

Open Table Community Church
Advent Devotional
2019



Week 1: Hope

Introduction

Each week of Advent has a theme. Week one is HOPE. Week two is PEACE. Week three is JOY. Week four is LOVE. In this Devotional, you will be offered 1-4 scripture readings if you wish to read the lectionary passages for this year. There will also be a short devotional reading followed by a meditation for the week. As we use Advent as a contemplative discipline to quiet our hearts and wait for the arrival of Jesus, I suggest using the meditations to aid you. Whenever you get caught up in the crazy pace of the holiday season, return to the meditations to resist being swept up in the chaos.

After the meditations, there will be a devotional for the whole family, especially the kiddos. It will include a review of what the kids are learning in The Kids' Table so you can refresh your kids on the content from Sunday. It will also come with challenges you can complete with your children during the Advent season.

We pray that this Devotional will help your family to slow down this season and prepare yourselves for God's Big Gift, the Advent of Jesus.

Scripture Reading

Psalms 122

Isaiah 2:1-5

Devotional Reading

When I'm having trouble falling asleep at night, I play a little game. I think most of us do this at times, but I play the game where I try to decide exactly how I would spend my money if I were to win a big lottery. I also kind of try to figure out just how small of a lottery I could win and still truly make a significant difference in my life. Usually as I'm doing the mental math to deduct taxes and I subtract the money necessary to pay off all of my current debts and I figure out much I'd give to God, my mind grows tired and I fall asleep. Though I never make it very far into this game, I've decided that my life would be easier if I won a huge lottery. That's probably naïve, but it's my honest answer. The question is, does this mean I hope to win the lottery? I guess I'd have to say no, because I never buy a ticket.

This week's sermon ended with the call to walk in HOPE. This is hard. Hope feels so risky. What if the things that I hope for never happen? What if I allow my heart to get attached to an outcome and I'm disappointed? I believe that this is where Biblical HOPE is different. We generally think of HOPE as the emotion we experience when we really want things to work out a particular way. We hope that we will get the job we want. We hope that the lab results reveal nothing. We hope that the pregnancy test reads positive. Though these things are all valid and important things to hope for and God is intricately concerned with them, Biblical Hope is deeper.

Biblical hope is a very real and powerful desire to see the core issues that lead to empty jobs, negative test results and infertility, finally and completely set right. Biblical hope comes from recognizing that the world is broken in very fundamental ways and that despite that brokenness, God has a plan to fix it. Advent HOPE is a hope that looks forward to a day that Jesus once again breaks into story in a way that makes all things new. But hope is not passive.

When we fully embrace Biblical HOPE, we begin to live as if we really believe that what we hope for, will happen. We know that because of Jesus, we will live in a world that isn't ruled by fear, so we choose not to live in fear now. We so look forward with hope to a day when there is no bigotry, and that hope becomes so real to us that we refuse to respond with bigotry, now. Walking with Jesus through a world where people share and show love, where people engage and embrace, and where people forgive and forget becomes so desirable to us that we actually start to create that world ourselves as the Holy Spirit empowers us. Hope wears shoes.

If I won the lottery, parts of life would be easier, but I'd only be introduced to a whole new level of stress and brokenness. Small outcomes like lotteries are not worthy of my hope. What I hope for is the day when none of us will have to wish for a lottery to find happiness because Jesus has repaired what was truly broken.

This Week's Meditation

What do you think the world would look like if Jesus returned and made everything right?

What could you do to start living in that world, this week?

From The Kid's Table

This year for Advent, The Kids' Table is going to lean into the concept of SHINE-ing hope, peace, joy, and love to the world we live in. We would love for you to join us. Our hope is that this year, we will all interact with this grand story of God's Big Gift to mankind, **JESUS**, and in that process that we will all find ourselves in the story of God.

Each week we will tell a part of the story leading up to Jesus, and we will focus on one of the 4 ways we want to SHINE this Advent season. Your children will be bringing home "ornaments" that they can make at home to help them retell the story with you. You can choose to do this however you want, one each day, all together on one day, or any other way you can dream up that best fits your family and life. The important thing is not how or when you do this, but that you are exploring together ways to SHINE.

We pray that this year as you read and interact with God, your family, and the people you meet each day that you are able to embrace the fact that you are relentlessly pursued by a God who gave up everything to come and find you. What a gift that we can share with ourselves and our families! Let's SHINE together OTCC!

Week One

HOPE

This week in The Kids' Table we covered these stories:

- **Creation**
- **Adam and Eve**
- **Noah**
- **Abraham**
- **Isaac**
- **Jacob**
- **Joseph**

Allow your child/ren to tell as much or as little of the story as they remember. Help them to recognize and learn that each of our voices are important in our church.

Creation-

God created the earth and everything in it. He created light and dark, water, dry land, plants, trees, insects, fish, birds, animals and all the living creatures. The God created man and woman. God stood back and looked at all He had created, and said it was good. God rested on the 7th day and He blessed that day, and gave it to us as a gift. God created the man, Adam, first and he placed him in a perfect garden. In this garden, God created the first woman, Eve, and gave her to Adam to be his companion. Everything seemed perfect.

Adam and Eve-

God made Adam and Eve to be the parents of all humans, and gave them the job of taking care of the perfect garden he had made just for them. God told them they could eat fruit from all the trees in the garden except for one. That tree was named the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The devil, an angel that disobeyed God and so God had to kick him out of heaven, didn't like that God had a special relationship with Adam and Eve. In fact, he hates God and all his creation. So the devil disguised himself as a snake, and came to Eve. He told her that if she just ate the fruit that God had told her not eat, she would suddenly become like God and her life would be so much better. But, the devil was lying to Eve. Eve didn't realize he was lying and so she ate the fruit, and then she gave some to Adam. In the very moment they ate the fruit, everything changed. Adam and Eve were forced to leave the perfect garden God had made for them and bad things like sickness and death came into the world. God knew that in order to make things good again, He would have to bring His big gift into the world.

Noah-

Adam and Eve had kids and their kids had kids and their kids and sin and bad things just kept getting worse and worse. In fact, things got so bad that God decided he needed to destroy the whole earth, except for a man named Noah and his family. God told Noah to build a great big boat called an ark and take 2 of every kind of animal onto the boat along with his family. He also told them to bring plenty of food. God was going to use Noah and his family to rebuild the earth.

Once Noah, his family, and all the animals were on the ark God shut the door to the boat, and it started to rain. It rained for 40 days and 40 nights, and Noah, his family and all the animals had to stay on the boat for a really long time. It was really muddy for a long time and they all had to wait until it was safe for them to come out of the boat. When it was finally safe enough, Noah, his family, and all the animals came out of the ark and onto dry land again. God placed a beautiful rainbow in the sky to remind Noah and his family and all people forever that He would never destroy the earth with a flood again.

Abraham-

Noah's family had kids and their families had kids and once again a lot of time had passed. God was looking for a man he could use to bring his big gift into this world. He found this man in a town called Ur. This man was named Abram, but God knew in order to move forward in this story of bringing his big gift into the world Abram would need to go somewhere else. So God asked Abram to leave his home and go to a new place. He promised Abram that if he would go where God asked him to go God would make a great nation from Abram's family and He would use Abram to bless every man, woman, and child ever created. Abram said, "Yes," and God renamed him Abraham, which means, "the father of many nations." When Abraham was 99 years, God sent an angel to tell Abraham that his wife, Sarah, was going to have a baby soon. That seemed a little crazy because Abraham and Sarah had been married a long time and they had no children. In fact, Sarah laughed when she heard this because she was far too old to have a baby, but the angel reminded Sarah that nothing is too hard for God.

Isaac-

Guess what? The angel that God sent to tell Abraham and Sarah that they were going to have a baby was right! When Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 75 they finally had a baby. They named their son, Isaac, which means, "laughter." Isaac was deeply loved by his parents and brought them much joy and laughter. When Isaac had grown up a bit, God decided to send a test to Abraham to see if Abraham's love for God was greater than his love for his son, Isaac. God told Abraham to go to a mountain and to sacrifice his son, Isaac. Abraham obeyed God. He took Isaac to the mountain, built an altar, tied Isaac up, and then put him on the altar. As he drew his knife to kill Isaac an angel stopped him. The angel told Abraham to take a sheep that was stuck in some nearby bushes and sacrifice it instead. Abraham learned in that moment that God loved not only him, but also his descendants, and that God really did want to use him to bless all men, women and children forever.

Jacob-

When Isaac was a full grown man he was ready to get married and have kids of his own. Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac, and when she arrived, it was love at first sight. Isaac married Rebekah, and after awhile they had twin boys. They named the boys Esau and Jacob. Esau was born first and then Jacob. Esau was Abraham's favorite and Jacob was Rebekah's favorite. But, the bigger problem was, the boys fought. They fought over everything all the time. Things got so bad that when Isaac was old and about to die, Rebekah and Jacob

tricked Isaac into blessing Jacob with the inheritance that should have belonged to the oldest son. Jacob had to run away from home because Esau was so angry with him that Jacob was afraid Esau would kill him. While Jacob was gone he had a crazy dream with a ladder and angels, but in that dream God promised Jacob exactly what He had promised his grandfather, Abraham. God was going to make his family into a great nation, and He would use that nation to bless all men, women, and children. Jacob became the father of 12 sons, and those 12 sons became the fathers of the 12 tribes of the nation of Israel.

Joseph-

One of Jacob's 12 sons was named Joseph. He was the second to youngest, and Jacob loved Joseph very much. He loved him so much that he gave him a special coat that had many colors. That coat, plus the fact that Joseph was kind of a pesky little brother who had crazy dreams, made his older brothers really angry and jealous. In fact, it all made them so jealous that they decided to sell Joseph to some passing slave traders and then tell their father that Joseph had been killed by wild animals. In the meantime, Joseph was sold to be a slave in Egypt. A lot of years later Joseph ended up becoming the second in command to the Pharaoh, or king of Egypt. Joseph had helped the Pharaoh know how to care for his people during a really bad time when there wasn't enough food in their country. While Joseph was helping Pharaoh, Jacob and the rest of Joseph's family were also in an area where there wasn't enough food. They heard there was plenty of food in Egypt so Jacob sent some of his sons to buy food. Joseph recognized his brothers and asked all of them to bring their father and all of their families to Egypt where he could care for them all.

This week we're looking for ways we can find and SHINE hope. Hope is usually defined as a feeling or excitement that something good will happen or the anticipation that something better is coming. What are some things that you hope for? Christmas gifts, trips, experiences, or special treats are all great things to hope for, but in the stories we're telling this week what I would like for us to look for places where we might find hope. Remember, we're looking for things that might give people the feeling of excitement or anticipation that something better is coming. These stories can sometimes feel like a lot of bad things are happening, but woven throughout each of these stories we can always find hope.

In the story of creation we see that God has given us the gift of rest. He instituted a whole day where He asks us to pause, to reflect and think about the "good" things in our lives.

In the story of Adam and Eve, even though we find the beginning of sin and death, we also get to see God begin to set into motion the process of giving us his biggest gift.

In the story of Noah, we get to see that no matter how bad things get God always has a plan to make all things new.

In the story of Abraham, we get to watch as God makes impossible things happen in the form of the gift of a baby.

In the story of Isaac, we see a story of obedience and trust that God always provides.

In the story of Jacob, we see that God's promises are forever. He doesn't give up on us even if we do bad things.

In the story of Joseph, we see that God's plan is bigger than we can imagine. We get to watch God train and grown Joseph into a man who is able to not only care for an entire nation but also his family that he thought was lost to him.

God is a God of hope. He wants us to be a people who not only hope in Him and His promises of love and provision for us, but he also wants us to be a people who spread hope to the world around us.

Challenge:

- This week, read a story, watch a movie, or talk with someone who has a story where hope is featured. (some suggestions: Any of the Star Wars movies, The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe, Charlotte's Web, The Lion King, Frozen, talk with someone who has not only survived but thrived in spite of tragedy) Then talk and dialogue about the difference in the characters before they have hope and after.
- Be imaginative, and actively look for hope in the everyday things you do and see. Create a list together that celebrates the finding of hope in your lives.
- Find one way to SHINE hope as a family to someone else this week. (pool some money together and pay for someone else's meal when you're out to eat, invite someone who might be lonely to spend a family meal with your family, anonymously gift someone something you know they would love to have but would never buy for themselves, drop by the house of someone who can't easily get out and bless them with company and some goodies, the list is as endless as your imagination.)