

The Gifts of Christmas: A Guide for Advent at Bethel

Week One: Hope

“...he has given us new birth into a living hope...” 1 Peter 1:3

Today we enter into the advent season, preparing our hearts to celebrate the birth of our saviour, Jesus Christ. This week we celebrate the gift of hope. As we move closer to the day of Christ's birth, the flame of hope begins to burn more brightly. Hope, which fueled the ministry of the prophets and the worship of Israel, must mark us as we prepare to celebrate Christ's birth and look forward to his return.

The gift image: *an anchor*, reminding us that we are secure in our hope.

Scripture readings:
1 Peter 1:3-4
Isaiah 43:1-3
Psalm 130:5-8
Isaiah 9:2
Isaiah 40:1-5

Questions for reflection:

What do these passages tell us about hope? What does hope mean in the Bible?
How do you experience God's gift of hope?
What is the hope you are holding on to this advent season?
How can we share the gift of hope with others?

Sing or listen to:

O Holy Night
O Little Town of Bethlehem,
O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Use this prayer as a guide for your prayers of hope this week:

Lord of hope, as night workers long for the sunrise, we long for the coming of Christ. We yearn for your Spirit to give us a glimpse of your glory, knowing that one day we will see in full. You know the suffering in our own lives and throughout all the world. This weight is too much for us to bear alone, and so today we choose again to place our hope in you.

Advent candle: (Purple)

This candle, also known as the Prophecy candle, assures us that we can have hope that God will fulfill all the prophecies declared in the Old Testament about Jesus. The purple represents royalty and repentance. In the Old Testament purple dye was rare and costly, only associated with kings. This is meant to remind us of the royalty of the coming King Jesus. It represents repentance and fasting as we anticipate the Lord's coming.

Say together: *“We light this candle as a symbol of our hope, as we watch and wait for Jesus to be born, and the promise to be fulfilled. Help us grow in the hope God has given us.”*

