

ADVENT  
2021

DEVOTIONAL

TENTHCHURCH

# WEEK 1: HOPE

## ISAIAH 52:7-10

<sup>7</sup>How beautiful on the mountains  
are the feet of those who bring good news,  
who proclaim peace,  
who bring good tidings,  
who proclaim salvation,  
who say to Zion,  
“Your God reigns!”

<sup>8</sup>Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices;  
together they shout for joy.  
When the Lord returns to Zion,  
they will see it with their own eyes.

<sup>9</sup>Burst into songs of joy together,  
you ruins of Jerusalem,  
for the Lord has comforted his people,  
he has redeemed Jerusalem.

<sup>10</sup>The Lord will lay bare his holy arm  
in the sight of all the nations,  
and all the ends of the earth will see  
the salvation of our God.

## REFLECTION BY ZULFE

I often forget the circumstances in which God chose to take on flesh. Instead of showing up during Israel's Golden Age, perhaps just as Solomon was offering the inaugurating prayer for his grand temple, God chose a time in history where his people had not seen a prophet for 400 years, and were living like second-class citizens in their own land colonized by an oppressive empire. Isaiah speaks of singing bursting forth from Jerusalem's waste places. Somehow, God seems particularly delighted to surprise us with hope in the places it seems most absent.

When I talk with friends whose mental health has been ravaged by the pandemic, or when my refugee friends talk about struggling with loneliness and uncertainty in Canada after having lost everything back home, it is clear that many of us are desperately looking for hope in the world. How many around us are like Simeon (Luke 2:25-35), waiting for the “consolation of Israel” but unsure of what that even means or looks like?

It is in this advent season where we can reflect on God breaking through the timeline of human history to bring hope in the deepest depths of sorrow and disillusionment. And as we look to the hope God has provided, I pray that each of us would become the beautiful feet bringing good news to those around us who so desperately need it.

## QUESTIONS:

-What does the message of hope look like in your current season of life?

-Who is God leading you to encourage with the message of hope this week? Ask Him to show you one person you can reach out to inside the church, and one person outside the church (in your workplace, circle of friends, etc.).

# WEEK 2: PEACE

## ISAIAH 11:1-10

<sup>1</sup>A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;  
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

<sup>2</sup>The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—  
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and of might,  
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—

<sup>3</sup>and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.  
He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,  
or decide by what he hears with his ears;

<sup>4</sup>but with righteousness he will judge the needy,  
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of  
the earth.  
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;  
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.

<sup>5</sup>Righteousness will be his belt  
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

<sup>6</sup>The wolf will live with the lamb,  
the leopard will lie down with the goat,  
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;  
and a little child will lead them.

<sup>7</sup>The cow will feed with the bear,  
their young will lie down together,  
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

<sup>8</sup>The infant will play near the cobra's den,  
and the young child will put its hand into the  
viper's nest.

<sup>9</sup>They will neither harm nor destroy  
on all my holy mountain,  
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge  
of the Lord  
as the waters cover the sea.

<sup>10</sup>In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for  
the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting  
place will be glorious.

## REFLECTION BY VERNON LO

Isaiah foretold in the eighth century BCE that a Messiah would arise from the house of David. Jerusalem was under siege. Their king did not depend on God and relied on human efforts. Earlier, Isaiah described the savior as the prince of peace, full of wisdom and understanding in governing, powerful and mighty at war and with complete knowledge of God. The future peace on earth is envisioned with the image of tamed ferocious animals resting harmoniously with one another – even safe enough for children to come near. This peaceful future is a vision of God's coming kingdom. Jesus will turn the afflictions and iniquities of the world into righteous and justice.

Verse 3 tells us that there is deep joy in living before God in reverence: “and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.” Some of us may not fully understand what it means by fearing the Lord and are not able to enjoy the peace that comes with respect and awe of our creator. Our thinking might be similar to the Israelites in the Old Testament who were afraid of God's punishment for their rebellion. However, the message at the birth of the Messiah was “Do not be afraid” which gave us a glimpse of God's loving care towards humankind. We are totally safe, cared for, and protected when we embrace God with high regard and admiration!

Let us join the angels in singing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.”

## QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

- How have you experienced peace from God?
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will give you the peace that transcends understanding.

# WEEK 3: JOY

## ISAIAH 9:2-3, 6-7

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

<sup>3</sup>You have enlarged the nation  
and increased their joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as people rejoice at the harvest,  
as warriors rejoice  
when dividing the plunder.

<sup>6</sup>For 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.

<sup>7</sup>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.

## REFLECTION BY KIRSTEN ICKERT

Take a moment to reflect upon a time in your life when you experienced true joy. What did this joy look like? Sound like? Feel like? Where was God present in this joy?

Experiencing a sense of peace and joy may feel easier when our lives are moving along at a steady and predictable pace. But what about those times that feel less predictable and peaceful?

Although the people of Israel were living through turbulent times, we can be reassured and reminded of the promise of Good News from the prophet Isaiah amidst these times of uncertainty: For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace! (Isaiah 9:6).

As we continue to reflect upon and anticipate the arrival of our Lord and Saviour, be filled with joy that the Prince of Peace delivers us from darkness and invites us to walk in His light.

Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your son - our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace - as our source of joy and light in this world. We praise you for your continued goodness and faithfulness in our lives and pray that we would continue to spread your light to those around us.

## QUESTION AND SUGGESTION:

- How has God helped you experience His light and joy amidst the difficult seasons in your life?
- During this advent season, take some time to reflect upon how - with God's guidance - you can be a source of joy and light to those around you (family, friends, colleagues, neighbours, strangers...).

# WEEK 4: LOVE

## ISAIAH 40:1-5, 10-11

<sup>1</sup> Comfort, comfort my people,  
says your God.

<sup>2</sup> Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and proclaim to her  
that her hard service has been completed,  
that her sin has been paid for,  
that she has received from the Lord's hand  
double for all her sins.

<sup>3</sup> A voice of one calling:  
"In the wilderness prepare  
the way for the Lord;  
make straight in the desert  
a highway for our God.

<sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be raised up,  
every mountain and hill made low;  
the rough ground shall become level,  
the rugged places a plain.

<sup>5</sup> And the glory of the Lord will be revealed,  
and all people will see it together.  
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

<sup>10</sup> See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power,  
and he rules with a mighty arm.  
See, his reward is with him,  
and his recompense accompanies him.

<sup>11</sup> He tends his flock like a shepherd:  
He gathers the lambs in his arms  
and carries them close to his heart;  
he gently leads those that have young.

## REFLECTION BY JEREMIA CHOW

I am struck by the dichotomy of God's mighty power and tender love. Isaiah talks about God "coming with power", with a "mighty arm"; how "every valley shall be raised up", and "every mountain made low". There's all this language referring to God's power, might, and authority. And yet, the Scripture also says that he "gathers the lambs in his arms" and "carries them close to his heart". I picture a young shepherd boy who loves his sheep and carries them close to himself when one of his young sheep needs to be carried. This God to whom mountains bow down is the One who came in the form of human being to hold us close to his heart!

Isaiah talks about God's glory being revealed so "all people will see it together." God loves all of humanity and came into the world for all of humanity. He demonstrates his love personally to each of us, by choosing to send his Son in the form of a person. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

## QUESTIONS:

- Where in your life now do you need to experience both God's mighty power and tender love?
- As we remember Christ's first coming and as we wait for Christ to come again, pray that God would rule with a mighty arm and also comfort with his loving arms in this world that needs both justice and love.

# CHRISTMAS DAY

## JOHN 1:1-4, 14

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

<sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

## REFLECTION BY DARRYL SHOEMAKER

There is plenty that can leave us stressed out this season if we don't pause and consider the mystery of the creator of the universe showing up in a manger and longing to spend time with us. The word became flesh...calling us to step through the words and into a relationship.

I loved the image C.S. Lewis created around stepping through the wardrobe closet into Narnia. Like that image, Christ is waiting for us to step through to taste and see that His Kingdom is all we could ever need or want. We don't need an appointment or presentation. We don't need to tell a good story. In fact, all the better if we come with open hands carrying all that is broken, knowing we will be well received. He longs to spend time together – for us to receive his love, to discover

his wisdom, and to be given strength for each day. All we have to do is humbly ask and be willing to let go. Randy Friesen said that “The presence of the Lord and our fellowship with him is the focus of the history of salvation...God desires to commune with us, guide us, and empower us to live for his glory and mission.” For only Christ can bring all of creation into its fullness and every step in Christ is a step closer to that fullness of time.

Recognizing that you are in Christ is a Christmas present that revolutionizes how you see yourself and the world. We can be drawn into His presence daily until the end of our lives when we step through to the other side and see Jesus face to face, which will seem like the most natural step in the world.

May the light of Christ shine continually, driving away all darkness. May Christ, the Morning Star, be welcomed as a light ever burning in our hearts—he who gives his light to all creation, and who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

## QUESTION:

How can you open yourself more fully to God's living presence this Christmas season?