



**WESTWOOD CHRISTIAN
CHURCH
ADVENT 2022**

Hope

November 27 through December 3

The first theme of Advent is Hope. Hope is something that often gets confused with optimism, but the two are not the same. Whereas optimism is a blind belief that things are either good, or better than they seem, hope is the belief that whether or not things are currently bad, there is something good, something loving, and something to look forward to. For Christians, that belief is located in the persons of the Holy Trinity and the promises of Scripture.

In hope, we are challenged to hold to the preferred future, to refuse to allow fear to dominate our lives, and to hold fast to the promises of Jesus.

The devotions this week on Hope should begin our anticipation of Jesus this Advent season. Through these readings, we'll be thankful for the promises we've been given. You may consider how you might have lived as a 1st century Jew, going through similar circumstances, but without the teachings of Jesus, and only the longing for a Messiah.

This year, our Saturday reading will be an Advent hymn that you may or may not know. Read it, reflect upon it, perhaps look it up online and listen or sing along.

Our authors this week are Ashley Crutcher, Sara Sanchez, Tom Sippy, Eric Quarm, and me. We have a picture colored by Jon Luca for us to look at and reflect upon as well.

Adam Tomlinson

November 28

To Come

Ashley Crutcher

Advent means “to come”. Implied is a hope that something (or someone) is coming.

In the Bible there is a repeated cycle of God’s people, the Israelites, coming to and turning away from God. In one passage where they are in exile after turning away, God speaks through his messenger Isaiah, “*I, the Holy One of Israel says: ‘Only in returning to me and resting in me will you be saved. In quietness and confidence is your strength.’*” Often when this is quoted, it’s stopped there. But the Lord is not finished. “*But you would have none of it.*”

They do not hope that the Lord will come to bring them out of exile. Instead, they turn to Egypt for horses they think they need to fight exile.

Reflect: Where are you experiencing what feels like hopeless waiting? What is your Egypt?

The warning continues. Instead of rescue, they will be ‘*left like a tattered banner.*’ What does the Lord do? He says, ‘*I will wait for you to come to me, so that I can show you my love and compassion. I am a faithful God. Blessed are those who wait for my help.*’”

13 chapters later, after they have experienced the failure of Egypt’s help in the Assyrian invasion, God says (paraphrased) “*Don’t you remember? I am the one who brought you out of Egypt, out of Babylon. But – look! I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will create rivers in the dry wasteland.*” God is asking us to look and see what he is already doing, and we can tell it’s him because it’s something only he can do. We cannot make rivers in a dry land, only God can.

Reflect: Ask the Lord to draw your attention to what he is already doing that only He can do.

This is not that we do nothing. While we wait, we hope, we come to God and we look for his movement. He is the one who

will do the new thing, something far more than we can imagine. Only He can do something like sending his Son, Jesus, to be born of a virgin, to live a perfect life, to die on a cross, and be resurrected. He is moving now, even as we hope and wait for Jesus to come again.

November 29

Hope for the Best

Tom Sippy

Hope for the best is a thought I have had many times in my life. For example, I had this mindset while awaiting test results in college. Trying to be optimistic while at the same time realizing the results might not be as good as I hoped for. So, what is the basis for a hopeful outcome for whatever we are trying to accomplish? For many it is the effort put into completing the task at hand. Other times hope is based on our skill or ability to accomplish what we plan to do.

But can we be completely confident to have a good outcome for all aspects and endeavors of our lives based only on our individual efforts and abilities? If we are honest, the answer is no! What then do we do as we journey through life? We do as many have done through the course of time. We put our hope and trust in God. Psalm 146:5 says, “Blessed is he whose hope is in the Lord his God.” David in Psalm 25, verses 3-5 says, “No one whose hope is in you (i.e., God) will ever be put to shame. Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.”

The prophet, Isaiah, gives us encouragement to remain in our hope in God even when we grow weary. Chapter 40, verses 29 to 31 tells us, “He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youth grow tired and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew

their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not faint.” Even the strongest people get tired at times, but God’s power and strength never diminish. He is never too tired or busy to help and listen. Hoping in the Lord is expecting his promise of strength will help us to rise above life’s distractions and difficulties as we trust in God. Trusting helps us to be prepared for him to speak to us. This helps us to be patient and wait for God’s answer to our pray.

In the New Testament we are reminded in Romans 12:12 we can, “Be joyful in hope, patient in trouble and always pray.” And finally in Romans 15:13 we are told, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” May your hearts and minds be filled with hope in the Lord and all his promises during this Advent season.

November 30

Right Defeated is Stronger

Adam Tomlinson

When Martin Luther King Jr. received his Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, he uttered what I believe to be the most succinct definition of Christian hope: “**right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant.**” What he meant is that as Christians is that we believe—we hope—that in the end of time, Christ will return, and establish a Kingdom of unconditional love and truth and in that moment, evil will be extinguished for eternity.

King’s assurance that “unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality” is what empowered him to be the leader that our nation needed in the racial justice revolution of the 60s.

Today, we hope for the same thing. We hope for a time when we are able to live in truth without violence or malice being used to exert what someone believes is truth. We hope for the day we are able to live in unconditional love as Jesus did. King reminds us, as he did his peers 60 years ago, that our hope is not in what is happening right now. It's in the perfect future that comes with Christ's return. Even if we feel like we're being defeated now, we have hope in a future where God wins.

December 1

Do NOT Defer Hope

Eric Quarm

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. (Hebrews 10:23 NKJV)

Whether we think about it or not, hope is a part of everyone's life. Everyone hopes for something. It's an inherent part of being a human being. To have hope is to want an outcome that makes your life better in some way. Not only can it help make a tough present situation more bearable but also can eventually improve our lives because envisioning a better future motivates you to take the steps to make it happen.

The prophet Isaiah in the Old Testament prophesied (Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7) about the Messiah and hoped in a Messiah's coming to save us from the sin in the world. Christ's birth fulfilled both prophesy and the hope of a coming savior.

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14 KJV

6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and

to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. Isaiah 9:6-7 KJV

Because evil abounds in our world and sometimes all seems lost, we can also hope that the prophecies about Jesus' second coming to earth will also be fulfilled as captured in the book of Hebrews.

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. Hebrews 9:28 KJV

In the Bible hope exists as a secure guarantee, a trust placed in a trustworthy God. God has not failed His people (us) in the past, and therefore, if He claims He will do something in the future, we can have a hope that He will fulfill that claim. Hope waits and endures. Hope is not merely wishful thinking, it can withstand fire, trials, and despair of any nature.

As followers of Christ where do we find hope?

We find hope in God's presence: When life feels out of control, turn to God in prayer.

6 He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved. 7 In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Psalm 62:6-7 KJV

We find hope in God's promise: His living Word.

My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word. Psalm 119:81 KJV

We find hope in God's process: Which almost never matches our own human understanding. Even in our pain, God is at work sewing things together for good. This may not translate to our comfort, it's meant to conform us to be more like Christ. God uses our struggles to produce endurance, which produces character, and character produces hope.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28
KJV

3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. Romans 5:3-5 KJV

We find hope in God's purpose for our lives: Every single one of us has been created with a divine plan in mind.

For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. Jeremiah 29:11
NLT

We find hope in the promise of things yet to come:

1 Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. 2 There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you. John 14:1-2 NLT

Hope is not something we do, it's something we possess that was gifted to us by God's unending grace and the power of the Holy Spirit. Hope is the anchor for our soul (Hebrews 6:19) and without it, we're incomplete (Proverbs 13:12).

This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary. Hebrews 6:19 NLT

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a dream fulfilled is a tree of life. Proverbs 13:12 NLT

In conclusion let us all shine wherever we are and keep the candle of hope burning to bring light to where there is darkness during the entire season of advent, as we await the celebration of the birth of Jesus and the hope it brings in our salvation.

December 2

**Hope Is An Act of Endurance,
Not a Glimpse Into Time**

**Sara Sánchez
Santana**

When I think about hope, I think about an active and conscious act of endurance. Isaiah 40:31 is a verse with a promise. Nevertheless, to guard, nourish and cultivate hope in the Lord is not a matter of a few sermons, a few weeks, or even a few years. For me, hope in the Lord is a promise that throughout a lifetime and tough circumstances, the Lord will sustain me. Hope is a safety net held by the all-powerful. And lastly, hope is not something foolish to treasure or to seek every Christmas. For me, hope in the Lord is the rock for anchoring our lives and navigating through turbulent waters, knowing the almighty is holding that anchor, strengthening us, and not letting us drown.

December 3

“Come Thou Long Expected Jesus”

Charles Wesley

Come Thou long expected Jesus
Born to set Thy people free
From our fears and sins release us
Let us find our rest in Thee
Israel's strength and consolation
Hope of all the earth Thou art
Dear desire of every nation
Joy of every longing heart

Born Thy people to deliver
Born a child and yet a King
Born to reign in us forever
Now Thy gracious Kingdom bring
By Thine own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone
By Thine all sufficient merit
Raise us to Thy glorious throne

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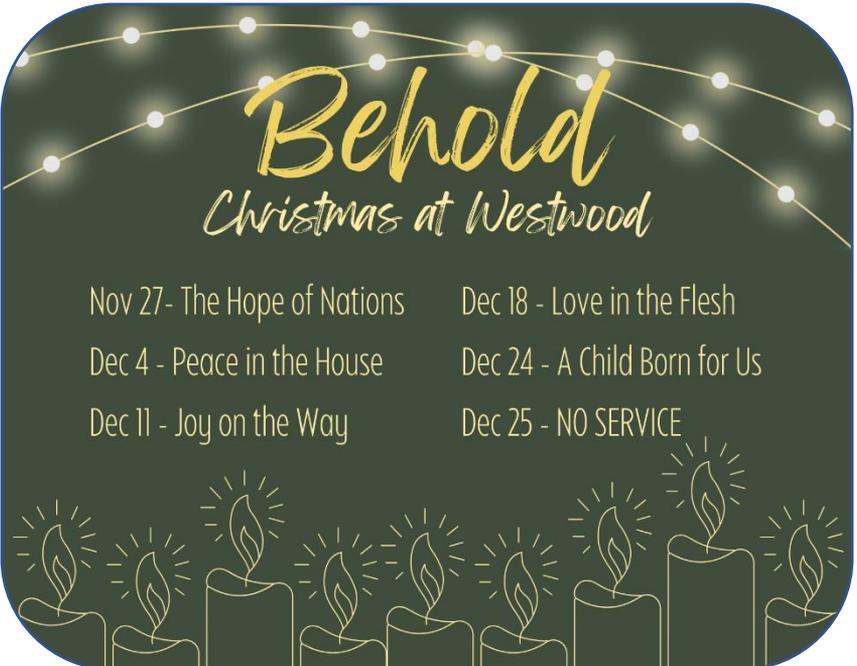
Malachi the Messenger



“God has a message for YOU. It’s time to get ready. God promised you a Messiah and the Messiah will come.” Advent is the time where we get ready for the birth of Jesus on Christmas. How do you get ready for Christmas?

Colored by

Jon Luca



Behold
Christmas at Westwood

Nov 27 - The Hope of Nations

Dec 18 - Love in the Flesh

Dec 4 - Peace in the House

Dec 24 - A Child Born for Us

Dec 11 - Joy on the Way

Dec 25 - NO SERVICE



Invite your friends and family to join us through Advent and Christmas Eve as we await and celebrate the birth of Jesus!

Find more information at

www.WestwoodChristian.com/Christmas

