

BEHOLD

# ADVENT

A CROSS POINT DEVOTIONAL





HOPE



## SUNDAY: THE LAYERS OF HOPE

Perhaps more than any other show, *A Charlie Brown Christmas* will be aired and viewed over and over throughout this Christmas season. I love it. Good art transcends generations and this Charles Schulz classic has stood the test of time.

I believe it is still relevant because it is both painfully real and incredibly hopeful. Though the main source of hope is the message in Linus' speech (Luke 2:8-14 KJV) , we see the intended effects of real hope played out in the life of Charlie Brown. Yes, Charlie Brown is one of the most hopeful characters in all of comic history.

*What? What makes you say that?*

Before we get to that question, let's look at what *hope* is: "A desire accompanied by expectation of or belief in fulfillment."<sup>1</sup> It involves

---

<sup>1</sup> "hope." Merriam-Webster.com. 2022. <https://www.merriam-webster.com> (16 September 2022).

looking forward to something and the concept of waiting.

Hope often works in tandem with fear, and there are two major fears under all other fears that need dealing with in the hearts of humans:

**1. That the world will never be put back right.** The fear is that justice will never be ultimately served and that the life we deeply long for will never come to fruition. We'll call this cosmic hope or a hope for the whole world.

**2. That there is no life beyond the grave.** The fear is that this life is all there is to our existence. We'll call this individual hope or hope for each person.

Part of what blurs our understanding is the way we use the word *hope* in our day and age:

*Hope to see you soon!*  
*Hope y'all are doing well!*  
*I really hope I get that job.*

This type of hope functions like a wish, based on blind optimism or positive thinking. This works to some degree when dealing with small matters, but if you drill down into the layers of every hope and every fear, you'll come back to ultimate justice and eternal life. Optimism and positive thinking are no match for those fears. The human heart needs something more substantial. It needs real *hope*.

So this week, we're going to track these twin fears and twin trajectories of hope and see how God, in the person and work of Jesus, has addressed both of them, thus supplying a solid foundation for real hope for those who believe. The Bible says that this kind of hope can endure *anything* because it's not dependent upon any human or any outcome. It's a hope that transcends pain and disappointment.

This is why Charlie Brown is one of the most hopeful cartoon characters I know. Despite getting mocked. Despite missing the football over and over again because of Lucy's meanness. Despite repeatedly being called a blockhead for the things he has or hasn't done, Charlie Brown clearly has something driving his persistence that is more than simply wishfulness. He has hope.

We never explicitly hear from Charlie what drives him, but I believe Linus' speech was meant to fill in some of those blanks.

As we enter this Advent season and inch closer to Christmas, our prayer is that true, grounded, biblical hope will fill your heart as you look deeper at the fears and longings of your heart.

# MEDITATION FOR THE DAY

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him, we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in **HOPE** of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces **HOPE**, and **HOPE** does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

**ROMANS 5:1-5 ESV**

## **MONDAY: THE NEED FOR A COSMIC HOPE**

In the Star Wars movie *Rogue One*, two sides fight: the Rebellion and the Evil Empire. Having grown increasingly powerful, the Empire began developing a weapon of mass destruction called *The Death Star*. The Rebellion is trying to intercept the plans but meets destruction every step of the way. It feels like a hopeless cause. They are asking questions like, "Is this really worth it?"

Have you ever asked that question?  
*Is this really worth it?*

The history of the people of God parallels the Rebellion in many ways. If Advent is anything, it's a remembrance of how long the people of God have been waiting for resolve. For peace. For rescue. After receiving the promises of God through the rise of the monarchy through David and Solomon, it all came crashing down in a seemingly expedient fashion. In the Old Testament times, Israel was constantly harassed and often subjugated to larger world powers, leaving them asking questions such as: *Where is this all going? What is the point? Is this really worth it?*

The Bible highlights another theme parallel with this seemingly hopeless thread. It is a thread of

hope. When the Israelites were oppressed by Egypt, God raised up Moses to deliver them from their harsh slavery. When Assyria and Babylon began attacking, God sent prophets to warn of judgment and to offer messages of hope through repentance and faith in the coming King. And even as His people were carried off into exile, God still pursued their hearts, promising to make good on His promises.

As the New Testament emerged, a new world power appeared: Rome. And in line with Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece, they too began to rule over God's people. It was *in* this scenario that Jesus came.

These scriptures teaches us that God is not immune to our situations. In fact, He is actively working to bring about His good purposes for the world He created and loves. But it requires faith to believe He is still at work, even when it doesn't seem like it. This perspective-shifting faith is what has fueled the hope of God's people throughout the ages. This is the brilliance of the Bible. It is the (not so) secret plans of God that have provided hope throughout history to people in the most desperate of situations.

At the end of *Rogue One*, (spoiler alert), after an incredibly difficult fight, the Rebels complete the mission and deliver to Princess Leia the plans for the Death Star. When the people around her ask what it is that has been sent to them, Leia responds with one word: *hope*.

The merging of the story of Jesus and the human predicament of suffering laid out from Genesis 3 onward can be summed up with that same word: HOPE.

MEDITATION FOR THE DAY  
MEDITATION FOR THE DAY  
MEDITATION FOR THE DAY

"O Israel, **HOPE** in the Lord, from this time forth and forevermore."

**PSALM 131:3 ESV**







## **TUESDAY: THE NEED FOR INDIVIDUAL HOPE**

Loretta Lynn and many others have sung the line, *Everybody wants to go to Heaven, but nobody wants to die*. And it's true. Generally speaking, the longer we live, the more acute the thought of not living plagues our minds.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that God has “placed eternity in man’s heart.” We are hardwired for eternity, and had sin never entered the world, we would have never had to face the prospect of death. We would have had heaven and no death.

*Everybody wants to go to Heaven, but nobody wants to die.*

It's popular nowadays to write death off as something you shouldn't fear. In her article entitled “It's Silly to Be Frightened of Being Dead,” British writer Diana Athill says that death is a natural process where you “slide down into nothingness.” And since it is inevitably a part of life, it can't be “too bad,” and therefore, should not be feared.<sup>2</sup>

But if you were to poll honest people, I think you'd find a different perspective. Fear of death is quite alive and well. Why else would insurance premiums in America exceed one trillion dollars in 2020 alone?

---

<sup>2</sup> Athill, D. (2014, September 23). It's silly to be frightened of being dead | Diana Athill | The Guardian. Retrieved October 5, 2022, from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/sep/23/-sp-diana-athill-its-silly-frightened-being-dead>

The Bible says that death is not natural. Life is. Death is unnatural, imposed on the creation as a result of sin, and the devil holds the power of death, leveraging it like a slavemaster over humanity (Hebrews 2:15).

Which is what makes Advent so beautiful. Jesus entered the world and lived a perfect life. According to Scripture, He should have never died;<sup>3</sup> yet he willingly laid down his life.<sup>4</sup> Why?

So that He would “destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.” Hebrews 2:14-15 ESV

---

<sup>3</sup> Ezekiel 18:4

<sup>4</sup> John 15:13

MEDITATION FOR THE DAY

“GREATER LOVE  
HAS NO ONE  
THAN THIS,  
THAT SOMEONE  
LAY DOWN HIS  
LIFE FOR HIS  
FRIENDS.”

JOHN 15:13 ESV

## WEDNESDAY: THE HOPE OF JESUS

“We’ll see.”

I hated that phrase growing up. I hated it because if my parents said it, it almost always meant “It ain’t gonna happen, Josh.”

“Can we go to the mall?” *We’ll see.*

“Can I go hoop at Jeff’s house?”  
*We’ll see.*

If you’ve ever heard “we’ll see,” chances are your hope did not increase, but rather diminished.

Throughout the Old Testament, for many, this is often how God’s promises were viewed. It’s as if God says, “We’ll see.” But the issue of hopelessness wasn’t God’s fault; it was ours. There were a few examples of hope filled people,<sup>5</sup> but on the whole, as time went on, hope was in short supply.

One of the unique aspects of Christmas is that we get to remember and celebrate the birth of Jesus, who was fully God *and* fully man. Being a true human, Jesus had the capacity to live a truly hopeful life. And He did. He embodied what it looked like to “hope in [God’s]

word” (Psalm 119:49, et.al) as He preached it near and far (Luke 4:43). He embodied hope in a seemingly hopeless situation (Lamentations 3:21–25), even as He sweat drops of blood in the garden of Gethsemane just before His arrest and crucifixion (Matthew 26:36–46). Why?

Because His Father never said, “We’ll see,” but instead, “Trust me.” The difference is the willingness, and ability, of God to make good on His promises decreed from before the foundations of the world (Ephesians 1:3–6; John 17:24; Matthew 25:34; Revelation 13:8). So, when the Scriptures say, “I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.” (Isaiah 46:11), Jesus believed it. He was the fulfillment of those very words!

It’s worth stopping and reflecting on the hope Jesus operated with because Jesus’ hope is the hope of the world.

---

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Abraham: “In hope [Abraham] believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” Romans 4:18. And David: “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.” Psalm 42:5.



**MEDITATION FOR THE DAY**



"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

**ROMANS 8:28 ESV**



## THURSDAY: JESUS IS OUR HOPE

If the Advent season is anything, it is a celebration of Jesus as our *ultimate* hope. The Apostle Paul often wrote about Jesus and hope; that Jesus did not merely bring hope, but that He *is* our hope.

- Writing a letter to his closest disciple, Timothy begins this way: “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope” (1 Timothy 1:1).
- In a letter to another disciple, Titus, Timothy says, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age, waiting for *our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*” (Titus 2:1-13). [Author’s italics]

But what does it mean that Christ *is* our hope?

- It means humans have access to God’s presence, which otherwise is impossible because of sin (Hebrews 6:19).<sup>6</sup>
- It means hope is a key ingredient to character transformation, because “everyone who thus hopes in him is purified as he is pure” (1 John 3:3).
- It means His resurrection is the assurance of our resurrection unto eternal life. “If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Corinthians 15:19).

---

<sup>6</sup> When a person repents of sin and places their trust/faith in Christ to be their Savior and Lord (Acts 2:34-37), they are then united with Jesus (Romans 6:5) so that wherever he is, they are too (Eph. 2:4-7).

There are lesser hopes and fears, but these are the ultimate ones that rest in the heart of man.

*Can I be right with God? Can I change? What happens when I die?*

These three things—access to God's presence (through the forgiveness of sin), character transformation, and eternal life—show that Jesus didn't just come to model hope for us, but to be the *source* of our hope.

This Christmas, let Jesus be your hope.

*The hopes and fears of all the years, are met in thee tonight.<sup>7</sup>*

---

<sup>7</sup> Redner, L. H., Brooks, P., Martens, F. H., & Yon, P. A. (n.d.). O little town of Bethlehem: Christmas hymn. Brunswick.



# MEDITATION FOR THE DAY

"To them, God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

**COLOSSIANS 1:27 ESV**

## **FRIDAY: A HOPE-FILLED LIFE**

So what? So what that the Bible says “Christ is our hope”? What does that hope have to do with the remaining days we have to live here on earth?

In a word, *everything*.

If a person truly believes Jesus is ultimately going to sort out every wrong and give life beyond the grave, then that person would live the rest of his life as a harbinger of those things. He would not put his stock in this life, nor live by the same principles as one who does *not* believe in who Jesus is and what He’s doing.

The birth of Jesus signaled that hope is not unwarranted when it is placed in God and *His* purposes for this world. Thus, Jesus came to gather people who live by, and with, hope as we wait for the consummation of that hope!

Author and theologian N. T. Wright states in his book *Surprised by Hope* that “the mission of the church is to bring real hope to real people in the present.”<sup>8</sup> How?

Hope touches every area of life, so there is no place that should not be examined. A good place to start

---

<sup>8</sup> Wright, N. T. (2018). *Surprised by hope: Rethinking heaven, the resurrection, and the mission of the Church*. HarperOne, an imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers.

is by asking, “How does Jesus *being my hope* now affect how I think and live regarding \_\_\_\_\_?” Consider the following examples:

- **Money.** “As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future so that they may take hold of that which is truly life” (1 Timothy 6:17-19).
- **Obedience.** “But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to

anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame” (1 Peter 3:14-16).

- **Death.** “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14).

In these examples, and in every area of life, there is a direct corollary between our words, our actions, and our greatest hope. This Christmas, let your hope in Jesus fuel an upcoming year that brings real hope to real people in the present.

## MEDITATION FOR THE DAY

“We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1 THESSALONIANS 1:2-3 ESV







## **SATURDAY: THE CONSUMMATION OF HOPE**

The biblical words for hope imply waiting with expectation. So what exactly *are* we waiting for? Let's look back at the fears from the first day of this section and reframe them as hopes.

**1. That the world will be put back right.**

**2. That there is life beyond the grave.**

What does the Bible actually say about these twin trajectories? If you are in Christ, let the word of God minister to the fears in your heart. And if you are exploring the faith, consider the following, how in Christ, God stays our sin and calms our lurking fears:<sup>9</sup>

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope

---

<sup>9</sup> Fullerton, W. Y. (n.d.). I Cannot Tell. On [https://hymnary.org/text/\\_cannot\\_tell\\_why\\_he\\_whom\\_angels\\_worship](https://hymnary.org/text/_cannot_tell_why_he_whom_angels_worship).

we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.  
Romans 8:18–25

So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:42–45, 54–57

The incarnation of Jesus signaled that God was putting the world back together and humans back together. In the Christian faith, death isn't the antithesis of this, but the pathway to it. As Tim Keller says, “If Jesus Christ was really raised from the dead—if He really is the Son of God and you believe in Him—all [the] things that you long for most desperately will come true at last. We will escape time and death, we will know love without parting, we will even communicate with non-humans (think angels), and we will see evil defeated forever.”<sup>10</sup>

This is a far sturdier hope than another present, a Christmas vacation, or a week off from work. This is a hope that can face anything in this life because it's grounded in Someone who transcends this life and the next.

---

<sup>10</sup> Keller, T. (2018). *Making sense of god: Finding god in the modern world*. Penguin Books.

MEDITATION FOR THE DAY

“IF IN CHRIST WE  
HAVE HOPE IN  
THIS LIFE ONLY,  
WE ARE OF ALL  
PEOPLE MOST  
TO BE PITIED.”

1 CORINTHIANS 15:19 ESV

# NOTES