

The Gift of Advent

Week 3: The Gift of Hope

Hope

A gift is given freely and offered in love. In the weeks before Christmas, we often race around finding just the right gifts for friends and family. The season of Advent is itself a gift—a time set apart to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ. We give thanks for God's gift to us in the baby of Bethlehem.

This series highlights four aspects of Advent that become blessings and gifts in our lives: patience, speech and silence, hope, and family.

Week 1: The Gift of Hope

Hope is a word on which our future rests. We cannot know what will come, but with faith we place our hope in Christ. Like Zechariah, we hope for the tender mercy of our God, light in the midst of darkness and death, and the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of our sins.

Opening Dialogue (*Isa. 42:16, 30:26, 11:6, 35:1, 7:14*)

Hope is a candle that flickers yet offers warmth and life.

The darkness will turn into light, the moon shine as bright as the sun.

Hope is a hand that grasps and reaches out in peace.

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard lie down with the kid.

Hope is a song that grows and fills the world with joy.

The wilderness and dry land will be glad, the desert rejoice and bloom.

Hope is a promise of a baby to be born in a manger stall.

A woman will bear a son and name him Immanuel.

Gathering Song—ELW #250

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

Prayer (Isa. 40:31))

O God for whom we long, we thank you for the gift of hope. Be our light in the darkness, that we may proclaim with Isaiah:

Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

**They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.**

We pray in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, your gift to all the world.

Amen.

Psalmody—Psalm 33:13-22

Reading—Romans 8:18-25

Song

For each perfect gift of thine,
peace on earth and joy in heav'n;
for thyself, best gift divine,
to our world so freely giv'n:
Praise we sing to Christ the Lord,
Virgin's son, incarnate Word!
To the holy Trinity
praise we sing eternally!

NUN KOMM, DER HEIDENHEILAND (ELW #879 st. 5; ELW #263 st. 6)

Gospel—Luke 1:67-79

Reflection

The reflection concludes:

God has given us eternal life,
and this life is in Jesus, God's Son.

Hymn—ELW #266

Prayers

For this time of waiting and watching for the coming of our Savior, **we give you thanks, O Lord.**

When the Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words, **we cry to you, O Lord.**

For the hope that shines through the darkest night, **we turn to you, O Lord.**

For the gift of friends and family who walk with us through life, **we praise your name, O Lord.**

Gather us all under the promise of your Son, who taught us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

Blessing

The peace of God accompany your waiting, the light of Christ warm your hearts, and the joy of the Spirit fill you with hope. **Amen.**

Sending Song—ELW #244

Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is coming soon.
Thanks be to God.