

## Isaiah 9 Hope

If you asked most people what Advent it is, they may not be able to describe it. For centuries, Christians have observed Advent, the four Sundays leading up to Christmas. Advent is from the Latin and means "coming into" as our Jesus came *into* the world for us. We needed Him and He came here to save us.

Christians remember Jesus' birth and entry into the world, and we also prepare for the promise of Jesus' coming return to earth. Advent is a time to prepare our hearts and minds to receive our promised Messiah. So, we welcome Him, both as the beloved child in the manger, but also as the King of Kings, The Messiah and Savior of the World. His birth was a cause for celebration.

I love how Isaiah 9 begins. "Nevertheless, there will be no more *gloom* for those who were in distress." No more gloom. Gloom describes life when created is separate from Creator. It is the sadness that clings to you, it is perpetual, it is partial or total darkness, it speaks of depression and dependency. Jesus came here for you to free you and to be the one and only cure for gloom. He sets us free.

Let's turn to the words of hope from Isaiah 9

*2 The people walking in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of deep darkness  
a light has dawned.*

And verse 4 and 5...

*4 For as in the day of Midian's defeat,  
you have shattered  
the yoke that burdens them,  
the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor.  
5 Every warrior's boot used in battle  
and every garment rolled in blood  
will be destined for burning,  
will be fuel for the fire.*

Jesus is the hope of the world, and, now let's read the beautiful words of Isaiah 9: 6...

*For unto to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
7 Of the greatness of his government and peace  
there will be no end.  
He will reign on David's throne  
and over his kingdom,  
establishing and upholding it  
with justice and righteousness  
from that time on and forever.*

*The zeal of the Lord Almighty  
will accomplish this.*

He paid for our sins. He is the hope for our future. In 1 Corinthians 1: 8 we see how the story ends “He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We always have Hope because of Jesus. My prayer for you is that in this season of such busyness, you don't lose sight of the hope behind the Christmas season. Hope that leads to Joy, hope that bubbles up in you, you have a *certain*, promised, coming hope. He is coming back. Hope with blessed assurance. It will happen. We will see Him face to face. It is not a maybe. He has prepared a place for us and we look forward to that day and feeling more excitement with each passing year. A Christian ages differently.

The four Sundays of Advent are recognized as each Sunday celebrates the four virtues. The candles on the Advent wreath symbolize hope, love, joy and peace. The Sundays of Advent prepare us more each year for His future arrival. It is a time to focus on the promise ahead. It is about our future hope of life eternal with Him and in the waiting, it is about our constant need for our Savior now.

The colors of Advent are purple and rose. The rose candle is for Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete means “rejoice.” We rejoice and we do not lose heart during the waiting.

As each candle is lit over the weeks ahead, take time to truly think about what Christmas means. He is our Hope. Remember what He did for us, but also what He will do in the ages ahead.

Only in Jesus do we have the beautiful gift of life and forgiveness. There is Hope in our future. There is so much more ahead to look forward to with joy.

Jesus is as real as your best friend or your spouse or your child. He is as close as a whisper away and He holds you every day, by your right hand. He is always on guard over us and always watching over us and never loses track of us in a day. He is amazingly, abundantly present.

Advent reminds us that our relationship with Him will someday grow even closer. It is a time of anticipation, like a small child looking at a gift under the tree. There is so much more to this life than what we can see. For now, we know in part, but soon we shall see Him face to face.

What could be a better reason for Hope than that? Let's pray...

Father God,

Every word in scripture points to the gift of hope we have because of Christ Jesus. We begin to see and understand just how great Your love for us is when we read the story of Jesus's birth in scripture. You showed us that great Light when You chose to send Your Son to this earth. You sent Him through a family tree that was scarred and broken. You chose a small and lowly city. The King of Kings and Lord of Lords was born among shepherds and livestock in a manger. The family was not ideal, the surroundings were not grand. The situation was full of difficulties. But You came in the midst of all of that.

Emmanuel

God with us.

God in the messy, the dirty, the difficult and the troubled.

You came to redeem and restore mankind. You came to dwell with us as fully God and fully man. You set aside the glory of heaven for one purpose. To be with us. You came to love us. You came to sacrifice everything and die for us, so that we would live.

Today, help us see that You are always with us. Your Spirit resides in us. You give us the gift of eternal life through salvation that only You, our Heavenly Father, can give when we believe in You, Jesus, when we repent of our sins and confess Your great name as Lord and Savior. You ask so little of us, only to believe.

On that first Christmas, You gave us the gift of hope, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. Thank You, Father God, for Your immeasurable gift.

God of Hope, we seek you.  
During this holy season of Advent,  
help us to see you in all whom we encounter.

God of Hope, we seek you.  
We seek you in the crude manger,  
a child born to save the world.  
May your hope be a comfort  
to all who long for justice.

God of Hope, we seek you.  
May your hope fill our hearts  
and grace our lips so that we might  
reflect your hope for all the world.

Amen