

DAILY DEVOTIONS

Day 1: The God Who Sees Your Struggle

Reading: Isaiah 61:1-3

The Messiah comes specifically for the brokenhearted, the captive, and the imprisoned. Notice that God does not ignore your pain or dismiss your struggles as insignificant. He sends His Anointed One directly to you in your moment of deepest need. The poor, brokenhearted, and captive were considered cursed in ancient Jewish thought, yet Jesus declares these are precisely the people He came to serve. Your brokenness is not a barrier to God's love but an invitation for His presence. Whatever has left you feeling poor in spirit, trapped in circumstances, or grieving loss, know that Christ's first mission was to bring you good news. You are seen. You are valued. You are the very reason Hope arrived on earth.

Day 2: Beauty from Ashes

Reading: Psalm 30:1-12

God specializes in divine exchanges. He offers beauty for ashes, joy for mourning, praise for despair. These are not minor adjustments but complete transformations of your circumstances and identity. The ashes represent what has been destroyed in your life—dreams, relationships, health, or security. Yet God does not simply remove the ashes; He replaces them with a crown of beauty. This is the nature of redemption: not just restoration to what was, but transformation into something gloriously new. The mourning you experience today is not your final destination. God is preparing a joyous blessing that will define your tomorrow. Hold on through this season of grief, knowing that your Redeemer is working to bring forth praise from your present despair.

Day 3: When God Seems Absent

Reading: Lamentations 3:19-26

The Israelites spent centuries in captivity, wondering when their Messiah would arrive. Between Isaiah's prophecy and Jesus' birth stretched 700 years of silence. Yet God's promise remained true even when His presence felt distant. Perhaps you are in your own waiting season, questioning whether God remembers His promises to you. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies are new every morning. Great is His faithfulness, even when you cannot feel it. Hope is not dependent on your circumstances changing immediately but on the unchanging character of God. He who promised is faithful. The delay is not denial. Your Messiah has come, and He dwells within you by His Spirit, working purposes you cannot yet see.

Day 4: The Servant We Need

Reading: Luke 4:16-21; Philippians 2:5-11

Jesus could have chosen any passage to announce His ministry. He selected Isaiah 61, proclaiming Himself as the Suffering Servant, not the conquering King the people expected. This reveals a profound truth: God gives us what we need, not always what we want. The Jews wanted political liberation; Jesus offered spiritual freedom. They wanted earthly prosperity; He provided eternal inheritance. We often approach God with our wish list, expecting Him to serve our agenda. Yet true hope comes when we surrender our expectations and receive the Servant-Savior who knows what our souls truly require. This Christmas, release your demands for how God should work. Embrace the humble Christ who came in weakness to make you eternally strong.

Day 5: Living Hope

Reading: 1 Peter 1:3-9

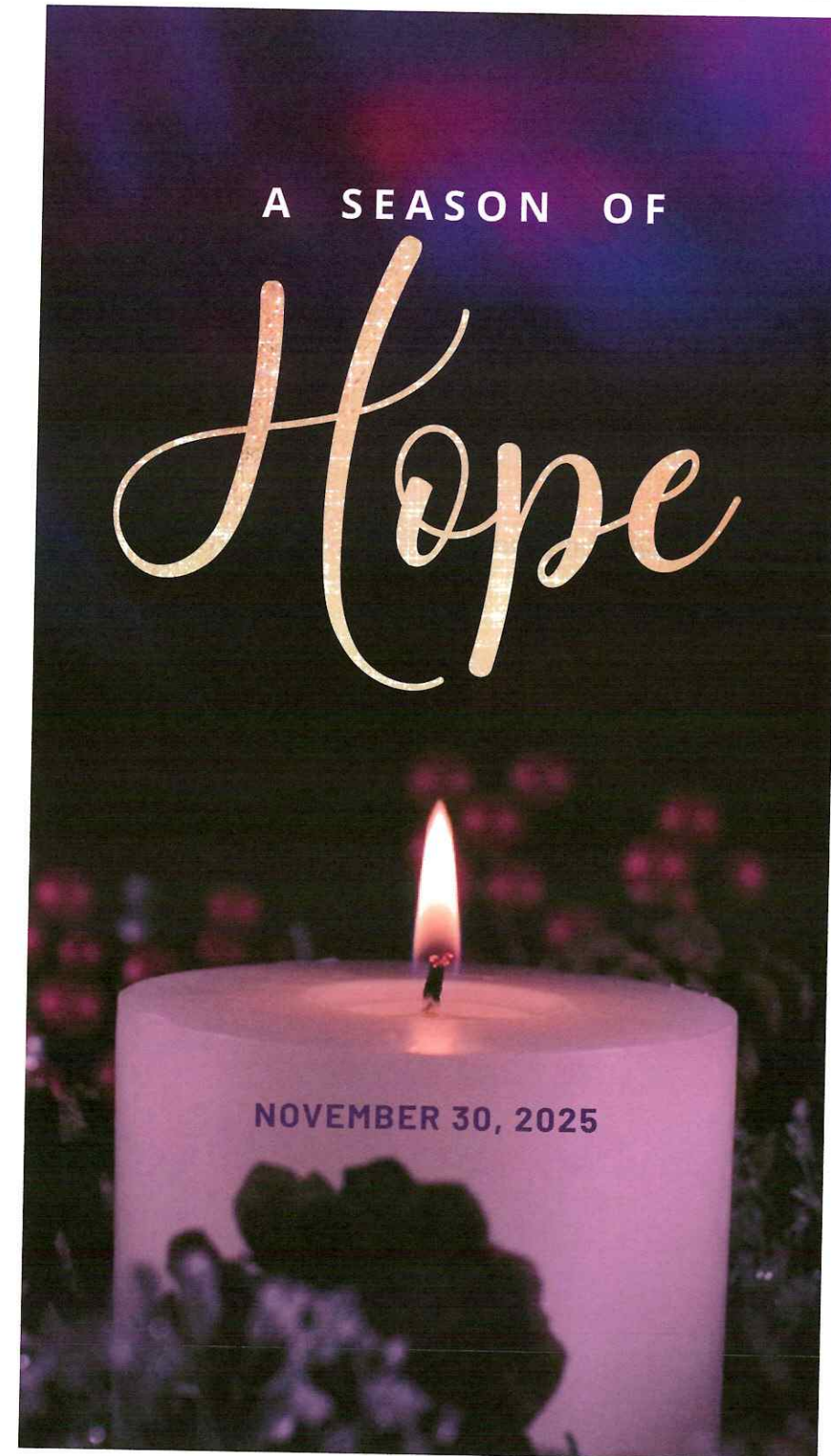
Viktor Frankl observed that prisoners who lost hope in the future lost their will to live. Hope is not optional for human flourishing; it is essential. But hope placed in circumstances, people, or personal strength will inevitably disappoint. The Advent message declares that true hope has a name: Jesus. He is not a concept or a feeling but a living Person who dwells within believers. This means your hope is not dependent on your situation improving but on Christ's unchanging presence. You possess a living hope through His resurrection—an inheritance that cannot perish, spoil, or fade. As you navigate this holiday season, measure success not by what you accomplish or acquire but by how fully you know Jesus and make Him known. Hold on to Him. He is your hope.

DEACONS ON CALL

Brad Friesen and Archie Harris

WEEKLY EVENTS

- **WORSHIP:** Sundays at 9:45 AM
- **SMALL GROUPS:** Sundays at 11 AM
- **DEEP DIVE:** Wednesdays at Noon & 6:45 PM
- **FIRST KIDS:** Wednesdays at 5:30 PM
- **FIRST YOUTH:** Wednesdays: MS 5:30 PM, HS 7:00 PM



HOLD ON! / ISAIAH 61:1-7

We cannot live without hope. That's not just a sentiment, but a proven fact. If you need some hope, you've come to the right season of the year. I know it doesn't seem that way. We are entering the busiest time of the year with lots of hassles and hurries. How can this be a season of true hope?

"Advent" comes from Latin words meaning "to arrive."

On Christmas Day, _____ arrived!

1. Israel wanted a _____.

2. Israel got a _____.

"Favor" translates a Hebrew word which means "to be accepted" or to be given God's grace."

3. Jesus is what we _____.

God is calling you and me to a new level of surrendered obedience in these days.

Scripture References (In order of use): 2 Samuel 7:16; Isaiah 9:7; Philippians 2:10-11; Isaiah 42:1-4; Isaiah 53:3; Deuteronomy 6:4; Luke 4:17-20
Referenced Works: Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott (*The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*); Expository Notes on the Prophet Isaiah (H. A. Ironside); Isaiah (Trent C. Butler); Isaiah-God Saves Sinners (Raymond C. Ortund); Isaiah, Volume 2 (Albert Barnes); 300 Quotations and Prayers for Christmas (Elliot Ritzema)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share one thing you're hoping for this Advent season—either something personal or something for someone you love.
2. Read **Isaiah 61:1-7**. Is there anything from the sermon you would like to discuss?
3. Patrick said, "We cannot live without hope." How have you seen this play out in your own life or in the lives of people around you?
4. Where in your life right now do you most need hope? (Marriage, parenting, career, health, relationships, purpose?)
5. The Jewish people expected a military Messiah who would defeat their enemies and restore Israel's glory. Why do you think God chose to answer their prayers so differently than they expected?
6. In what ways do we treat God as a "means to our end"—expecting Him to give us what we want because we pray, serve, or give?
7. Patrick mentioned that "all of God there is, is in your life" through the Holy Spirit. How does this truth change the way you approach daily challenges?
8. How can we "measure success this season not by what we get or give, but by how fully you know Jesus and make Him known"? What would that look like practically?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

- Each morning this week, spend 5 minutes consciously surrendering your day to Jesus. Ask Him, "What do I need from You today?" rather than telling Him what you want.
- Pick one area where you'll live according to kingdom values rather than cultural norms this week (finances, entertainment choices, social media, conflict resolution, dating standards).
- Identify someone who is poor, brokenhearted, captive, or imprisoned (literally or figuratively) and tangibly bring them hope this week through your words or actions.