was strong took on our weakness. In his second advent, Jesus will come in power. He will thunder from the skies as a valiant, conquering King to finally and forever destroy his enemies and restore his people.

But both the arrival of Jesus we celebrate and the arrival we long for have the same purpose in mind: *the redemption of God’s people for God’s glory and their joy in him.*

This first week of Advent we are focusing on the biblical theme of *hope*. Jesus’ birth creates real hope for really hopeless people. One of the last words from Jesus before he enters Jerusalem to give up his life is a clear mission statement. Mark tells us Jesus told his disciples that he didn’t come to be served, but to serve, “to give his life as a ransom for many.” This tells us a couple truths.

First, we learn that we are really hopeless people. If Jesus comes to ransom us, then we are slaves. We aren’t just people with flaws that need a little modification. We don’t just struggle with sin. We are slaves to sin (Rom. 6:16-18). We don’t just have a little devil sitting on our shoulder influencing us to do bad things sometimes. We are slaves to Satan. We are really hopeless and helpless people who are naturally incapable of living righteous lives (Rom. 3:20). We don’t just need a spiritual teacher or leader. We need a Redeemer. We need someone to rescue us out of slavery and to deliver us from a dominion of darkness.

Second, we learn that Jesus brings real hope. When Jesus was

born, the world wasn't merely gifted another powerful spiritual teacher or prophet. Real hope was born in Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago. In that lowly stable, God himself took on flesh to rescue us from slavery by dying in our place. Through his death and resurrection, our chains are undone and we are set free to live as sons and daughters, rightful heirs of an eternal kingdom (Gal. 4:4-6). We have every reason to hope because Jesus was born to die. He came to serve. He came to give his life as a ransom for many.

A dark cloud of sorrow may be hovering over you at the end of 2017. Life may not seem or feel very hopeful. If so, I pray you will look in hope to Christ. He has come into the world to redeem you from everything that would keep you from eternal peace, righteousness, and joy. May his light penetrate your darkness.

ADVENT PRAYER FOCUS

This Advent season we are praying for unreached people groups. An unreached people group is identified as a people group that has absolute minimal access to the gospel. Each week we will pray for a different unreached people group.

People Group // The Shaikh (pronounced "shake") peoples of Bangladesh

Population // 80,024,000

Number of Christians // Very few believers

Language // Urdu

Main Religion // Islam

Prayer Point // That God would reveal himself and his people would sacrifice to penetrate this people with the gospel.

ADVENT APPLICATION

Encourage someone this week with the hope of the gospel.

Evaluate your heart. What makes you feel hopeless? Do you have hope? Is it Christ-centered?

Express your hope in Jesus. Draw a picture representing how Jesus brings you hope. Display it in your home this Christmas.

ADVENT CATECHESIS // WEEK 1

[The Lighthouse Catechism]

Q 42. What is our only hope in life and death?

A. Our only hope in life and death is that we are not our own but belong to God in Christ.



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