

Hope Candle

Hope in His Coming...

Background & Scripture

There are several “hopes” associated with Advent.

The first is that of darkness changing to light. In ancient times, this was a literal, physical hope—that the days would stop getting shorter, and that the warmth of spring would return. Now we know that that was only a symbol of Christ’s coming to remove the darkness of sin.

Scripture

1. So the LORD will comfort Zion.
He will comfort all those who live among its ruins.
He will make its desert like Eden.
He will make its wilderness like the garden of the LORD.
Joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the sound of singing.
Pay attention to me, my people.
Open your ears to hear me, my nation.
My teachings will go out from me.
My justice will become a light for the people.
My righteousness is near.

My salvation is on the way.
I will bring justice to people
Isaiah 51: 3-5a

2. Arise! Shine! Your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD has dawned.
Darkness now covers the earth,
and thick darkness covers the nations.
But the LORD dawns,
and his glory appears over you.
Nations will come to your light,
and kings will come to the brightness of
your dawn.
Isaiah 60:1-3

**The prevailing hope seen in
the Old Testament** is that of
the hope of God's Messiah
coming to save God's people.

Scripture

1. "Comfort my people! Comfort them!"
says your God. "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and
announce to it
that its time of hard labor is over
and its wrongs have been paid for.
It has received from the LORD double for
its sins."

A voice cried in the desert:
"Clear a way for the LORD.
Make a straight highway in the wilderness
for our God.

Every valley will be raised.
Every mountain and hill will be lowered.
Steep places will be made level.
Rough places will be made smooth.
Then the LORD's glory will be revealed
and all the people will see it together.
The LORD has spoken."
Isaiah 40: 1-5

2. Here is my servant
whom I have chosen, whom I love, and in
whom I delight.
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will announce justice to the nations.
He will not quarrel or shout,

and no one will hear his voice in the streets.
He will not break off a damaged cattail.
He will not even put out a smoking wick
until he has made justice victorious.
The nations will have hope because of him.
Matthew 12: 18-21

**As we move into the New
Testament**, with the hope of the
Messiah having been fulfilled,
scripture turns to our hope of
being with him. There hope is
sometimes used as shorthand
for our ultimate salvation, that
is, joining Jesus after death.

Scripture

1. Since we belong to the day we must be
sober. We must put on faith and love as a
breastplate and the hope of salvation as a helmet.
I Thessalonians 5: 18

2. We do know that when Christ appears,
we will be like him because we shall see him as
he is. So all people who have this confidence in
Christ keep themselves pure as Christ is pure.
I John 3: 2b-3

Since Jesus's death, we now also have the **hope of his return**, the Second Advent.

Scripture

1. After he had said this, he was taken to heaven. A cloud hid him so that they could no longer see him.

They were staring into the sky as he departed. Suddenly two men in white clothes stood near them. They asked, "Why are you men from Galilee standing here looking at the sky? Jesus, who was taken from you to heaven, will come back in the same way that you saw him go into heaven.

Acts 9-11

2. He said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord God of the spirits of the prophets has sent his angel to show his servants the things that must happen soon. I'm coming soon! Blessed is the one who follows the words of prophecy in this book."

Revelation 22: 6-7

Service

Suggested Music

1) *Emanuel*

Music: Bob McGee

Text: Bob McGee, c1978

2) *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*

Music: Rowland H. Pritchard

Text: Charles Wesley

3) *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*

Music: Adapted from Plainsong by Thomas Helmore

Text: Adapted from the Latin Hymn *Psalterium Cantionum Catholicorum*, 1710)

4) *Lo! How a Rose E'er Blooming*

Music: *Geistliche Kirchengesäng*

Text: German carol, 16th century

Prayer for Illumination

God, who gives the light of the sun to the earth, and who gave us your Son Jesus, who is the Light of the World, grant us the light of understanding in this blessed season. May our rejoicing over hope fulfilled in the past prepare us for confidence in your future promises.

Thank you that we have seen the great hope of humanity fulfilled in Jesus' coming. We rejoice in the promise of the hope of his return, and of going to be with him for eternity.

Bless now this ceremony [service], that the symbolism of the wreath and the candles may become truth indeed in our lives. Make this Christmas season one of meaning, worship, and awe. We praise you and thank you for the overwhelming gift of Jesus Christ, and for your salvation. Amen

Drama/Something for Kids

Voice 1: Hi!

Voice2: HI, yourself!

Voice 1: Do you know why we're here today?

Voice2 : Because it's Sunday.

Voice 1: No, I mean, why are we up here?

Voice 2: Up here? Oh-h-h-h, you mean everybody's watching us!

Voice 1: Right! Do you know why?

Voice 2: Because we're cute?

Voice 1: Well, that too, of course. But we're here to talk about hope.

Voice 2: I hope we don't have to be up here too long!

Voice 1: What does hope mean?

Voice 2: It means I want something to happen.

Voice 1: That's one meaning. Can you give me an example?

Voice 2: I hope we don't have leftovers for supper tonight.

Voice 1: Go on.

Voice 2: Um... I hope I get [INSERT THE NAME OF THE SEASON'S HOT TOY] for Christmas.

Voice 1: You can hope! Let's change gears just a little. Tell everyone your hope involving Dad tonight.

Voice 2: [HAPPILY] I hope Dad remembers to go to McDonalds tonight!

Voice 1: Is Dad usually trustworthy?

Voice 2: Of course! He's Dad.

Voice 1: Then that leads us to our next definition. When hope involves a person, it often means trust. So when you say 'I hope Dad remembers to go to McDonalds,' I can say, 'He will, he promised.' And because we know Dad keeps his promises, we can trust him to stop there. Can you think of some other times when hope means trust?

Voice 2: I hope Pastor _____ preaches a good sermon today.

Voice 1: [LAUGHING] Good! And just like we can trust Dad or Pastor, because we know what they have done in the past, we can also trust that God will keep his promises, because he has always kept them in the past.

Voice 2: But God is so big, and I'm so little.

Voice 1: God kept all his promises to Israel. He promised them that a Messiah—someone to save them—would come, and the Messiah did come.

Voice 2: That's Jesus!

Voice 1: Right. God kept his promises in the Bible, and he will keep his promises to you, too. God gave us the best present of all, his Son, so that we could live with him always. And we trust him to keep his word.

Voice 2: That's great, but I still want a [INSERT HOT TOY NAME HERE].

Voice 1: Yep, I can always trust you to be silly!

Voice 2: Hey!

The candle lighting

Today is the first Sunday of Advent. Advent means “coming” and for the next four weeks, we are preparing our hearts and minds to celebrate Jesus’ coming. We celebrate both his fulfilling of Old Testament prophecy and his coming again.

The Advent wreath represents God’s love. It is a never-ending circle, as God’s love is never-ending. It is made of evergreen to symbolize the living love of God. The candles represent Jesus, the light of the world. Three of the candles are purple for the majesty of Jesus. This first candle, the candle of hope, or of expectation or prophecy, is one of the purple ones.

The Jews of the Old Testament hoped for the Messiah, whose birth we celebrate at this season. The people of the New Testament hoped to be with Jesus forever, as well as hoping for his return. Today we still hope for these things. [LIGHT CANDLE]

“There is a saying, ‘Hope lights a candle instead of cursing the darkness.’ But you say, ‘I’ve lost the match.’ It is God that has the match, strikes it, and lights the candle for you.” (*Sermon by Lorraine Watson at Friends Memorial Church, Dec. 2000*)

Of all the words associated with Advent, only hope is transient. When hope is fulfilled, it stops being hope, and turns instead to joy or thankfulness.

Prayer

Thank you God, for fulfilling your promises in the past. Thank you for sending the Light of the World to save us from our sins. Thank you for giving us hope in this dark world, especially the hope of Jesus coming again, and that we will live with you always.

May we spread the hope you give us to others, especially at this busy time of year. May we serve as beacons of hope to those who have not seen the light of Christ. Let us always remember to light our candle of hope rather than curse the darkness. Amen

Responsive Reading

Wait with Hope

*(Psalm 33: 18-22, Psalm 147: 11, Colossians 1: 27,
I Corinthians 13: 13a)*

LEADER 1

The LORD's eyes are on those who fear him,

LEADER 2

on those who wait with hope for his mercy

LEADER 1

to rescue their souls from death

LEADER 2

and keep them alive during a famine.

ALL

We wait for the LORD.

LEADER 1

He is our help and our shield.

ALL

In him our hearts find joy.

LEADER 2

In his holy name we trust.

ALL

Let your mercy rest on us, O Lord, since we wait with hope for you.

LEADER 1

The LORD is pleased with those who fear him,

ALL

with those who wait with hope for his mercy.

LEADER 2

Yet the strength of those who wait and hope in the LORD will be renewed.

ALL

They will soar on wings like eagles.

LEADER 1

They will run and won't become weary.

LEADER 2

They will walk and won't grow tired.

BOTH LEADERS

God wanted his people throughout the world to know the glorious riches of this mystery—which is Christ living in you, giving you the hope of glory.

ALL

So these three things remain: faith, hope, and love.

Conclusion/Benediction

May God, the source of hope, fill you with joy and peace through your faith in him. Then you will overflow with love by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 15: 13)