



Hope

IN THE DARKNESS

Your Trinity Family Advent Devotional
TRINITY LUTHERAN, BLOOMINGTON, IL

Hope in the Darkness

A Trinity Family Devotional for Advent 2020

The devotion booklet you hold (either in paper or screen form) is a companion to our Advent sermon series called “Hope in the Darkness.” Hope is discussed often in the Bible. What does hope mean in Scripture? Expectation. For those that would like a longer definition, Biblical hope is “looking forward to something with some reason for confidence respecting fulfilment.”

In many ways, the year 2020 has seemed to eradicate hope. Things we were extremely confident about at the beginning of the year—employment, graduation and wedding ceremonies, seeing a loved one in the nursing home, going to school—either didn’t occur or seem unlikely. Many of us have experienced grief while isolated. Others are wary of making plans for the future because so many other plans have been cancelled. In the midst of all this uncertainty and disappointment, where can we find hope?

We find hope in our Savior Jesus, who humbled Himself by being born to bring hope in this dark world. Advent is a perfect opportunity to be reminded that not only do Christians have hope for the future through the certain promise of eternal life, but we also have hope in the present. We find this hope in the Bible, which constantly points us both to Jesus and God’s faithfulness. Scripture is a great place to turn in the midst of difficult times.

Our prayer is that this devotion booklet will give you time in Scripture to remind you of the hope you have in Jesus Christ. And may this hope comfort and encourage you this Advent season.

In Christ’s hope,

The Advent Devotion Team

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DAY 1 : Sunday, November 29, 2020

Bible Reading

Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again - my Savior and my God! Psalm 42:5



Devotional Thought

As you read Psalm 42:5, the theme verse for our “Hope in the Darkness” Advent sermon series, you can relate to those two questions. You know discouragement. You know sadness. It’s tempting to stop at those questions and focus on those things that can stuff our hearts with frustration... fear... hurt... hopelessness. However, this psalm teaches us to turn our focus from our hopelessness and fix our eyes on the one who provides hope. To fix our eyes on the one who entered our frustration-filled world as a baby. To fix our eyes on the one who has given us a Spirit not of fear but of power, love, and self-control. To fix our eyes on the one who endured our hurts on the cross so we could live a life of sufficient grace. To fix our eyes on our Triune God. In the midst of your discouragement and sadness, may you praise your Savior and God today! (PD)

Reflection Questions

1. What discouragement and sadness can you trust God to help you with today?
2. What are three things that you can praise God for today?
3. Who is someone that is experiencing plenty of discouragement and sadness that you could encourage today?

KIDS CONNECTION

God is our hope. Make a hope bracelet to wear throughout Advent. It can be as simple as a piece of yarn tied around your wrist, or creative as a pasta bracelet, or you can use beads if you have them at your house. When people ask you about it, share that it serves as a reminder that when we are sad or discouraged, we can focus our eyes on God and put our hope in Him.

DAY 2 : Monday, November 30, 2020

Bible Reading

So God has given both His promise and His oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to Him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary. Hebrews 6:18-19



Devotional Thought

I am interested in family history, so I drove to a central Illinois town looking for the gravesite of my great-grandfather. My great-grandfather was an immigrant who came to America not knowing the language and with very little money. He worked hard as a farmer. His wife died giving birth to their fifth daughter. Despite well-intentioned advice to send his girls to live with other families, my great-grandfather was determined to keep his young family together and not split them up.

I was surprised I found his tombstone so quickly, but it stood at least eight feet tall, making it hard to miss in the small cemetery. It was an impressive carving of an anchor overlaid by a cross. Today's verse explains the symbolism. Our hope in God is as secure as an anchor that holds a boat steady in shifting seas. That must have been the message my great-grandfather wanted to relay to future generations. (CL)

Reflection Questions

1. When the waves of this life hit you, what do you do to cope?
2. From today's passage, what makes God a good anchor?

KIDS CONNECTION

One of the greatest gifts we can leave our family is a legacy of faith: hope in God as an anchor in their lives; passed down from one generation to the next. Spend some time today telling stories about your great-grandparents and how they lived out their hope in God. Then imagine what your great-grandchildren might be like and your time by praying for your great-grandchildren asking God to bless them in specific ways.

DAY 3 : Tuesday, December 1, 2020

Bible Reading

Lead me by your truth and teach me, for you are the God who saves me. All day long I put my hope in you. Psalm 25:5



Devotional Thought

Did you know that you can learn how to hope? We might sometimes think of hope as a thing for people who are optimists or idealists, for people who seem to ignore the difficulty of daily life (or don't have any difficulty at all!). But in this psalm, David asks God to teach him how to stay on the right path and to show him how to continue in hope. David recognizes that the only way to remain in hope is to remain in the truth that belongs to God. That truth is found in the forgiveness, compassion, love, and salvation of the Lord. David knows that it's all too easy to forget this truth, so he reminds himself that God is the one who forgives. God is the one who has compassion. God is the one who loves and saves. And by remembering that God does all of these things for all of his people, David learns to have hope—and we, like David, can learn to have hope too! (HK)

Reflection Questions

1. When has it been challenging for you to have hope? Why was it hard?
2. How has God shown you his love, compassion, and forgiveness?
3. How can you help others learn to have hope?

KIDS CONNECTION

Like David, we need to be guided by the WORD of God daily, so we can learn to find hope in God. Hide an object in your house, blindfold one member of your family, and then use your words to guide them to the object. Take turns doing this, then talk about it.

Why was it hard to find the object? Could you have found the object without someone guiding you?

DAY 4 : Wednesday, December 2, 2020

Bible Reading

Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying.

Romans 12:12



Devotional Thought

Picture yourself climbing up to a platform 25 feet in the air, with a helmet, harness, and a little metal clip that fits into a trolley system, attached to a 325-foot cable that travels above the treeline. I know for many people zip-lines give absolute thrills, but for me, this picture ends when the instructor tells me to take that step off the ledge. I want to ask if I can get a guarantee that my harness stays attached, the cable won't break, and that I won't feel my stomach leave me for another altitude. Whether you are conquering a fear or taking on a challenge, you want to have some assurances. The same is true in this Christ-following life. In what can we be SURE? In Romans 12:12, Paul points out our response to two certainties in this life. We can be SURE there will be trouble (John 16:33), so be patient through it, and because of Jesus and His resurrection we also can be SURE this world is not the end (John 11:25), so rejoice in that hope. We have the assurance while riding the zip-line of life, God's got us forever! Our hope in Christ is a SURE-THING, we can be confident of that! Rejoice!! (MB)

Reflection Questions

1. What uncertainties in life are you currently facing?
2. As a follower of Jesus Christ, in what can you be sure?
3. What does it look like to "rejoice" today because of the sure hope you have through Jesus?

KIDS CONNECTION

There are lots of words used to describe God. Words like protector, healer, promise keeper, comforter and ruler. We know that we can trust God and can place our hope in Him, because we are sure of who He is. Today, spend some quiet time thinking about God.

As a family write down all the words you can think of to describe God.

Talk about why you chose those words.

Hang your "word picture" somewhere where you can be reminded daily who God is.

DAY 5 : Thursday, December 3, 2020

Bible Reading

I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called-- his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance. Ephesians 1:18



Devotional Thought

In yesterday's verse the Apostle Paul encouraged us to rejoice in the confident hope we have because of faith in Jesus Christ. Today's passage finds Paul praying that we understand this hope. Now that's a bold prayer! How could we possibly comprehend what God has done through this baby born in a feeding trough? How could we even begin to fathom that we are God's "holy people," set apart to do the works He has called us to do? In fact, this grace-filled gift is so difficult to grasp that we might begin to think we haven't been called by God. Our past sins can deceive us into determining that we're not included in Paul's prayer. But we are part of Paul's prayer! Paul knew all about not being worthy of the gift of grace. But he also knew that the power of the Holy Spirit transformed his heart and life. As you go forth in God's grace today, may the light of Jesus Christ help you understand the hope you have today, and may you live confidently in that hope! (PD)

Reflection Questions

1. What is one way you've grown in your understanding of the hope you have in Jesus in the past year?
2. What is one aspect of the hope we have through faith in Christ that you need God's help to understand?
3. What is one way you could live in confident hope today?

KIDS CONNECTION

God gives us understanding. Today, gift your neighbors by drawing them a picture, bringing them a baked good, helping them with a chore, etc. Attach or leave a note letting them know that they are loved by God.

DAY 6 : Friday, December 4, 2020

Bible Reading

My mercy and justice are coming soon. My salvation is on the way. My strong arm will bring justice to the nations. All distant lands will look to me and wait in hope for my powerful arm. Isaiah 51:5



Devotional Thought

What great news! Mercy and justice are coming! Salvation is on the way! It will happen—guaranteed—because God’s powerful arm will make it happen. God’s promises never fail. God is sovereign. God is in control. But we have to wait for it... We don’t like to wait for things. We want them now. It is really hard to wait for things, especially mercy, justice and salvation because they should happen now! But there is a way to make the wait bearable that we find in this verse... “Wait in hope!” Be confident that what God promised He will bring about. To build that confidence, read the Bible, pray, worship, and receive encouragement from fellow believers. (CL)

Reflection Questions

1. Where do you see the need for mercy, justice and salvation in your life?
2. How does it help knowing that God will bring it about in His perfect time?
3. What will you do as you “wait in hope”?

KIDS CONNECTION

“It’s not fair!! I got in trouble and they didn’t.” These are words that we hear at my house a lot! Moms and Dads know that the punishments may not seem fair, but it is the best way to teach our son or daughter. It is the same with God. He is in control and often when things seem unfair to us, God knows it is what’s best for His plan. During dinner time or a time when everyone is together, start a tradition of sharing your Wows, Pows, and Holy Cows! (Share what was great about your day, what was not great about your day and how you saw God at work that day.)

DAY 7 : Saturday, December 5, 2020

Bible Reading

Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence. Ephesians 3:12



Devotional Thought

In this verse, Paul is so excited for the Church—the capital-C Church, made up of everyone who believes in Jesus as their Savior. Paul knows that it is all too easy for Christians to be afraid, because he is writing this letter from prison! But even as a prisoner, Paul is not afraid. He knows that Christ is able to change fear into boldness, both in life and in prayer. We might want to give into fear, but because of our faith in Christ, we don't have to—we can be confident in the Lord.

What an exciting thing to share with others! We can share the story of Paul, a man who God used to share the Gospel even from a prison cell. We can share our own stories, too—how God has worked in our lives to bring us out of fear into boldness. (HK)

Reflection Questions

1. Is there another story you can think of (other than Paul) when God changed someone's fear into boldness?
2. When is a time that God changed your fear into boldness?
3. Who is someone you know who you can share your story with?

KIDS CONNECTION

Go for the Bold today! God does not want us to be scared.
God wants us to share His Word. God wants us to stand up for those who are being bullied. Call, write, facetime, or zoom with someone who needs to hear the hope of Jesus today.

DAY 8 : Sunday, December 6, 2020

Bible Reading

Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.

Isaiah 41:10



Devotional Thought

What is your BIGGEST fear? We all have an answer to this question because fear is universal. It could be spiders, heights, crowded rooms, flying, or the dark. You may be worrying about your children or grandchildren and their walk with the Lord, school, aging parents, finances, acceptance, job security, friendships, health, COVID-related issues, or (fill in the blank). On this side of eternity, God knew we would struggle with being afraid, which is probably why He addresses it 365 times in his love letter to us. The prophet Isaiah records these words of God both for the Judean captives, who feared God's abandonment, and for his children today, as we deal with anxieties and distress. God combats BIG fears with these BIG promises: He is God, He will not leave us, He goes with us, He is our strength, our Help, our Victory! There was one more BIG promise of God that Isaiah unfolds – His plan for future blessings through His Son, our Messiah (Isaiah 9:6), who offers a fearful people some BIG hope. It is because of Jesus Christ, these BIG promises can be our reality and our focus. Let's meet our BIG fears today with BIG faith in our BIG God, who follows through on BIG promises. That's BIG news!! (MB)

Reflection Questions

1. What is one BIG fear you are facing now?
2. How does hope in Jesus Christ give us BIG faith?
3. What is one promise you love about our BIG God?

KIDS CONNECTION

Always remember that God is with you. Memorize today's verse with actions. So do not fear (act scared), for I am with you (Point at sky, then point at yourself); do not be dismayed (hand on the forehead), for I am your God (point to the sky). I will strengthen you and help you (show those muscles); I will uphold you with my righteous right hand (hold right hand up, palm open).

DAY 9 : Monday, December 7, 2020

Bible Reading

O Lord, you alone are my hope. I've trusted you, O LORD, from childhood.

Psalm 71:5



Devotional Thought

The Lutheran Study Bible shares that this psalm “is for an older believer struggling with assaults on his faith, including temptations to think that his faith was in vain.” Although others are attacking him physically and telling him this “trusting in God stuff” is nonsense, he clings to his hope that God is with him AND will also help him in this situation. He also remembers that God has proven trustworthy numerous times “from my youth.” This verse reminds us of the many times Jesus encouraged people to faith “like a child,” a simple trust that God will fulfil His promises.

What assaults on your faith are you experiencing today? Are you tempted to think that your faith is in vain? If so, pray this verse as your prayer today. Reminding ourselves that God is our hope and that He’s provided for us numerous times before is a great thing to do as we face an uncertain future.

(PD)

Reflection Questions

1. Think of a time in your life when you witnessed God’s faithfulness. How did you see his faithfulness in that situation?
2. What is something you’re facing now that God is inviting you to have a child-like faith as you go through it?
3. What does it mean for you that “you alone are my hope?”

KIDS CONNECTION

God is unchanging. Draw a picture of yourself as a baby and draw a picture of you now. Talk about what has changed and then talk about how God never changes. God has always been holy, always been good, always been faithful, always been loving, always been righteous—and He has always been our rescuer.

DAY 10 : Tuesday, December 8, 2020

Bible Reading

“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



Devotional Thought

Do you need hope? Here it is!!! There is a PLAN despite the disaster you have gone through, are going through or will go through. Life is hard and we don't know what the next day will bring, but we know God. And God has a plan. God's plan includes using disasters to grow us and shape us. Know this: God has both the power and the desire to bring about good for you. You know God has the power because He is the Creator of all things. He is sovereign and in control of all things. He is omniscient and knows all things, including your future.

You might doubt God's desire to bring about good for you, but God does love you—even when you feel unlovable. You need only to look at the cross for proof of that love. This God who is beyond our understanding has a plan to spend eternity with you. (CL)

Reflection Questions

1. What “disaster”—past, present, or future—is stealing your hope?
2. How have you seen God bring you through other disasters?
3. Will you bring your doubts about God's ability and desire to bring about your future good to Him in prayer right now?

KIDS CONNECTION

God is unchanging. Draw a picture of yourself as a baby and draw a picture of you now. Talk about what has changed and then talk about how God never changes. God has always been holy, always been good, always been faithful, always been loving, always been righteous—and He has always been our rescuer.

DAY 11 : Wednesday, December 9, 2020

Bible Reading

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



Devotional Thought

Rejoicing in problems? Is it even possible? When it comes to problems, I don't want to think about how it might build my character or help me to grow. I just want the problem to be over! But these verses remind us that whenever we face problems—big or small—we are not alone. God has given us a part of himself: the Holy Spirit, who fills our hearts! So we're not left to ourselves to learn from our mistakes, deal with our problems, or endure hardship. We have the Holy Spirit working within us, helping us learn and grow stronger in faith. This doesn't mean that we won't have problems, or that they will disappear. But we can have hope and joy in knowing that the Holy Spirit is with us through every single problem we face. (HK)

Reflection Questions

1. Can you name a time when you had to face a problem, but you were reminded that God was with you?
2. What are some ways you remind yourself of the presence of God?
3. How have you seen the Holy Spirit's hope at work in the past year?

KIDS CONNECTION

God has a plan for you. Have you ever put a puzzle together? Were there pieces that you thought just didn't fit? But in the end all pieces fit together. Our life can feel like that sometimes, the plans you had just didn't work out. When this happens, we can remember that our hope is in God and remember that God has a plan for us. Grab a puzzle today and thank God that He always has a plan for us.

DAY 12 : Thursday, December 10, 2020

Bible Reading

Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping-- believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, "That's how many descendants you will have!" Romans 4:18



Devotional Thought

God made a covenant with Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. Well, you don't have to be a medical physician to know that this promise had to start with the birth of a child. Year after year, it wasn't happening. It wasn't happening. Abraham could have thought, "Why hope for this promise to be fulfilled when I am getting older than the stars by the minute?" Despite circumstances that seemed hopeless, Abraham continued to HAVE FAITH. Not only did he HAVE FAITH, but he expected God to fulfil His promise. When there was nothing left to hope for, Abraham still hoped. As a result of this PERSEVERING HOPE, he did become the father of many nations. His faith began a legacy built on the trust of the Lord. Despite how hopeless your situation is, expect God to fulfil His promises for you! (MB)

Reflection Questions

1. Whose persevering hope has been an encouragement for you and in what ways?
2. How are you demonstrating your faith in the Lord today?
3. Do you expect God to fulfill His promises to you?

KIDS CONNECTION

God keeps his promises. God promised Abraham that he would become the Father of many nations. Today have some fun and sing "Father Abraham" as a family
-- don't forget the actions!!

DAY 13 : Friday, December 11, 2020

Bible Reading

And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope.

1 Thessalonians 4:13



Devotional Thought

This verse provides two truths about the Christian life. First, followers of Jesus will grieve when fellow believers die. Some people think that Christians shouldn't have earthly sorrow, but Scripture clearly states that we will mourn. Even Jesus wept at the sight of Lazarus's limp body. So what's the second truth from this passage? That Christians mourn in hope. Let those words sink in.

CHRISTIANS. MOURN. IN. HOPE. Because of Jesus rising from the dead, we grieve with a confident expectation: not only are believers who died in faith with the Lord now, but when Jesus returns, their lifeless bodies, like the body of Lazarus, will rise.

On December 16th, 2020, Trinity will host our annual "Blue Christmas" worship service. The goal of this service, which is for those who are mourning loved ones or are struggling with any other loss, is to remind us that, even as we mourn, our hope is found in Jesus. (PD)

Reflection Questions

1. What are you mourning today?
2. How can the hope you have in Jesus help you as you mourn?
3. How can you share the hope found in Jesus Christ with someone who is mourning today?

KIDS CONNECTION

God is our comforter. Following Jesus doesn't mean we won't ever be sad. It means God comforts us when we are sad. Do you know someone who is sad right now? Send them a "Jesus hug" with a phone call or a card. If it's someone in your own family, give them a real hug and remind them that Jesus loves them.

DAY 14 : Saturday, December 12, 2020

Bible Reading

Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it. 16 But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. Peter 3:15-16



Devotional Thought

We are excited to celebrate the Christmas season. We decorate our homes, buy gifts, send cards, bake cookies, participate in special worship services, observe special family traditions and plan festive meals with friends and family. Have you ever considered Christmas activities as opportunities to tell others the reason you celebrate the season?

You know the story. The babe born in Bethlehem on Christmas was Jesus. He died on the cross for your sins on Good Friday. He rose from the dead on Easter and because He lives you have the hope of eternal life. Prepare to share your story. It is the hope that everyone needs that you can give. (CL)

Reflection Questions

1. Who will you pray for by name to hear the Good News this Christmas?
2. What small thing can you do to show the hope you have in Jesus?

KIDS CONNECTION

Share the reason for your hope. Send cards that contain a Christian Christmas message. Give gifts to people who cannot give you a gift in return, and explain that you do it because God gave you a gift in Jesus Christ that you can't repay.

DAY 15 : Sunday, December 13, 2020

Bible Reading

So each generation should set its hope anew on God, not forgetting his glorious miracles and obeying his commands. Psalm 78:7



Devotional Thought

Today's verse is at the beginning of a long psalm that sounds like a history lesson! It's a psalm to help remember 400 years of God's miracles, from Moses to King David. God parted the Red Sea, gave his people food and water in the desert, and made a shepherd boy a king. Even when they didn't obey his commands, God still took care of his people. And God still takes care of us.

Take some time to remember how God has cared for you. From when our parents were waiting for us to be born, through our childhood; in our relationships with family and friends; in our schools and jobs... See how God has worked miracles in our lives, including the best miracle of all: sending his Son to be born as a baby, to one day grow up to die on the cross and rise again, to save us from our sin! (HK)

Reflection Questions

1. Can you name some other miracles of God that are written about in the Bible?
2. Where do you see God at work in your own history?
3. How has God taken care of you and given you hope??

KIDS CONNECTION

God cares for us. Talk about the different ways that God cares for you. Then say a popcorn prayer (prayer where each person takes a turn praying, not in any particular order) and thank Him for caring for you.

DAY 16 : Monday, December 14, 2020

Bible Reading

I say to myself, "The LORD is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!"

Lamentations 3:24



Devotional Thought

Have you experienced grief in recent days, weeks, months, or last year? I think it could be safe to say we have all experienced sorrow over losses. Maybe there has been a death in the family, a move to a new place, a job termination, the cancellations of activities, missed holidays or traditions, or just a lot of change over a long period of time. There can also be sadness over the things that break God's heart: the sin in our lives that hurts others or brings about suffering or (fill in the blank). All of these things can cause grief. Our word today is actually a funeral song written for the fallen city of Jerusalem. As the prophet Jeremiah laments over the destruction of Jerusalem and the devastation of his nation, there is a ray of HOPE. Here we see that God's compassion is ever present and His faithfulness is great. There is also a realization that God's mercy is what saved his people from total annihilation. There are consequences to sin but we can have HOPE in the midst of tragedy, loss, sadness. Through Jesus, our eyes have been opened to the HOPE of eternity, where there will be no more tears, sorrow or death (Revelation 21:4). Lamentations 3:24 reminds us that this truth is our inheritance. What do we do with things we inherit? We have the privilege of passing this promise of HOPE on to the next generation. (MB)

Reflection Questions

1. When have you experienced grief in this last year?
2. When have you witnessed God's compassion and faithfulness through your grief?
3. What does it look like to pass on this "inheritance of hope" to the next generation?

KIDS CONNECTION

Do you have an object or maybe a bible that you have inherited or passed down from your grandparents, maybe your great or great, great grandparents? The greatest gift we inherited is our gift of eternal life. When we believe in Jesus, we become heirs (relatives) and also receive the same inheritance (gifts).

We have the gift of eternal life, living with Jesus forever!

DAY 17 : Tuesday, December 15, 2020

Bible Reading

Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see. Hebrews 11:1



Devotional Thought

Faith and hope are similar yet distinct terms. The object of hope is something in the future, while faith deals with future and present items. Our faith as Jesus followers prompts us to display confident hope in the midst of uncertainty. Our faith allows us to walk forward trusting that God will provide us with whatever we need. And the Bible provides us with countless examples of people living by faith. In fact, Hebrews 11 is often referred to as “the faith chapter” because it shares numerous individuals in the Old Testament who lived by faith. People like Abel, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, and Rahab. These individuals were imperfect people, just like us, who trusted God’s faithfulness and provision. As you go forth today, may you have faith and trust in God’s faithfulness and provision! (PD)

Reflection Questions

1. Who is someone from Scripture who lived by faith that you can relate to?
2. Who is someone you know who lives/lived by faith?
3. What situation is God calling you to live by faith in today?

KIDS CONNECTION

How do we know something is there if we can't see it? Can you see the wind? How do you know it is there? We know it is there because of the evidence or clues it shows. We can feel the wind on our face and we can see it blowing the grass and the trees. Our actions are evidence to our faith and hope in Jesus. We pray, we share, we love, and we trust in the promises of God.

DAY 18 : Wednesday, December 16, 2020

Bible Reading

You are my refuge and my shield; your word is my source of hope. Psalm 119:114



Devotional Thought

The Battle of Chancellorsville fought during the Civil War centered on a large, brick mansion that served as an inn at the junction of the Orange Turnpike and Orange Plank Road. Frances Chancellor lived there with her family, and when the fighting began they went to the basement. 30,000 men died during a battle that lasted several days, but Frances Chancellor and her family emerged safe and unharmed from their basement.

You have a place to go when the battles of life come crashing down. Open the door to the throne room of the King! Read God's Word. Come into His presence in prayer. Gather family and friends to support you. Nothing can touch you that doesn't go through our Lord first! (CL)

Reflection Questions

1. What bombardment are you experiencing right now?
2. What verses in the Bible bring hope to the battlefield?
3. Who can you ask to pray with you?

KIDS CONNECTION

God is our refuge, our safe space. Make a refuge (fort) out of couch cushions and a shield using a cardboard box. Find something soft (nerf balls, socks, toilet paper rolls) to throw at each other. When everyone is exhausted, look up the words of "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" and sing it together as a victory song.

DAY 19 : Thursday, December 17, 2020

Bible Reading

As we pray to our God and Father about you, we think of your faithful work, your loving deeds, and the enduring hope you have because of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 1:3



Devotional Thought

When we first read this verse, it seems like the emphasis is on how our hope comes from Jesus—and there is no doubt that it does! But there is also something familiar here—faith, hope, and love. Faith and love are descriptors: faithful work, loving deeds. Hope is an action and a noun—something we both have and do, something that endures.

Everything we do is infused with hope, and that hope comes from Christ. This is how we are able to shine the light of Christ to people in our lives who are in search of the hope that only Jesus can bring. When we live faithful lives, when we serve others in love, hope is at work, too. Praise God that we are able to bring his hope to the world through the way we live our lives, moment by moment, day by day! (HK)

Reflection Questions

1. Which is most challenging for you: being faithful, being loving, or being hopeful?
2. What is one place where you have an opportunity to be faithful in work or loving in deeds?
3. How have you seen Jesus bringing hope into your life or the life of someone you know?



KIDS CONNECTION

God is like a night light, shining even in the darkness. Place a star in your window that can be displayed both during the day and night, to share the light of Christ.

DAY 20: Friday, December 18, 2020

Bible Reading

You are my refuge and my shield; your word is my source of hope.

Psalms 119:114



Devotional Thought

“And the greatest of these is love.” “Love your neighbor as yourself.” “Love one another as I have loved you.” “Perfect love casts out fear.” “Love one another out of reverence for Christ.”

The above quotes are just a minute sampling of the numerous references to love in the Bible. The love referenced above and in today’s passage isn’t fleeting or based on emotions. This love is selfless and focused on the other person. This love often reveals itself through humble acts of service. When Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians, he hadn’t met them yet. But he heard from many sources about the ways they loved others. And from where did this love for God’s people come? Their confident hope in God’s promise of eternal life through faith in Jesus. It was this hope of forever being in God’s presence that spurred them to love one another as Jesus loved them. Whatever your situation looks like today, go forth knowing what God has reserved for you in heaven and love others in His name. (PD)

Reflection Questions

1. How are hope and love connected for Jesus followers?
2. Who is someone that you could love because of the confident hope you have of eternal life?

KIDS CONNECTION

God’s love for us is unconditional. This means that there is nothing you can say or do to make God love you more or to make God love you less. God wants us to love others in the same way. Is there someone in your life that is hard to love right now? Say a prayer for God to help you love like He loves. Then reach out to that person and remind them that they are loved. This can be done through an act of service, forgiveness, a phone call or card, praying together, etc.

DAY 21: Saturday, December 19, 2020

Bible Reading

This is why we work hard and continue to struggle, for our hope is in the living God, who is the Savior of all people and particularly of all believers. 1 Timothy 4:10



Devotional Thought

The Apostle Paul wrote 1 Timothy to encourage his mentee, Timothy, who was struggling to lead the church in Ephesus. Timothy's struggles included false teachings by other leaders and poor living by fellow believers. Paul knew that Timothy's struggles were overwhelming, so he encouraged Timothy to take his eyes off his temporary struggles and fix them on Jesus.

In your struggle today, remember that Jesus is with you. Remember that Jesus is living and active in your life through the power of the Holy Spirit. Remember that He is the Savior of all people. And remember that He is YOUR Savior, strong enough in the midst of your overwhelming weakness. May that knowledge give you peace that passes your ability to understand. (PD)

Reflection Questions

1. Why is the fact that Jesus is the "living God" important to you as His follower?



KIDS CONNECTION

The Holy Spirit is our GPS, guiding us to where He wants us to be. Put a special destination in your GPS and take a Saturday drive as a family. Talk about ways the Holy Spirit guides you on your way there.

DAY 22: Sunday, December 20, 2020

Bible Reading

Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. Hebrews 10:23



Devotional Thought

God can be trusted because Hebrews 6:18 tells us it is impossible for God to lie. Why would God need to lie? He has the power to do anything. He is in control of all things. He makes the rules. Unlike you and me, God doesn't have to make excuses as He answers to no one. He makes no mistakes. He has no guilt to cover up. Because God can be trusted we can act on His promises.

One promise that gives great hope during Advent is Jesus' promise to always be with us. The name Immanuel means "God with us." Jesus' last words on earth were recorded in the Great Commission: "And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). Hold tightly to the hope we have in all of God's promises! (CL)

Reflection Questions

1. What can you do to remind yourself of God's promises?
2. What promises in the Bible do you need to tighten your grip on?

KIDS CONNECTION

God is a promise keeper. Choose a favorite promise of God that the whole family can memorize. Make artistic renderings of the verse and post them around your home this Advent season.

Day 23: Monday, December 21, 2020

Bible Reading

I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13



Devotional Thought

Trusting that God is the source of hope—unshakeable, enduring hope—leads to joy and peace. We won't find peace on our own. Just look at what Christmas is to a world that doesn't know Jesus: decorating, shopping, baking, get-togethers (or phone calls), gift-wrapping (and unwrapping), cleaning... It is anything but peaceful. It might look joyful, but sometimes the holiday glitter is covering up a lot of hurt and sadness. We have more than glitter! We have the promise of joy and peace which God sent to us in the form of a baby, a baby who was all-God and all-human. He came to our world, which so badly needed Him, and brought salvation to us all. As we get closer and closer to Christmas Day, may we overflow with the hope, peace, and joy that comes from the only true source: our God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! (HK)

Reflection Questions

1. When you see Christmas outside of church, what do you see?
2. Who is one person you can bring the peace and joy of Jesus to today?
3. How can you help remind others of where true peace, hope, and joy, and come from?

KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus is our joy! Celebrate by singing: I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart!
I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy - Down in my heart (where?) (3x)
I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy - Down in my heart (where?) - Down in my heart to stay
I've got the love of Jesus, love of Jesus.....
I've got the peace that passes understanding
I've got the wonderful love of my blessed Redeemer...
I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy - Down in my heart (where?) (3x) I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy
Down in my heart (where?) - Down in my heart to stay (3x)

DAY 24: Tuesday, December 22, 2020

Bible Reading

I asked you to come here today so we could get acquainted and so I could explain to you that I am bound with this chain because I believe that the hope of Israel—the Messiah—has already come. Acts 28:20



Devotional Thought

This is the Apostle Paul again, talking to a group of Jewish people in Rome. Paul had recently arrived in the city and was living there under house arrest—but even when he was unable to leave his house, he still had a single goal: sharing the Gospel! The hope of Israel—Jesus—was always Paul’s hope, even when believing in that hope led to being under guard, locked in a house. Knowing he might eventually be killed for his faith didn’t stop Paul from sharing the Good News of Jesus. For the next two years Paul was able to talk about Jesus with everyone who came to visit—and no one tried to stop him! Paul wasn’t on his own, though. We know that this kind of hope-filled witness is possible through the work of the Holy Spirit, through the saving grace of our Messiah Jesus, and through the love of our Heavenly Father. (HK)

Reflection Questions

1. What do you think the people in Rome thought of Paul’s message?
2. Who is someone you don’t know very well, who you could become better acquainted with?
3. Think about the next two years—how might you share the love of Jesus in that amount of time?

KIDS CONNECTION

During this time of quarantine, we may feel confined. There are so many things that are different—school is different, church is different, how we hang out with our friends is different.

But the message of Jesus is the same, and like Paul, we can still share the good news of Jesus. Think creatively, think outside the box—now go grab a box and write down creative ways you can share Jesus on the OUTSIDE of the box. Pick one as a family and go do it!

DAY 25: Wednesday, December 23, 2020

Bible Reading

As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream.

"Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will

have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:20-21



Devotional Thought

You've probably read this passage of Scripture before, but let's review the facts. Joseph fell in love with Mary. They were engaged but the wedding was months away. And then Mary gets pregnant. Back then, the law called for an engaged woman who committed adultery to be killed by stoning. Being an honorable man, Joseph decided to quietly break off the engagement to avoid Mary shame and save her life.

But then an angel arrives while Joseph is dreaming and tells Joseph that Mary was not unfaithful. The baby inside her was conceived by the Holy Spirit! And she would give birth to the hope of the world, the one who would save people from their sins. That one dream conversation spurred Joseph to obey God and marry Mary. What an awesome example of obeying God's calling, even when it doesn't make sense to us or others! This Christmas, may we remember the reason the Savior came: so we can have confident hope! And may that give us peace as we follow our Savior. (PD)

Reflection Questions

1. What is God calling you to do? And what would obeying that call look like?
2. What is one of your favorite parts of the Christmas accounts in the Bible? Why?

KIDS CONNECTION

We can trust in God's plan for us. We can trust in God's plan even when we can't see it. Take 2 paper towels. On one towel draw a beautiful picture and on the other draw only pieces of your first picture (so you can't tell what it is). Then lay the beautiful picture on the bottom and the other on top. Take a spray bottle with water and gently spray the picture. What happened? The beautiful picture showed through. God's plans are the same for us. He doesn't always show us His plan right away, but over time His beautiful plan is revealed.

DAY 26: Thursday, December 24, 2020

Bible Reading

Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!", he said. "I bring good news that will bring great joy to all people." Luke 2: 9-10



Devotional Thought

We waited a long time for this good news of the birth of a Savior. Bible scholars point to Genesis 3:15 as the first announcement of the coming Messiah whom we know as Jesus Christ. Adam and Eve had just committed the first sins. If we did contact tracing we would find that the sin that infects us came from them. God immediately put His rescue plan into motion. You can trace the cure through the pages of the Bible. The promise of a Savior came to Abraham, Issac and Jacob, on to King David and the royal line that followed him until the angel proclaimed the Lord's birth. Jesus' blood shed on the cross provides an endless supply of the antidote for sin, available to all persons of all times. Those who receive this free cure now live in hope of spending a sin-free eternity with the Savior who loves them. (CL)

Reflection Questions

1. What sin infects you that you need to confess?
2. Who do you know that needs to hear the "good news" of a cure for sin that brings "great joy"?

KIDS CONNECTION

Light your advent wreath or a candle and take turns reading Luke 2 verse by verse. Have each person share a thought about the Christmas story. Consider making this a Christmas Eve family tradition.

DAY 27: Friday, December 25, 2020

Bible Reading

The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them. Luke 2:20



Devotional Thought

Just imagine what the first Christmas was like for the shepherds! They were so excited to find this baby that they told everyone. Bethlehem was a busy place; so many strangers were in town for the census. And they would have travelled back home, carrying the shepherds' story—Jesus' story.

We've heard the shepherds' story too—and we know what happened next! We know that the baby in the manger grew up to become a teacher and a miracle-worker. We know that He was sentenced to a death He didn't deserve, that He was dead for three days. We know He came to life again! All this because our God loves us and longs to give us hope. This baby, Jesus Christ, is the Son of God and He is our Savior, in whom we have the hope of eternal life—a hope everyone needs to hear! (HK)

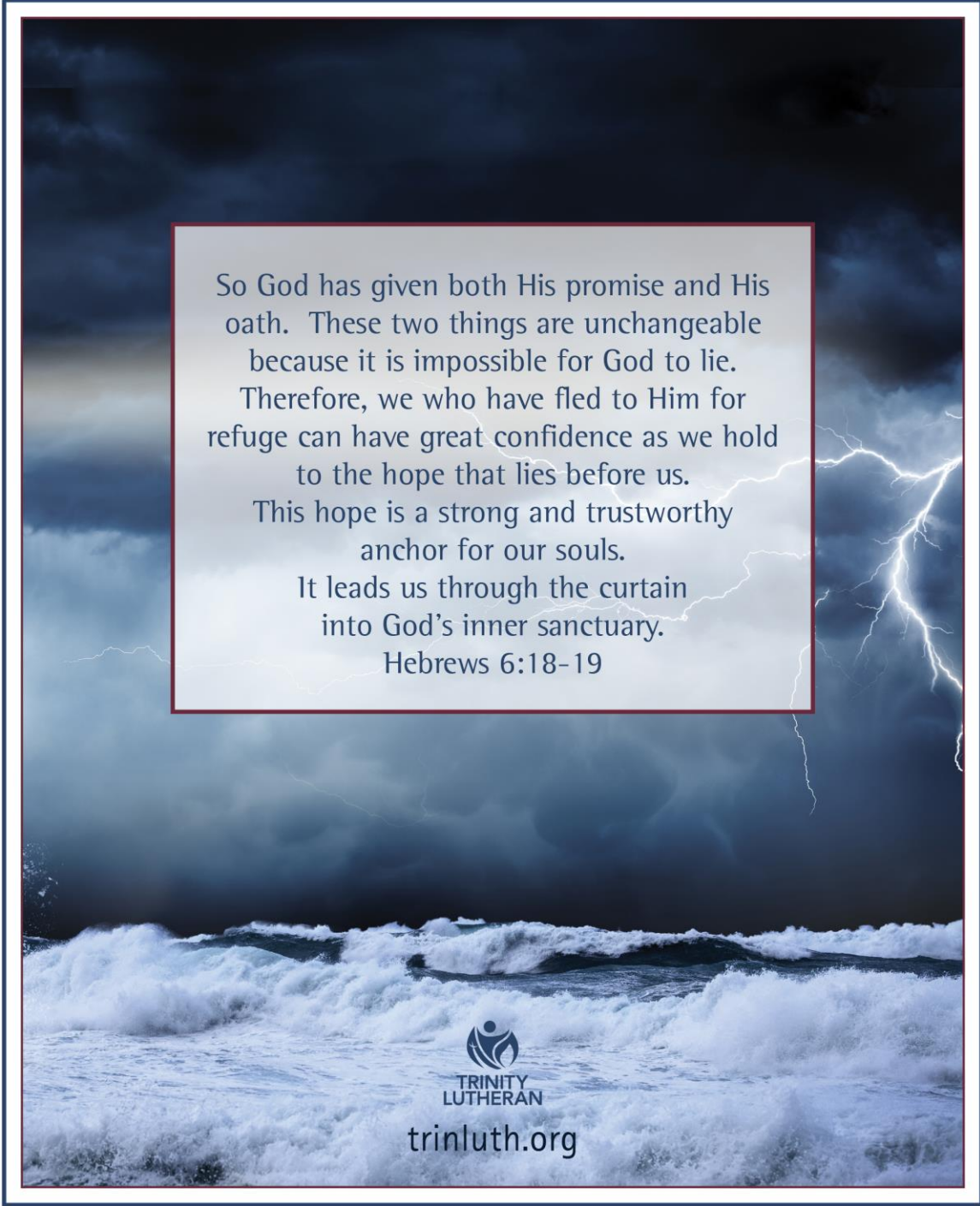
Reflection Questions

1. How do you think the shepherds felt after seeing the baby in the manger?
2. Think about the life this baby had ahead of Him—where do you find hope in the life of Jesus?
3. How can you thank God for the hope found in Jesus?

KIDS CONNECTION

Jesus is our eternal hope! Today is Christmas. Spend the day celebrating and worshipping our Savior. Take your bracelet you made on day one and hang it on your tree. Each year when you pull out the Christmas decorations, you can be reminded of the hope we have in Jesus.

Notes & Reflections



So God has given both His promise and His oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to Him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary.
Hebrews 6:18-19



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