
A RHYTHM FOR
ADVENT



VOL 4





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INTRO

PROPHETIC PROMISES OF ISAIAH

ISAIAH 9:2-7

The excitement of the Christmas season and the surprise of presents brings great joy. However, sorrow often accompanies us as we remember those who are no longer here. Remembering Advent provides us with an opportunity to have lasting joy and everlasting hope. Advent reminds us of the first arrival of Jesus and prepares our hearts for the promise of his second coming.

No Old Testament prophet can prepare our hearts better than Isaiah. He prophesied from 739–681 BC to a nation that had turned a deaf ear to the Lord. Hundreds of years before Jesus would enter into human history, Isaiah predicted His life and death with stunning accuracy. Isaiah is quoted in the New Testament more than any other prophet and is often known simply as “the Prince of Prophets.”

This Advent devotional will guide us through four key passages describing Jesus's arrival. We will gain Hope as we see his arrival in dark times, Joy at the prediction of His kingdom reign, Peace as we see his sacrifice, and Love as we receive His promise to save.

We hope this season brings you closer to Jesus as you discover the plan of God's salvation.

HOPE

ISAIAH 9:2-7

For too long, we've equated hope with wishful thinking. Hope becomes a flimsy, fragile thing. We hope for rain, good news, and "it all to work out." Then we come to a Bible verse like Hebrews 6:19 that declares hope to be an "anchor for the soul," and we wonder why our hopes make us feel more like a wave-tossed-dinghy than an anchored ship.

Biblical hope isn't a wish, though. It's a "confident expectation." It's something sturdier and more steady than this thing we've reduced it to.

We cannot hold fast to hopes that are mere wishes. But the hope that Jesus gives—the promises our faithful God has made and will surely keep—that hope will hold us fast even when our wishes don't come true.

Here's the bad news about hope: We can misplace our hope. We can set our expectations on the wrong things and suffer the sting of disappointment. But here is the good news: We can adjust our expectations and re-place our hope in what we've been assured of! We can align our hopes with the promises of our faithful God and wait with the confident expectation that will anchor our souls.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Consider Isaiah 9:2-7. What are some securing promises of God in these verses?
- Hope itself isn't failing, but many of the things we've placed our hope in have failed. We've hoped in political parties, familial relationships, financial stability, and social standing, and they have failed to stand up under the pressure we've put on them. Where do you tend to misplace your hope?
- Select one misplaced hope that you listed above. How does Isaiah 9:2-7 encourage you to replace that hope? What is one promise that God has made that you can place your confident expectations in?

PRAYER

Lord, so much of our hope has been misplaced, but we long for the confident, anchoring hope we find in You. Continue to reveal the promises and plans in which we can place our hope. And ultimately, would you reveal Yourself to us more fully as our Coming King and our Eternal Hope?

Written by Cody Andras

JOY

ISAIAH 11:1-9

Have you ever seen a tree ripped apart by hurricane winds or burnt by fire? The opening of Isaiah's prophecy uses this image as a reminder that poor, unfaithful leadership has dire consequences. In chapter 6, God warns that Israel will be cut down until only a remnant remains. Because of their hard-heartedness, everything God built through David will be almost completely erased.

However, chapter 11 offers a reason for optimism and a picture of the joy that people experience under a good and righteous king. All of a sudden, a new branch will sprout from the burnt remains. Israel will be reduced to rubble on account of its wicked kings, but their true King is arriving (the word "advent" literally means arrival). And when He comes, His people will be filled with joy!

This Christmas, we have an opportunity as followers of Jesus to be filled with joy because our King has come and is coming again. He is the fulfillment of everything that Isaiah 11 describes—the ability to choose the right course of action and the power to see it through. May we submit to His leadership in our lives and be filled with joy by following Him!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Are there parts of your life that feel like Israel in Isaiah 6, burnt down and barely hanging on?
- Verses 6-9 describe creatures that are usually enemies being reconciled to each other. How can Jesus enable you to reconcile with someone who has hurt you?
- How can you find joy today rather than dwelling on the painful aspects of life?

PRAYER

Jesus, You are our true and righteous King. We thank you for coming and leading us out of our darkness and into Your light. Please help us to follow You faithfully as we remember Your birth and fill us with joy as we do. Amen.

PEACE

ISAIAH 53

"Peace on earth" is a phrase that surrounds us during the Christmas season. We long for peace. We long for the peace of God to rule and reign in our lives and circumstances. J. I. Packer says this about peace: "The peace of God is first and foremost peace with God; it is the state of affairs in which God, instead of being against us, is for us. No account of God's peace which does not start here can do other than mislead." How can we experience this peace of God? Isaiah 53 tells us, about 700 years ahead of time, that Jesus would come and what He would do to bring about this peace with God.

As we reflect on the 9 verses in Isaiah 53, we find that Jesus did not have a majestic form, although He was the King of Kings. He was despised. He was acquainted with grief. He suffered for us, pierced through for our transgressions, and crushed for our iniquities. He was oppressed and afflicted and chastised for our well-being. That punishment brought us peace with God. By His wounds, we are healed. The price of our sin has been paid, and therefore, we can have peace with God.

As we reflect on His coming at Christmas, may we be reminded of the reason for His coming and His sacrifice that allows us to have the ultimate peace with God. And may we resolve to live in grateful obedience to Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- When you consider that Isaiah prophesied 700 years before Christ, how does that affect your view about the certainty of God's word, even when things might seem bleak and hopeless?
- Isaiah 53 speaks about Jesus bringing peace. How would you describe the difference between the peace that Jesus offers and the peace the world offers?
- Reflect on the cost of the peace Jesus brought, paying for our sins. How can you live in a way that honors His sacrifice and reflects His peace to others?

PRAYER

Our gracious God, we thank You for sending Jesus to save me. Thank you for paying the price of my sin that I couldn't pay. As I experience peace with you, help me always remember your sacrifice and help me follow you by living in peace with others. Amen.

LOVE

ISAIAH 43:1-7

The famous children's book *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* tells the story of a family encountering nature's intimidating obstacles - snowstorms, mud, and rivers - while on their quest to catch a bear. As they face each challenge, the family repeats these words: "We can't go over it, we can't go under it, We've got to go through it!"

God's people will also face trials in this world. While we wish we could go over or under them, it's a matter of "when," not "if." So what are we to do when we face our own waters, rivers, and fire? Isaiah reminds us of two key truths that God has given us: redemption and presence. Christ has saved us, declaring us sons and daughters of God, and He has promised to be with us forever.

This Christmas season we can confidently walk through our suffering because the King of Kings is right there with us. There is no guarantee that our trials will be easy, but we do know that God will hold fast to us in love. The flames may surround us, but we will not be consumed. God loves us so much that He would take on flesh and suffer to the utmost degree so we could be redeemed people in His presence through all obstacles.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Can you recall a time when you felt God's presence in the midst of a difficult situation? How does that shape your approach to suffering now?
- What is a trial or struggle you are currently facing? How can you embrace that challenge knowing that God is walking with you?
- Who do you know who is currently in a moment of suffering or hardship? How can you encourage them with the truths found in this Scripture passage?

PRAYER

Father, thank You for always being with me. I pray that in whatever trial I face, I will know that Your grace is sufficient for me and that Your power is made perfect in weakness. As I have been comforted by You in suffering, help me to comfort others in their own trials. Amen.



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