

ADVENT HOPE



"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

A Journey with Advent Hope

Introduction

This Advent booklet is intended to accompany you on your journey through Advent providing you with a sense of hope in these difficult times. The booklet is set out having a page for each day from Advent Sunday to Christmas Eve. Each day has a verse from scripture, a reflection based on the verse of scripture, topics for prayer and a quotation as food for thought. The theme running through each page and therefore the entire booklet is that of Advent Hope. There is a poem on page 29, and a small selection of Advent prayers on pages 30 and 31 all of which can be used as an addition to the daily pages.

It is intended that each page will provide a daily opportunity to pause and reflect on the true meaning of Advent and what it means to have hope in these uncertain times caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

“At this Christmas when Christ comes, will He find a warm heart? Mark the season of Advent by loving and serving the others with God's own love and concern.” -Mother Teresa

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Reflections-Revd. Michael Guest

Quotations - As noted on each page

Prayers as noted.

ADVENT SUNDAY

29th November 2020

Verse from Scripture

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,

Ephesians 1:18.

Reflection

There are times when we come to a point where the word of God does not affect or motivate us. I suggest that this is because we have lost our way with regard to the hope we have in Christ. When this happens we are in danger of sinking into indifference when it comes to believing the Word of God which in turn can lead to a loss of hope. This is especially easy to do when we are in the midst of difficult times, as we are now with the Covid-19 Pandemic. The way back to letting the word of God enlighten us once more and to re-discovering the hope to be found there, is through daily Bible reading and prayer. May this Advent season and this booklet provide the opportunity for you to do so.

Prayer topics

Pray for a holy Advent

Give thanks for the Bible

Quote

Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.

DESMOND TUTU

Monday 30th November

Verse from Scripture

*the LORD delights in those who fear him,
who put their hope in his unfailing love.*

Psalm 147:11

Reflection

A "People Pleaser" is someone who does what it says "on the tin" they like to please people. They are never happier than when their efforts are rewarded with a "well done" or a heartfelt "thank you". It is almost as if they live for the approval of others. Confrontation, on the other hand, is an anathema to them and to be avoided at all cost. Sadly "People Pleasers" can become so involved with pleasing others that it can become their only hope for the future. Whilst it is always good to please people it should never become a person's *raison d'être*, that should be in bringing an expression of delight to the face of God and that can, on occasion, involve confronting others with the unfailing love of God, the true source of all hope. Sometimes we just have to choose!

Prayer topics

Pray for discernment when pleasing others.

Give thanks for those who have shared God's love with us.

Quote

Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.

HELEN KELLER

Tuesday 1st December

Verse from Scripture

*Israel, put your hope in the LORD,
for with the LORD is unfailing love
and with him is full redemption.*

Psalm 130:7

Reflection

Israel, like most people, had the propensity to get things wrong. Their history is littered with mistakes and ill advised decisions that caused them to lose favour with God. Take their wanderings in the wilderness for example, within days of God performing wondrous deeds on their behalf, they became convinced he had forsaken them. The worst incident was perhaps the making of a golden calf whilst Moses was on the mountain having an audience with God. During his absence they began to lose faith, forgetting all that God had done for them. They asked Aaron to give them a god, so he fashioned them a lifeless idol, using the gold they had brought out of Egypt. Sadly, it strikes me that we are much the same, often forgetting all that God has done for us and often go chasing after the false gods of this world. Israel's hope of redemption, as does ours, lay in the unfailing love of God who refuses to give up on us despite our failings.

Prayer topics

Pray for those who put their hope in false gods.

Give thanks for the grace of God.

Quote

Let your hopes, not your hurts, shape your future.

ROBERT H. SCHULLER

Wednesday 2nd December

Verse from Scripture

*"But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD,
whose hope is in him. "*

Jeremiah 17:7

Reflection

The word 'blessed' is a word that has its derivation in the Bible and is much used by Christians. It is a word which in some ways has been hijacked by modern culture. People may talk about blessings in their lives, but more than likely, have little or no understanding of what it really means to be blessed in the biblical sense of the word. One bible based understanding of the word 'blessed' is in the sense of self-contained happiness, which means regardless of what is happening to us externally, or what difficult situation we might find ourselves in, we can nevertheless know true happiness within. This is the hope we have as Christians mediated to us through the gracious blessings of Jesus Christ.

Prayer

Pray for God's blessing on Renishaw and Killamarsh.

Give thanks for God's blessings on our lives.

Quote

*Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul and
sings the tune without the words and never stops at all.*

EMILY DICKINSON

Thursday 3rd December

Verse from Scripture

*"The LORD is my portion," says my soul,
"Therefore I hope in Him!"*

Lamentations 3:24

Reflection

So, what does it mean to say that "God is my portion"? Today we may think of a portion as being part of something such as a portion of cake, or at the reading of a will where the bereaved gather to hear what portion of the deceased estate they are to inherit. The latter is not far off the biblical understanding where saying that "God is our portion" is another way of saying that He is our inheritance, our allotment in life. When we say that God is our portion, we are, in fact, saying that He is the source of all that is good in our lives. He is the only inheritance that matters. Relationships, riches, jobs, health, and all other things in our lives may fail, but we can say with confidence that "God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (*Psalms 73:26*). When God is our portion, we are content, we lack nothing for we have a never-ending supply of hope.

Prayer topics

Pray for those who are not content with their lives.
Give thanks for God's never-ending supply of hope.

Quote

*We must accept finite disappointment, but never
lose infinite hope.*

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Friday 4th December

Verse from Scripture

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.

Romans 15:4

Reflection

If someone is steadfast in something that they are doing, they are convinced that what they are doing is right and they refuse to change it or to give up. For example we might say that "He remained steadfast in his belief that he had done the right thing." Steadfastness then is a necessary quality of the faithful Christian particularly in today's world when faith is often considered something of an anachronism and even something to be made fun of, when steadfastness is also seen as a quality that belongs to a time gone by, that we are called to exhibit steadfastness in our Christian faith, but where are we to find support? Paul, in Romans, puts us on the right track by directing us to Holy Scripture where the word of God provides us with all the encouragement we could ever need. It is then in our steadfastness in regular Bible reading that we will find our hope.

Prayer topics

Pray for steadfastness in reading the Bible.

Give thanks for bible translators through the ages.

Quote

When you're at the end of your rope, tie a knot and hold on.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Saturday 5th December

Verse from Scripture

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

Jeremiah 29:11

Reflection

Sometimes things are not as we would like them to be. Despite our best efforts, we can still find ourselves in difficult circumstances. As I am writing this, we are in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic and about to enter a second period of "national lockdown". Many people are anxious and afraid, others are feeling isolated and depressed.

In 586 BC, the Jewish people found themselves experiencing similar feelings having been taken into exile by the Babylonians they were a defeated people who could not see an end to their suffering. Then God, speaking through the prophet Jeremiah, gives them this wonderful message of hope:-

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."

With the Lord, things are never hopeless.

Prayer topics

Pray for those facing seemingly hopeless situations.

Give thanks for the NHS.

Quote

What we call our despair is often only the painful eagerness of unfed hope.

GEORGE ELIOT

Sunday 6th December

Verse from Scripture

*The LORD, your God, is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you in his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing.*

Zephaniah 3:17

Reflection

I should imagine that we have all faced disappointment at one time or another, times when a much looked forward to event didn't take place, for example. Due to the Coronavirus there have been many such times this year: weddings postponed, concerts cancelled and the Olympic Games put off until next year. But it's the personal ones that really sting isn't it? We can withstand corporate disappointment, after all we are used to it aren't we? But when someone we know and love disappoints us it breaks our heart. There is one, however, who never disappoints us and who, no matter how many times we might disappoint him he will not only stick with us but will
".... *rejoice over us with gladness.*"

Prayer topics

Pray for all those experiencing disappointment at this time. Give thanks for those who have provided a shoulder to cry on.

Quote

*Remember, Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things,
and no good thing ever dies.*

STEPHEN KING

Monday 7th December

Verse from Scripture

*Surely there is a future,
and your hope will not be cut off.*

Proverbs 23:18

Reflection

Regardless of what other people may hope for, it's what we hope for that matters most. The hope we have as Christians is not the same as the hope that someone has when they are filling in their Lottery ticket. That kind of hope is little more than wishful thinking. Our hope is in the Lord, and no matter what we are going through in life we should never lose sight of that fact. Our outcomes in life, you see, are not determined by wishful thinking, but by a hope we can look forward to with great expectation. The above verse from the Book of Proverbs gives us confidence in knowing that the things we are hoping for from God will happen. It is a hope that is built not on our personal desires but upon the Blood of Christ and the wonderful grace and mercy of God our Father to all who believe. It is a hope that will change the world.

Prayer topics

Pray for those putting their trust in the things of this world.

Give thanks for hopes and dreams realised.

Quote

Live, then, and be happy, beloved children of my heart, and never forget, that until the day God will deign to reveal the future to man, all human wisdom is contained in these two words, Wait and Hope.

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

Tuesday 8th December

Verse from Scripture

*They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.*

Isaiah 11:9

Reflection

The tendency of human beings as a whole is towards aggression. The history of humankind is littered with wars and instances of "mans inhumanity to man". It is not just humankind against humankind however, we have also acted aggressively towards the rest of God's creation. The deforestation of South America, the burning of fossil fuels leading to global warming, the hunting to extinction of some of God's creatures are all signs of humankind's *lassaiz faire* attitude to caring for God's beautiful creation. There is hope however for God promises a future time when we will stop hurting each other, and violence against nature will come to an end when all the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God.

Prayer topics

Pray for an end to cruelty and violence in our world.

Give thanks for the peacemakers and Eco-warriors.

Quote

Hope itself is like a star — not to be seen in the sunshine of prosperity, and only to be discovered in the night of adversity.

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

Wednesday 9th December

Verse from Scripture

and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Romans 5:5

Reflection

There are times in life when we are faced with seemingly hopeless situations. It is at such times that we need to remember our baptism, and the symbolic pouring of water on our heads, which is representative of the pouring of the Holy Spirit into our hearts. For baptism is the assurance that what we hope for in Christ will happen, and the certainty that what we cannot see does exist. You see, it is the hope of God's love in our hearts that is confirmed by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Which in turn means that for the baptised follower of Christ there is no such thing as an impossible situation. One of the great privileges of being a priest is to baptise people in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit knowing that the hope they receive will never disappoint them.

Prayer topics

Pray for all who are newly baptised or who are preparing for baptism.

Give thanks for all who have taken on the responsibility of becoming Godparents.

Quote

They say a person needs just three things to be truly happy in this world: someone to love, something to do, and something to hope for.

TOM BODETT

Thursday 10th December

Verse from Scripture

*Truly the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him,
on those who hope in his steadfast love,*

Psalm 33:18

Reflection

When I was a small boy it always seemed that mum saw everything I did, or was about to do. She would give me one of those looks that immediately caused me to say sorry and hope that I would be forgiven, which of course I was, upon which I inevitably shed a tear and received a hug from mum. Whilst it was a little unnerving to think that mum saw everything, it was nevertheless a comfort to know she was watching over me. What a comfort then, and what hope we have in knowing that our Lord sees everything that happens to us, both good and bad. No matter what takes place in our lives he sees it and he is there with us. When we put our hope in his steadfast love there is nothing that can happen to us that is outside his plan and purpose for our lives. Whatever trial we face or joy that comes along the Lord is with us. This means of course that he also sees those things we would rather keep hidden from him. This should not be a cause for alarm however but rather a cause for us to throw ourselves on God's mercy and ask him for his forgiveness and in return receive a divine hug.

Prayer topics

Pray to be forgiven for the things we have done wrong.

Give thanks for sins forgiven.

Quote

Hope is the only bee that makes honey without flowers.

ROBERT GREEN INGERSOLL

Friday 11th December

Verse from Scripture

*Come now, let us argue it out,
says the LORD:
though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be like snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool.*

Isaiah 1:18

Reflection

Feeling guilty is an emotion that we can all suffer from on occasion whether we deserve to or not. What hope then is to be found in this verse of scripture with its promise of forgiveness. Isaiah was of course prophesying to Israel as a nation but we can all learn something from it about sin and forgiveness. Regardless of what we may have done and how unforgiveable it may seem, there is nothing that God cannot or will not forgive. For our part there is nothing we can do to earn God's gracious forgiveness but we do need to accept that we sometimes fall short of God's standards and humbly turn to him in repentance and seek his mercy.

Prayer topics

Pray for the humility to accept our mistakes.

Give thanks for those who have forgiven you.

Quote

it's always something, to know you've done the most you could. But, don't leave off hoping, or it's of no use doing anything. Hope, hope to the last!

CHARLES DICKENS

Saturday 12th December

Verse from Scripture

Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.
Romans 12:12

Reflection

I am writing this at the time of the second period of lockdown due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, and this verse speaks to the very heart of our situation. Most of us, I am sure, are longing to get back to some kind of normal, to spending time with our families and to come together again for worship. But we don't want to rush it. We need to make sure that we can do all these things safely. So, we are called to be patient and to persevere in prayer whilst rejoicing in hope. It might seem that there is not much cause for rejoicing, but you see, our hope is in the knowledge that God is always with us, whether we recognise that fact or not, and so we can be confident that he has not left our side in any of this. His love for us is just as strong as it ever was. His plan for us is in place just as it always is. So, let's be patient and wait on God and through faith in him know and rejoice in the certain hope that this time of trial shall come to pass.

Prayer topics

Pray for those who are suffering as a result of the pandemic.

Give thanks for the gift of patience in trying times.

Quote

Hope is the companion of power, and mother of success; for who so hopes strongly has within him the gift of miracles.

SAMUEL SMILES

Sunday 13th December

Verse from Scripture

Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Titus 2:13

Reflection

Advent is the season when we look forward to celebrating the birth of Jesus, but also to the time when our Lord will return which will be the crowning glory to his mission to reconcile the whole of humankind to God, a mission that began with his birth.

We may well wonder why the Word became flesh in the first place, leaving heaven to dwell among us fallen human beings. We may never know, but perhaps the answer lies in the fact that by His illuminating light which pierces every darkness, we might see His glory, believe in Him and be filled with His grace which brings us the truth we have failed to grasp on our own. This then may be the reason why the Incarnation, the moment when the Word became flesh, is so important to the Christian faith so that we may perceive the grace and mercy of God who despite our many failings, longs for our reconciliation, and that we being moved by the Holy Spirit, may have Hope.

Prayer topics

Pray for the reconciliation of broken relationships.

Give thanks for the ministry of counsellors.

Quote

Hope lies in dreams, in imagination, and in the courage of those who dare to make dreams into reality.

JONAS SALK

Monday 14th December

Verse from Scripture

"Hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began."

Titus 1:2

Reflection

The hope of eternal life through faith in Christ lies at the heart of the Christian faith. God promised, even before his awesome act of creation, that fallen humankind would receive eternal life as a free gift of grace through faith in the birth, life, death and resurrection of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ who is our blessed Hope. We have also been assured, in both the Old and New Testaments, of our hope of eternal life which can only be accessed by faith and cannot be earned or deserved, for it is freely given by the grace of God which He promised before time began.

This hope in Christ is not only a future expectation but it is already our present possession, for when we were saved by grace through faith in Christ we were made children of God; and therefore inheritors with Christ of all that he desires for us. Nothing is as sure as the Word of God, for He cannot lie and in due time God will fulfil His word to the letter. Let us rejoice and be glad that God has given us eternal life both now and in the ages to come - which is ours by grace through faith in Christ Jesus our Saviour.

Prayer topics

Pray for those who are near to the end of life.

Give thanks for all those who minister to the dying.

Quote

Courage is like love; it must have hope for nourishment.

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

Tuesday 15th December

Verse from Scripture

But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

1 Thessalonians 5:8

Reflection

There is no doubt that we are living in perilous times and we are all in need of protection and a little hope. When we are afraid and feel threatened our hearts race and instinctively our minds turn to thoughts of "fight or flight." Christians however have another option by turning to Christ and putting on the armour of God. Faith and love are like an armoured breastplate, protecting our hearts from fear and hate. Hope is like a helmet protecting our minds from despair and despondency. Certainly, these are perilous times, but with faith in God we can move forward with confidence; with His love for others, we can drive out hate; and with hope in the promises of God, we can persevere through any problem or trouble we might face.

Prayer topics

Pray for courage when facing difficult situations.

Give thanks for those who have shielded us from harm.

Quote

Hope is important because it can make the present moment less difficult to bear. If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear a hardship today.

THICH NHAT HANH

Wednesday 16th December

Verse from Scripture

..so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints,

Ephesians 1:18

Reflection

I remember as a small boy seeing a pond yacht in Woolworths that I really wanted and I determined to save up my pocket money to buy it. It took me several weeks and during that time I lived in the hope that it would still be there when I had saved up enough money to buy it. The day finally came when I had saved enough and mum took me to Woolworths to buy the longed hoped for yacht. It was still there but you know it didn't look half as good as, in my mind, I had built it up to be over the weeks of longing and I spent my savings on a cowboy outfit instead. The point is that living in earthly hope can often be the best part of the whole deal, but it can, and often does end in disappointment. That is not the case with Christians, because we live with the "eyes of our heart enlightened" as to what God has in store for us, so it is that we can live in the certain hope that what is to come is far better than anything we could ever deserve or imagine.

Prayer topics

Pray for God's guidance in what to hope for.

Give thanks for those who have acted as guides in our lives.

Quote

Hope is a waking dream.

ARISTOTLE

Thursday 17th December

Verse from Scripture

*To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
Colossians 1:27*

Reflection

Sharing what you hope for with another person can often be something of a risky business. The fact is they might find your hopes unbelievable or even stupid and cast scorn and doubt on your dreams. All of which of course can be very hurtful and can even cause you to doubt that what you hope for has any chance of ever becoming reality. As Christians, however, we should never let what other people think trouble the hope we have in Jesus. You see, we have a responsibility to share our Christian hope with as many people as possible. This too, of course, will often be met with derision, as society becomes more and more secular, but it is not what people think but what God knows about us that really matters. We have, you see, the happy certainty that one day we will share God's glory. And our guarantee of heaven is in God's masterplan. That is the hope we need to share with everyone regardless of the risks involved.

Prayer topics

Pray for persecuted Christians everywhere.

Give thanks for evangelists.

Quote

*Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow.
The important thing is not to stop questioning.*

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Friday 18th December
Verse from Scripture

*And all who have this hope in him purify themselves,
just as he is pure.*

1 John 3:3

Reflection

The journey we are all on, as Christians, is to become more Christlike and our future hope is centered on this truth. There is no exception here. We who have this hope need to take a step back and examine our lives and root out those things we know to be wrong, the things we may wish to keep hidden. We must seek to walk honestly before God as we go about our daily lives, no longer trying to hide our mistakes but admit them trusting in our Lord's grace and mercy for forgiveness. We must have hearts that long to be like Jesus for he is our example; for although he knew no sin he lived in this world with all its attractions and temptations yet remained pure and without sin. We have a future hope that is absolutely guaranteed. Therefore we must seek to live holy lives and live in a way that is pleasing to God, not to receive his love and forgiveness, for that is already freely given, but in thankfulness for it.

Prayer topics

Pray for the mission of the Church.

Give thanks for Christian travelling companions.

Quote

Hope is the companion of power, and mother of success; for who so hopes strongly has within him the gift of miracles.

SAMUEL SMILES

Saturday 19th December

Verse from Scripture

For the law made nothing perfect; there is, on the other hand, the introduction of a better hope, through which we approach God.

Hebrews 7:19

Reflection

Following the recent presidential election in America, Donald Trump the controversial US president of the last four years, refused to accept defeat and would not concede that the President Elect, Joe Biden, had won the election. Instead he has resorted to the law, accusing the Democrats of having falsified the results, thus drawing into question the whole democratic system. The law is vital to the smooth running of society but its efficacy depends on the majority of people, including those in positions of power, supporting it. The law is good but people can misinterpret and do misuse it. A major point made in the New Testament is that the law of Moses was never meant to be our final, ultimate means of salvation. Rather, the law was meant to teach us and to direct our hope to God's perfect promise, in Jesus Christ. The law could never *completely* save humankind. Nor, for that matter will it save Donald Trump's presidency. Christ, on the other hand, offers not only the perfect sacrifice but will serve eternally as our priest. In that way, Jesus, who is the fulfilment of the law, can save us where human efforts will always fail. With that in mind perhaps Donald Trump would be better off turning to our lord in prayer, seeking the gift of a better hope.

Prayer topics

Pray for the politicians and those who make our laws.

Give thanks for the police and those who work in the legal system.

Quote

To live without hope is to cease to live.

FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY

Sunday 20th December

Verse from Scripture

Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Hebrews 7:25

Reflection

I am sure that most of us have experienced times when we have been lost for words especially when we are talking to God in prayer, either because of the enormity of the situation or because of our own feelings of inadequacy, or because we find it hard praying for ourselves, words fail us. Regardless, however, of how serious, personal or complex the situation may be that takes us out of our comfort zone and renders us speechless, we need not lose hope. For in Jesus we have the perfect mediator who is always willing to make intercession on our behalf or on behalf of those whom we are praying for. The point is all we need to do is lift the name of the person or situation that concerns us to Jesus and leave the rest to him. It is for that reason that this particular verse of scripture has been said to be the crowning jewel of the Book of Hebrews. It speaks to us of how Jesus is uniquely prepared to be the go-between for us with the Father. He is divine and therefore can interpret God to us. He became human so He can represent us to God. All this means of course that there is good reason for hope in any and every situation confident that whatever the result, it is in God's hands.

Prayer topics

Pray for those who are unable to speak for themselves.

Give thanks for those who speak for the voiceless.

Quote

I wake up every morning believing today is going to be better than yesterday.

WILL SMITH

Monday 21st December

Verse from Scripture

His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'
Matthew 25:21

Reflection

"Well done, good and trustworthy slave." These are words, I am sure, that we would all hope to hear when the time comes to meet our maker. We might feel uncomfortable, however, with being called slave, but in the context of our Lord's parable it is used almost as a term of affection and out of mutual respect. As followers of Jesus, we too have a responsibility not to hide our God given gifts but to share them with others, bringing light and hope into their lives. Responding to the greatest needs of our day with love and hope reflects the hope that we have in our hearts. When we do, something incredible will happen. We'll encounter a living God working through us to usher in His kingdom of love and justice on earth. To end exploitation. To restore lives. To empower communities. And in serving them, we'll serve Him. What a hope that is!

Prayer topics

Pray for an end to modern day slavery.

Give thanks for those who work in the service industries.

Quote

You are not here merely to make a living, you are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if you forget the errand.

WOODROW WILSON

Tuesday 22nd December

Verse from Scripture

But, as it is written,
*"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart
conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him"—*
1 Corinthians 2:9

Reflection

These words from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians should fill us with hope. It is a promise that what is to come when this life is over is beyond our imagining. Now, I know most people are not very good at trusting in something they can't see, taste or feel. These days people want scientific proof before they will accept anything as being true. But where is the faith in that? And where is the hope? The truth is that most people would rather put their faith in the things of this life, with all its troubles and woes, and simply hope for the best. On the other hand, Christianity is largely built on what we don't know, and yet our hope is certain, based on faith in the written and living word of God, and the promise made in the death and resurrection of our Lord that will be realised with his return.

Prayer topics

Pray for people mourning the loss of a loved one.

Give thanks for those people who have touched our lives and have now passed into the heavenly realms.

Quote

*Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well,
but that something makes sense, regardless of
how it turns out.*

Vaclav Havel

Wednesday 23rd December

Verse from Scripture

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

Reflection

This verse of scripture is a wonderful prayer that Paul wants every believer to experience. When you read a verse like this, how does it make you feel? Does it make you feel special? It does me, and it forces me to ask, "Does that verse even come close to describing me? Can I honestly say that my life is *filled* with *all* joy and peace in believing? Do I *abound* in hope?" And, since we all tend to give ourselves the benefit of a doubt in these matters, I need to ask, "Would my family or good friends describe me in that way, as being *filled* with *all* joy and peace in believing and *abounding* in hope?" I am sure that most families would hesitate in answering that question. The truth is our families hopefully see the best of us, but all too often they also get to see the worst as well. God and our families, however, knowing that we are far from perfect love us anyway. Now I don't know about you but that fact alone causes me to abound in hope.

Prayer topics

Pray for the grace to be able to see the best in people.

Give thanks for your families.

Quote

Plant seeds of happiness, hope, success, and love; it will all come back to you in abundance. This is the law of nature.

STEVE MARABOLI

Thursday 24th December

Verse from Scripture

"She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Matthew 1:21

Reflection

Christmas Eve, what a magical time, laden with hopeful expectation, the world holds its breath. The hope of all the world is about to be realised in the birth of a baby born in the most inauspicious of circumstances. The long awaited Messiah is to be born not in a palace but in a stable at the back of an inn, a manger for his crib. A sign that this royal birth was to be different. This child was to be non other than the Saviour of the world. This is what Christmas is all about. This is what Jesus was coming into the world to do: He was coming "to save His people from their sins" giving hope to people everywhere, rich, poor, the sinful and the fearful, the right and the wrong. The light of the world is about to shine and the darkness will not overcome it.

Prayer topics

Pray for a peaceful and blessed Christmas.

Give thanks for the joy of Christmas.

Quote

"And when the Lord Jesus has become your peace, remember, there is another thing: good will towards men. Do not try to keep Christmas without good will towards men." -

Charles Spurgeon

Christmas Frustration????

I said to God, upon my knees
“O Lord, I am so cross!
“That gift I sent to Aunt Denise
“Within the post is lost!
“That tree I bought for forty pounds
“(Well, just a penny less)
“Its needles lie upon the ground
“It looks a total mess!”

“I know,” said God, “I understand,
“I sent my Son, you know.
“He came to Earth, just as I’d planned
“Two thousand years ago
“Was born within a stable bare –
“The cattle heard Him cry
“He spoke of love, men didn’t care
“They led Him out to die.”

“No gift was given with such love
“No higher price was paid.
“He left His throne of light above
“For sin His life to trade.
“But even after all these years
“This gift you men eschew,
“So Christmas is a time of tears

“For Me, as well as you.”

By Nigel Beeton

Parish Pump

ADVENT PRAYERS

God of hope
be with us in our Advent journey
to the stable and beyond,
be with us in our meeting
and in our travelling together,
be with us in our worship
and our praying together,
be with us in our Advent journey
to the stable and beyond,
our God of hope.



God of hope, who brought love into this world,
be the love that dwells between us.
God of hope, who brought peace into this world,
be the peace that dwells between us.
God of hope, who brought joy into this world,
be the joy that dwells between us.
God of hope, the rock we stand upon,
be the centre, the focus of our lives
always, and particularly this Advent time.



God of the journey, your invitation is to all
to walk with you without fear of stumbling
Your arm enough to steady the feeblest soul
Your grace to rescue us should we fall
Grant us faith enough to take you at your word
To know that when our hearts are heavy
and the destination seems so distant
that you are there with us along the road
Forgive us those times when we doubt your Word
when we awake and feel alone
Draw us ever closer into your family
that we might know your presence
and sing your praises
all the days of our lives. Amen

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ADVENT PRAYERS

A Prayer to Prepare My Heart for Christ's Coming

Father, just as You sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus, help me to clear the path in my heart, too. Show me the distractions in my life that block me from all-out worship of You this Advent. Lord, I await Your coming! As I celebrate the first Advent--the first coming--I look toward the day where I will see You face to face. I imagine what it will be like. Give me a heart, Lord, that looks for Your coming on a daily basis. Help me to live my life where I'm constantly seeking Your presence. My offering to You today is my righteous life for I know I am only clean because of Jesus. Show me today how I need to be refined, purified, forgiven. Give me the strength to ask for forgiveness and to then change my ways.

~Sarah Martin, from "The Awe & Wonder of Advent: Day 18"

A Christmas Prayer

Lord, as I enter into the fast-paced season ahead, help me walk slowly and quietly. Let me stop and listen to the angels sing of the greatest news ever told. Let my heart, mind and soul join the chorus. "Glory in the Highest!! The Messiah has been born!"

Among all the bright sparkling lights and cheery holiday tunes, let my spirit travel once again toward Bethlehem to honour and worship Jesus, my King, The Prince of Peace, the Lord of Hosts, Mighty Counsellor, Son of God, the Lamb. All Your love, mercy and power somehow made flesh in the tiny form of a humble baby born in a manger. Let me worship the only one who is worthy to take our sin away and open the gates of all eternity! *by Daphne Kitching*

