

Slide 1 Image: Introduction: Advent 1—The Season of Hope

Slide 2: Micah 5:2 Tells Us Who Was Waiting in Hope.

Romans 15:4 tells us why the Scriptures give believers hope.

Here we are, the first Sunday of December, the beginning of the season known as Advent.

It's a season that has been observed by the church, in one form or another, for more than 1600 years. This morning Joyce and Donna lit the first candle on the advent wreath, known as the candle of Hope.

Today we'll begin a five-part series of messages dealing with the season of Advent; we'll look at Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and conclude with a Christmas Eve message, centred on Christ.

Micah 5:2 paints the picture of the Messiah's humble origin, and Romans 15:4 reminds us why these ancient words matter to us today.

It's our goal to rediscover the Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Christ of Christmas.

Slide 3: This Is a Season of Hope. Advent Is All About Hope.

Christian Hope is not merely wishful thinking — it's a confident expectation built on God's promises. Romans 15:4 reminds us:

"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope."

Christian Hope is not rooted in circumstances — it's rooted in Christ. Advent restores the believer's confidence that God always keeps His promises.

Christian Hope is not a concept — it is a person. His name is Jesus.

Believers don't hope for something—**they hope in Someone.**

That Hope has come. That Hope is here. That Hope is coming again.

Though the shepherds in Jesus' day were ordinary, overlooked and forgotten by society, they were the first to hear the good news of Jesus birth.

Why? Because hope is not reserved for the powerful — it's given to the humble, the waiting, the believing.

Advent marks the beginning of the Christian year, a season wrapped not in tinsel or commercial glitter, but in expectancy, longing, and hope.

Slide 4: Advent Means "Coming Or "Arrival," — it looks back to Jesus' first coming in Bethlehem, and it looks forward with anticipation to His second coming in glory.

Advent is not just an extension of Christmas, it's a season that links the past, present, and future.

Advent is not simply a countdown to Christmas, but a season of deliberate and active waiting.

Advent offers us the opportunity to share in the ancient longing for the coming of the Messiah, to celebrate His birth, and to be alert for His second coming.

It's a time for quiet reflection amidst the world's noise, and for remembering that we are people who wait for someone.

So wherever you are this morning on your 2025 spiritual journey, I pray this season of Advent will be meaningful for you.

Slide 5: In these difficult times, we need hope, real hope. **Hope Makes the Difference Between Making It or Not.**

We're told that when a person has hope they can endure almost anything.

And what do people in waiting need most? They need hope.

In a world shaken by wars, rising costs, illness, loneliness, and uncertainty—people aren't just looking for presents, they're searching for hope.

Slide 6: The Promise of Hope — God Speaks into Hopeless Situations Micah 5:2

We turn first to the prophet Micah, who wrote centuries before the birth of Christ. **Hear again his timeless words:**

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for Me One who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

Micah spoke to a nation facing darkness, oppression, fear, and uncertainty. The people of Israel were under threat; their king would be struck, their cities would fall, their future looked hopeless.

But God spoke a promise — not to a large, powerful city — but to Bethlehem, the smallest, the least likely. From this insignificant place would come the One whose "origins are from ancient times."

This short verse is a thunderclap of hope.

The setting is critical. Bethlehem was not a city of great renown; Micah calls it *"small among the clans of Judah."* It was a tiny, unassuming village, known primarily as the hometown of King David.

In the midst of mighty empires and powerful cities—Jerusalem, Rome, Athens—**God chose the smallest, the most ordinary place, as the birthplace for the Ruler of Israel.**

This is the very nature of God's hope revealed in Jesus's first Advent:

Hope springing from the unexpected and the humble.

When we look for hope, we often look for displays of massive power: great armies, huge investments, or influential people. **But God subverts this expectation.**

Slide 7: Hope Came Not in Caesar's Palace, but in a small town, in a stable, to a humble couple.

Jesus's first coming assures us that God is actively working, not just in the large, obvious places of power, but in the quiet, overlooked, and forgotten corners of our lives and our world.

The Hope of the Incarnation Is the Promise Fulfilled: God came to us, exactly as prophesied.

The ancient promise found its perfect, tiny, significant fulfillment in a feeding trough in Bethlehem.

Slide 8: Lessons From This Prophecy:

God is at work even when we feel forgotten.

God often begins His greatest work in small, humble places and the most unexpected people.

He had not abandoned His people — He was preparing something beyond imagination.

Perhaps today you too are facing your own “**Bethlehem moments**”? Times when life feels too small, too weak, too forgotten? You're looking for renewed hope.

But beloved, take heart this morning that our God does His greatest work in the quiet places of obedience and expectation.

Hope is not the absence of struggle — it's the presence of God in it.

Slide 9: The Fulfillment of Hope — Christ Came Just as God Promised

The prophecy of Micah was fulfilled over 700 years later when a young couple arrived in Bethlehem, a baby was born, laid in a manger.

That manger became the cradle of hope.

Jesus came:

Not on a chariot — but to a stable.

Not as a warrior — but as a baby.

Not as a political rebel — but as the Prince of Peace.

His first coming proved that:

God keeps His promises — even if they take centuries.

He hasn't forgotten humanity. **He gave us Hope.**

And that Hope had a name — Jesus.

Romans 15:4 tells us that the Scriptures give us hope because they show that God always does what He says.

Slide 10: The Sustaining Hope (Romans 15:4)

But why should we, two millennia later, care about a prophecy fulfilled in a village that was "too little"?

That is where the Apostle Paul provides our anchor.

Paul writes to the Romans, speaking of the Scriptures:

“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” (Romans 15:4, ESV)

This verse pulls the ancient promise into our present reality.

It tells us the primary purpose of God’s Word—all of it, from Micah to the Gospels—**is to instill enduring hope in us.**

Paul connects hope to two essential qualities: **endurance and encouragement of the Scriptures.**

Endurance: The world we live in is not easy. We face personal challenges, global crises, and daily exhaustion.

Endurance is the ability to keep standing, keep loving, and keep believing when everything tells us to sit down and quit. Endurance is only possible if it is rooted in something certain. **That certainty is Christ.**

Encouragement of the Scriptures: How do we endure? By drawing encouragement from the Scriptures.

The stories of God’s faithfulness, the promises fulfilled (like Bethlehem), and the ultimate victory of Christ all remind us: **God always finishes what He starts.**

If He was faithful to the tiny prophecy of Micah, He will be faithful to the gigantic promises He has made to us—promises of peace, forgiveness of sins, renewal, and eternal life.

Our hope today is sustained by this historical evidence: Jesus Christ has come. His life, death, and resurrection are the evidence that our God is a promise-keeping God.

The hope we light today is the light we need to endure the dark days and times of difficult waiting.

Slide 11: The Future Hope — Christ Will Come Again

Advent reminds us: Just as Jesus came the first time, He will come again.

Just as Micah’s prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus’ first coming, all the promises about His second coming will also be fulfilled.

“This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go...” (Acts 1:11)

Advent is unique because it's the only season that asks us to look in two directions simultaneously: back to Bethlehem and forward to the return of Christ.

The fulfilled hope of the first coming is the guarantee of the awaited hope—the Second Coming.

The Messiah who came in humility (Micah 5:2) will return in glory.

The baby wrapped in swaddling clothes will return as the King wrapped in majesty.

The Advent we celebrate with carols and manger scenes is only half the story. The other half is the day when Christ will return to complete the work he began.

Slide 12: This Promised Return—Is the Ultimate Climax of History.

It's the day when every tear will be wiped away, when injustice will be abolished, and when our faith will turn into sight.

This final hope changes how we live now:

It calls for Vigilance: We are called to live alertly, not carelessly.

If we knew the King was arriving at our house this evening, we would clean up the place and prepare.

We would tend to our hearts, our relationships, and make sure our lives were right with God.

It calls for Action: Because we know Christ is coming to make all things new, we are called to be agents of that renewal now.

We look back, we gather strength for the present, and we look forward with absolute certainty.

The one who came forth from Bethlehem, whose existence is “from of old,” is the one who will return to call us home.

Slide 13: Why Jesus Second Coming Matters:

1. It reminds us that this world is not our final home.

There is more than what we see — heaven is real, eternity is sure.

2. It gives hope to those who suffer, grieve, or struggle.

Revelation 21:4 — He will wipe every tear from every eye.

3. It calls us to live with purpose, purity, and readiness.

We don't wait in fear — we wait in hope.

We don't wait in despair — we wait in confidence.

We don't wait in darkness — we wait in the light of Christ.

Slide 14: Summary: The Candle of Hope

This first Advent candle — The Candle of Hope — reminds us:

Jesus came — just as God promised.

Jesus is with us now — through His Spirit.

Jesus will come again — as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Slide 15: The Hope That Endures Today — Christ in Us, the Hope of Glory

We live in a world full of pessimism, fear, anxiety, uncertainty. People hope in governments, medicine, technology, and wealth.

But Christian hope is different — it's not in what we see, but in what God has promised.

Romans 15:13 says:

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him..."

Christian hope is not optimism — it is assurance.

It's not based on circumstances — but on Christ.

This Advent, we don't just hope for a merry Christmas or a happy new year. We hope in the Resurrection.

We hope in the return of the King who will wipe away every tear. This hope allows us to endure the difficulties of "this life" because we know they are merely the prologue to a joy that will never end.

Remember The Smallness of Bethlehem and The Magnitude of The Promise It Fulfilled.

This is our hope, our faith, our confidence, this is the faith of our ancestors who believed then what we believe now.

This is what the earliest Christians believed, and this is what Christians around the world believe.

Let the doubters doubt if they will. We join hands with the saints who have gone before in proclaiming our faith in the risen Lord.

Because he rose, we too shall rise. Death will not have the last word. Though we do not yet see it, one day the cemetery will become resurrection territory.

Take to heart the words of Romans 15:4, allowing the Scriptures to encourage your endurance today. And finally, lift your eyes to the horizon, knowing that the King of Glory, who has come, will come again.

A gentle reminder this morning that this Advent hope we are talking about belongs to those who have come to a saving knowledge of Jesus.

To all those who have trusted in him for forgiveness of their sins and a future home with Jesus forever.
To be able to say, “I know whom I have believed.”

This Advent, let us hold fast to the enduring hope we have received.

Slide 16 Image: Waiting in Hope

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for the reminder that our hope is not tethered to this temporary world. Our hope is built on the empty tomb and the coming Kingdom.

Lord, anchor our souls in the certainty of the Resurrection and Jesus’ return. An anchor “*sure and steadfast.*”

Let this Hope be the light that shines in our darkness this week.

Slide 17: We wait for You, Jesus. our Promise-Keeper, our Saviour, our Coming King.

Amen.