

ADVENT *Devotional*

A 27-Day Devotional Reflections
from Leaders Across the Asia-Pacific Region



CHURCH OF THE
NAZARENE

ASIA - PACIFIC

The background is a dark, textured surface with a mix of deep blue, purple, and black tones, resembling a night sky or a close-up of a celestial body. A white rectangular box is centered in the upper half of the image. Inside the box, the text "WEEK 1" is written in a white, outlined, sans-serif font. Below it, the word "HOPE" is written in a large, bold, white, sans-serif font.

WEEK 1

HOPE

DAY 1

HOPE

by Mark Louw - Asia-Pacific Regional Director

December is upon us and it is with a sense of anticipation and heightened excitement that I enter this Advent season. For two years now, I have hopefully anticipated seeing my grandson and spending quality time with him. Particularly given that his birthday and Christmas are in the same month. Unfortunately, those hopes have these past two years been dashed as a result of the COVID-19 travel restrictions.

This year, however, the situation has changed and my hopes and expectations have already been fulfilled. For today, I speak with you from the United Kingdom of Great Britain. The new nation of residence of Hayden and his parents.

I am certain that many of you are approaching this time of the year with similar hopes and anticipation of seeing loved ones and being able to lavish love upon them and others through hugs and tangible gifts from the heart.

While we have been disappointed, displaced, and at times dismayed we have not been without hope. For we know who holds the future and we know that our hope is based on the ongoing faithfulness of God.

More than 2000 years ago an engaged but unmarried couple, pregnant with child, and facing the shame associated with their situation, contemplated their uncertain future. Their confident expectation was that the child that Mary was bearing was from God and that he was the hope of mankind. The one prophesied about by the ancients. Their confident hope is unwed parents was based on personal visits by divine messengers. By angels who comforted them with words such as those spoken to Mary and recorded in Luke chapter 1 verses 30-33. "Do not be afraid Mary for you have found favor with God. And behold you will rest conceive in your womb and bear His Son. And you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of His kingdom, there will be no end."

As we enter this advent season as disciples of Jesus, we do so with our hope founded on personal experience of a visit or maybe visits by the Spirit of the Most High God. During a time of great spiritual need and hunger consequently, we look forward to and celebrate the Advent of the Christ child because he has through faith been born within us and we have accepted and experienced all that the baby Jesus represented them and continues to represent today.

While Advent is about looking back at our desperation and celebrating the new birth, the new life, and the new hope that accompanied the birth of Jesus. Advent is also about looking ahead. As trusting believers, we also celebrate Advent with an expectant attitude that Jesus is coming again. As we live in the familiar passages of the Christmas season and identify with the characters of that day through pageants readings and sermons we similarly approach the season with the hope that Jesus will return again to fulfill His promise in John 14 verses 1-3. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in me. My father's house has many rooms. If that were not so would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

Advent is about both looking back and looking forward He is the beginning and the end. He is Emmanuel. God with us. My prayer is that you will enjoy your Christmas season regardless the challenges that you might encounter. By holding unswervingly to the hope that we profess. For he who promises is faithful. God bless.

DAY 2

CARRYING HOPE

by Janary Suyat-Godoy - Regional NYI Coordinator

It's been almost 2 years since we heard about COVID-19, and we are still in the midst of this pandemic. In the beginning, some people were happy because the stay-at-home mandate meant they could catch up on rest, and work on things that are usually ignored. But as soon as people we know got sick and many lost loved ones, we yearned deeply for things to change. We started to hope that we could freely move again and not have to quarantine and wear masks.

If you've felt a range of emotions connected to this issue, I want to encourage you. As a human being, it is important to acknowledge these. The fears, worries, and anxieties that you have are real, and they are valid. However, for us who believe in God, the negative emotions caused by the pandemic are not the end of the story. We carry hope.

What does this hope look like? Many of us hoped for things to go back to how they used to be. But some of us started to question God when things were taking too long to change.

Whenever I worry about the future, I stop and think about the many times in the past when God has provided for me in unexpected ways. Scripture helps me remember the way God has been a source of strength. God was faithful over and over again in redeeming people who were even unfaithful.

So, we can cry to Jesus when things are overwhelming because no one understands brokenness more than him who was broken for our sake. Maybe we won't be able to see circumstances change to the way we want it to be, but our hope is on the One who knows what it means to go through sorrow, and who knows all about pain.

We continue to wait upon the Lord because we know He is near and He loves us. He is transforming us to become more like Him in His character as we take each step with him who walks with us even in the valleys of despair.

We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

Romans 5:3-5 NLT

DAY 3

HOPE IN CHRIST

by David Hane - Regional Personnel Coordinator

For several generations, my family have been farmers. And like Judah's King Uzziah, I, too, love the soil (2 Chronicles 26:10). So the opening illustration in "The Pursuit of Holiness" by the late Jerry Bridges has stayed with me for many years: "Farming is a joint venture between God and the farmer. The farmer cannot do what God must do, and God will not do what the farmer should do."

The Apostle John was a fisherman, not a farmer, but today's scripture passage reminds me of this farming analogy. Because of God's great love, not only are we CALLED Children of God, we actually ARE Children of God. And "who knows how we will end up" (The Message) when we see Christ "as He is"! John concludes by asserting that all who have this hope in Christ "purify themselves" – a present, active verb.

John is reminding us that holiness, like farming, is a joint venture. Through Jesus' sacrifice, God has made it possible for us to walk in holiness. But it is up to us to do the daily walking.

As we journey deeper into this Advent season, let us not only rejoice at Christ's coming, but "Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him. Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure.

1 John 3:1-3 NIV

DAY 4

THE CONSTANT HOPE

by Roland Hearn - Australia/New Zealand Field

Hope always looks to tomorrow. We do not hope for things in the past, nor do we hope for the reality in which we now exist. The past is gone, the present cannot be changed. The future is the context of hope. However, our past and our present are the soil in which our hope grows.

Our hopes are generally nebulous constructs. They range from simple ideas like, “I hope it does not rain tomorrow for our picnic;” to complex life events, “I hope I find a loving life partner.”

Our hopes are formed from our experience and include our own pains and failures, as well as our joys and successes. Our hope represents our longing for the very best of life and are profoundly connected to our search for significance. At their most profound they represent our desire for love.

Our souls become downcast when our hopes seem beyond our reach.

As we come to the season of reflecting on Christ’s coming, we are compelled to recognise this astounding truth: Christ represents, with total adequacy, the unrestrained love of God, our value to him, and the significance of our lives. Unlike hope built in our human experience there is no doubt in the hope of the coming Christ. Our souls can abandon their “downcast perspective,” because our hope in Christ is a constant revelation that we are loved by our eternal God. Our lives matter to Him.

***Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.***

Psalm 42:11 NIV

DAY 5

REST IN HOPE

by John Eun-Yup Kim, SDMI Regional Coordinator

When COVID-19 came, it has impacted our entire world and our way of life. The new normal has caused a lot of uneasiness, anxiety and fear in the hearts of many people. People are shaken by a big storm that they have not experienced before.

When our life is hard and difficult, like a storm, we need to pray quietly and look upon God alone. Despair comes when we put our hopes on the things of the world, but hope rises when it is placed in the Lord. This is because God is the eternal rock, salvation, and fortress.

We must again stand as disciples who follow the Lord. What the disciple needs is trust in Jesus' sovereignty. When a huge storm shakes us, we must believe in the Lord who rebukes the wind and the sea and calms us. People of faith should quietly wish for the Lord. This is because recovery and hope only come from Him. I hope David's poem will be our song today.

***Yes, my soul, find rest in God;
my hope comes from him.
Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.***

Psalms 62:5-6 NIV

DAY 6

ENDURING AND OVERFLOWING HOPE

by Lisa Lehman - Regional Literature Coordinator

Romans 15 exudes hope rooted in Christ that overflows to the nations.

Recently, I had the privilege of visiting Sisters, Oregon, a town named after three mountains known as the Three Sisters-Faith, Hope, and Charity. It occurred to me that enduring as those rock formations remain to be despite the changing seasons and times we live in, God's Word fulfilled in Christ is the hope that will never disappoint us.

Romans 15:4 says, "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope."

Verse 12 then echoes Isaiah's words, "'The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him.' So the message comes down through history in Christ to us in verse 13, "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."

God's hope in Christ is an enduring trust we can count on, yet it's not for us alone. Hope needs to overflow through us by the power of the Holy Spirit to the people all around us.

Who needs the hope that is overflowing through your life today?

***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.***

Romans 15:13 NIV

DAY 7

GIFT OF HOPE

by Bruce Alder - Regional Education Coordinator

The anticipation of Christmas! Are you expecting good things; happy occasions; connecting with people we have not been able to meet with for so long? The older I get the sooner Christmas seems to come around again. However, as a child I remember waiting for what seemed like an eternity for Christmas to come again.

Our passage today speaks of hope and anticipates the plans God has for us. However, this message of hope comes at a dark time for the people of God. They were in exile and mourning the loss of home and loved ones. In the preceding verses Jeremiah urges the people to settle in for a long wait in exile. In a place that was their least preferred place to be, God says 'wait patiently, for I have plans for you – plans that will see you flourish and prosper. Don't give up. Don't just resign yourself to what you have now. There are great things ahead in my plans for you. Wait hopefully and in anticipation.

This Advent Season you may have been ravaged by Covid-19 and its consequences – ill health, loss of loved ones, restricted movement, isolation ... The Word today reminds us to, in faith, take the long perspective here – there is hope and that hope is found in Jesus. This Advent Season is a reminder that, regardless of the circumstances in which we find ourselves, God's gift of Jesus is our Hope. This is the reason that we can rejoice and thank God. He has plans for your welfare ... to give you a future with hope. (Jeremiah 29: 11b NRSV)

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Jeremiah 29:11 NIV