

# Finding Hope in Present Times

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## Introduction

Finding hope in a world full of darkness can be a struggle. Today as we celebrate the first week of Advent, we are discussing how Jesus brought hope into the world and changed it forever.

It is hard to believe that Christmas is just a short month away. Today, we start the celebration of Advent in anticipation of Christmas. Advent simply means the coming of Christ. For the next few weeks leading up to Christmas, we are going to explore the advent that Christ brings with hope, peace, joy, and love. That is what Christmas is all about.

Each week you will see that we have a candle lit leading up to Christmas. On Christmas Day, we light the final candle, which is the Christ candle.

Christmas is a time of hope, peace, joy, and love. Depending upon a person's life circumstances, Christmas is a time of celebration or a time of sadness. As Christians, we celebrate the Christ child that was born 2,000 years ago and how he transformed the world.

When we look to the purpose behind Christmas and its real meaning, it allows us to experience hope. Some would argue that Christmas is about spending time with friends and family, exchanging gifts, and enjoying one another's company. While all those things are wonderful, they are not what Christmas is about.

We want to begin this celebration by talking about finding hope in present times.

Today, people struggle to find hope in the midst of their circumstances. Sometimes, you can feel so buried by the burdens of the world that it appears that there is no hope. The struggles seem insurmountable, and it is difficult to see light at the end of the tunnel. There are many pressures that can bring us down from work environments to relationship issues, financial difficulties to family issues.

Satan wants you down and out this Christmas season. He wants you to focus on yourself and your situation instead of looking to Christ. Today, we encourage you to recognize the true reason for this Christmas season and place your hope in Christ.

## Blessed Hope

Two thousand years ago, slavery, captivity, and political oppression were the culture for the Jewish people who had been persecuted and dispersed. For hundreds of years, they had heard that one day they would be set free. One day, they would be free from bondage, and a deliverer would come and rescue them. This was the hope the men and women of God were promised would come. This was the hope that fathers told their sons and daughters. This was the hope that one day, a coming Messiah would set them free.

It was difficult for generation after generation to remain hopeful that the promised Messiah would one day come. Many gave up hope, but several did not.



The prophet Isaiah prophesied of the coming Messiah and spoke of this coming hope. When he spoke these words in Isaiah 52:7-9.

#### Isaiah 52:7-9

(7) 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!" (8) 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. (9) Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem.

These words of Isaiah brought comfort and solace. He spoke on behalf of God. God knew the suffering the people were going to endure. He knew they would need a Savior. He promised hope. He promised peace. He promised comfort.

Today, there are those who need hope this Christmas. There are people who need to hear that God knows their pain, God sees their suffering, and that God hears their cries. Remember that what you are going through will only last a season. God gives hope in the darkest of times and he knows what you are feeling and enduring.

#### Hope for Salvation

Friends, God loves you and will not abandon you. He brings peace and gives hope. Christmas is a time for hope. Jesus is the hope of the world. Let us read 1 Peter 1:13.

#### 1 Peter 1:13

(13) Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.

Two thousand years ago, the world experienced hope like never before when baby Jesus was born. Today, as Christians, we have that blessed hope knowing that he is returning one day to bring us home with him. In Christ, we have hope. We have hope in the present time, and we have hope for eternity.

Taking one day at a time is sometimes all we need to do to rest in the hope that comes from Christ. When we grasp that his grace is sufficient and his love is deep for us, we can put our hope in him.

Because God sent his son to be born and live a sinless life and die for us on the cross in our place, we have hope. We are no longer enslaved to sin. We are no longer bound by evil and selfishness. We can have salvation through Jesus' sacrifice that he made for each one of us. This is hope.

#### A Living Hope

In 1 Peter 1:3, we read about such hope.

#### 1 Peter 1:3

(3) Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

A living hope! That means that this hope we have is alive and active. This hope fills our hearts and gives us purpose in life. This hope fills our minds so that we can have the proper perspective in life when



facing difficulties. This hope fills our souls so that we can share it with others and have the confidence that one day we will be with Jesus in Heaven.

This is the hope we need each day to be encouraged and to share with others. This is the hope that brings light at the end of the tunnel and sheds light in the darkness.

Jesus is our hope. Knowing that he has prepared a place for us in eternity gives us hope. He is there for us in the midst of our circumstances when we feel there is no hope. Psalm 33:20 reminds us that he is our help in times of need.

Psalms 33:20

(20) We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.

Jesus is there to help us get through the hard times. We have hope that he is our shield, our protector, and our deliverer. He brings hope in the midst of our circumstances.

## Conclusion

This Christmas season, we invite you to experience this hope. If you have not said “yes” to Jesus, we invite you to. The Bible tells us that if we confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe with our hearts that God raised him from the dead, we shall be saved. All you need to do is acknowledge that you need Jesus, confess your sins to him, and invite him into your life. Then tell someone. Tell other believers that you said “yes” to Jesus. They want to rejoice with you.

We leave you with this one last piece of encouragement found in Romans 15:13.

Romans 15:13

(13) May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

