

November 30, 2025

**God's Good News Story: The Church Alive & Growing
Advent Sunday 1**

Grace-Fueled, Hope Focused Gratitude

Today is unique: We are moving from Celebrating Thanksgiving into our Advent Celebration. Advent is a word that describes the arrival of a notable person, thing or event. We are using the term in the traditional sense of the Four Sundays that precedes the Celebration of Christ's birth. During this important event on the church calendar, each week of Advent focuses on a different theme - hope, peace, joy, and love. Christians from all denominations and backgrounds celebrate Advent in different ways but all focus on the anticipation of waiting for the arrival of Jesus. Now I think we all have come to realize that we cannot be 100% sure the exact day of Christ's birth, but we are 100% sure that He was born, lived, died, rose again and is coming again.

So, today we are merging Thanksgiving and Advent into one Hope-Focused Celebration.

Thanksgiving reminds us to pause and give thanks for God's blessings.

Advent points us forward with hope, anticipating Christ's coming.

Today we unite these themes: gratitude that is fueled not by circumstance, but by grace—and hope that anchors us in Christ.

Gratitude that is Grace-Fueled and Hope Focused

Let's start by reading together this marvelous passage on Thanksgiving from **Psalm 100**...

Psalm 100:1-5... ¹*Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.* ²*Serve the LORD with gladness: come before His presence with singing.* ³*Know ye that the LORD He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.* ⁴*Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name.* ⁵*For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations.*

As we have just completed our series of 1st & 2nd Corinthians, it is appropriate to revisit a passage that applies well to our topic today...

2 Corinthians 9:8, 15 – *“And God is able to make all GRACE abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. THANKS be to God for His inexpressible GIFT!”*

Now let's tie it together with a passage from our next Book of the Bible we will study next Year...Romans

Romans 15:12, 13 – ¹²*Isaiah says, “THERE SHALL COME ONE FROM THE ROOT OF JESSE, AND HE WHO ARISES TO RULE OVER THE GENTILES, IN HIM SHALL THE GENTILES HOPE.”* ¹³*Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

We put these together to reveal a...

“Gratitude that is Grace-Fueled and Hope Focused”

1. Thanksgiving: Grace-Fueled Gratitude Where We Remember God's Faithfulness

Thanksgiving often focuses on material blessings—food, family, health. But Psalm 100 calls us to combine joy, worship, service and thankfulness to a God who is Good and the Source of Eternal Truth.

Thankful Gratitude is not just a polite response; it's an Act of Worship and Spiritual Discipline. When we pause to give thanks, we acknowledge that every good gift comes from God.

Paul, in both 1 Corinthians and Romans, reminds us that gratitude flows from the Gift of Grace. This Grace-Fueled Gratitude produces Hope, Joy and Peace. When we see life through grace, gratitude becomes a way of life—even in the difficult times of life.

2. Advent: Hope-Focused Gratitude Where We Anticipate Christ's Coming

Just as Thanksgiving looks back, Advent looks forward — both are anchored in the same faithful God. A Grace-Fueled Understanding of Advent produces a Hope-Focused Anticipation of Christ's Coming.

Rom. 15:12–13... *“The root of Jesse will spring up... in Him the Gentiles will hope. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him.”*

Advent is about waiting—not passively, but with expectation.

- Hope is not wishful thinking; it is confident assurance rooted in God's promises.
- Just as we anticipate Christmas morning with joy, we anticipate Christ's return with certainty. Advent begins with hope: the hope that Christ has come, and the hope that He will come again.

Advent is the season of hope: Christ has come, Christ will come again.

- Grace fuels hope because it assures us of God's faithfulness.
- Gratitude looks back at what God has done; hope looks forward to what He will do. Together, they form a rhythm of Christian life: remembering and anticipating.
- In Old Testament times Israel waited in faith and remembered God's past deliverance. They also waited in anticipation and Hope for the promised Messiah.
- Today for us, Advent reminds us: Christ has come, Christ will come again. Grace fuels hope because it assures us of God's faithfulness.
- Gratitude looks back; hope looks forward.

A farmer gives thanks for the harvest, but also plants seed in hope for the next season. Gratitude and hope are two sides of the same coin.

3. Living Between Thanksgiving and Advent

Thanksgiving teaches us to look back with gratitude. Advent teaches us to look forward with hope. Together, they shape how we live in the present: thankful hearts, hopeful spirits. Thanksgiving without hope can become nostalgic & shallow. Hope without thanksgiving can become mere restless longing. But together, gratitude and hope, anchor us in Christ. Gratitude looks back at God's faithfulness; hope looks forward to God's promises — together they shape our worship and our lives.

Gratitude is not seasonal—it's a lifestyle.
Hope is not wishful thinking—it's confident expectation.
When grace fuels both, we live differently:
We forgive because we've been forgiven.
We give generously because we've received abundantly.
We endure trials because hope anchors us beyond them.
Grace empowers us to forgive, give, and endure.

Live with both gratitude and hope. Let your thanksgiving be more than a holiday—it should be a lifestyle. And let your hope be more than a candle on the Advent table—it should be the anchor of your soul.

Call to action: As we move into this Advent Season give thanks not only for what God has done, but also for what He has promised. When we remember what God has done, it strengthens our confidence in what He will do. Thanksgiving is the soil in which Advent hope grows. In Christ, we give thanks for salvation, and that gratitude sustains our hope for His return.