

Advent Series  
"Hope"  
Sunday, November 26, 2017  
Dr. Janet Cook, Senior Pastor  
© 2017 Prayers Ministries, Inc., dba River of Life Community Church

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, all Scriptures are from the NKJV Bible.

Welcome to the first Sunday of Advent. What an amazing season it is as we journey together toward Christmas. The Word *advent* is a version of a Latin term which means "coming." So we use these weeks leading up to Christmas as a chance to look forward to our celebration of the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, the light of the world, our Savior.

We will read the introduction in our books, "The Star A Journey to Christmas," page 7.

No matter where you find yourself today, you are invited into this journey. Will you journey toward Bethlehem, drawn by hope for the love, joy, and peace that await?

1. Acknowledge the Darkness.

Matthew 2 – God chose a star to guide the wise men to Bethlehem.

Psalm 19:1-4 "The heavens declare the glory of God;  
And the firmament shows His handiwork.  
Day unto day utters speech,  
And night unto night reveals knowledge.  
There is no speech nor language  
Where their voice is not heard.  
Their line has gone out through all the earth,  
And their words to the end of the world.  
In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun..."

Psalm 8:3-4 "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,  
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained,  
What is man that You are mindful of him,  
And the son of man that You visit him?

- God's glory is seen in the stars. But the thing about stars is they can't be seen in the light.

As we journey together toward Christmas this Advent season, let's be honest about the darkness we find in the world around us and the darkness within our own hearts.

Isaiah 9:2 "The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light;  
Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined."

- Nothing can rescue us except God. He shows up in our darkest hour!

## 2. Embrace the Waiting.

Since the beginning, God had a plan of hope when sin entered into the world.

Genesis 3:14-15 "So the Lord God said to the serpent:

'Because you have done this,  
You are cursed more than all cattle,  
And more than every beast of the field;  
On your belly you shall go,  
And you shall eat dust  
All the days of your life.  
And I will put enmity  
Between you and the woman,  
And between your seed and her Seed;  
He shall bruise your head,  
And you shall bruise His heel.'"

- This was Jesus, the source of hope from the very beginning.
- God had a plan of hope from the start but the waiting seemed like forever.

Advent is a time of waiting. While we wait to celebrate Jesus's birth, we also wait for our true hope to be fulfilled when Jesus comes again.

Will you allow this Advent season to serve as a reminder of the confidence we have as we wait in hope for what we do not yet see?

Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

- Hope fuels our faith.
- Hope draws us onward, giving us expectation that our belief and longing will be fulfilled as God has promised.

## 3. Commit to the Journey.

Psalm 31:24 "Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart, All you who hope in the Lord."

1 Peter 1:13 "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ..."

- Hope is about waiting, but that waiting involves a commitment to being present in our journey of obedience.
- The good news in all this is that where ever you are on your journey, it's okay; just keep following God's light.
- All you have to do is show up and be willing to follow God's lead.
- God wants to fill your heart with hope for the ultimate healing and life in His Son Jesus Christ.