

Advent Week 1 – The Candle of Hope

Healing Beside the Horse – The Stable of Hope

Word of God

Isaiah 64:1–9

Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down,
that the mountains might quake at your presence—
as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,
and that the nations might tremble at your presence!
When you did awesome things that we did not look for,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.
From of old no one has heard
or perceived by the ear,
no eye has seen a God besides you,
who acts for those who wait for him.
You meet him who joyfully works righteousness,
those who remember you in your ways.
Behold, you were angry, and we sinned;
in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved?
We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
There is no one who calls upon your name,
who rouses himself to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities.
But now, O Lord, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
Be not so terribly angry, O Lord,
and remember not iniquity forever.
Behold, please look, we are all your people.

Psalm 80:1–7

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock.

You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth.
Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh,
stir up your might and come to save us!
Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved!
O Lord God of hosts,
how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?
You have fed them with the bread of tears
and given them tears to drink in full measure.
You make us an object of contention for our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh among themselves.
Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved!

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus,
that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge—
even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you—
so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.
God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Mark 13:24-37

“But in those days, after that tribulation,
the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.
And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.
And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds,
from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.
“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves,
you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place,
you know that he is near, at the very gates.

Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows,

not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come.

It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge,

each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake.

Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come,

in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep.

And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

Reflection in the Field

The barn grows quiet in Advent’s twilight. Breath meets the cool air, and the steady sound of hooves shifting in straw becomes a rhythm of waiting.

Each evening, as you light the candle of hope, the horse beside you reminds you of this: waiting is not idleness. It is readiness—an open stillness that trusts the dawn will come.

Isaiah’s cry, “O that You would rend the heavens and come down,” feels like the groan of the earth in winter. The horse knows this kind of waiting too—the patient endurance that trusts unseen renewal.

Like the first candle lit against darkness, hope burns quietly. It does not rush the sunrise; it simply holds space for it.

In the stable of hope, Christ’s light is already kindling. Even before He appears, His promise stirs the air. Each quiet gesture of care—filling water buckets, brushing a mane, listening in stillness—is a prayer that joins creation’s long sigh for redemption.

The horse does not fear the waiting. She lives in it, breathing peace into the night until light returns.

Lutheran Reflection

Martin Luther once wrote,

“Our Lord has written the promise of resurrection not in books alone, but in every leaf in springtime.”

— Martin Luther, Table Talk, no. 5533 (1538)

Advent hope is this same living promise. It is not an abstract optimism, but a faith grounded in God's incarnate mercy—He comes near, not once only, but again and again into our weary waiting.

Luther reminds us that faith lives in the tension between promise and fulfillment, trusting that God is both hidden and present.

Like the horse who senses her keeper's presence before she sees him, faith waits in quiet assurance that her Shepherd is near.

Reflection Prompts

When in your life have you experienced a “winter” of the soul—where hope seemed faint, yet still flickered?

How does being beside a horse teach you to wait with trust rather than fear?

In what small ways can you become a bearer of hope for others this Advent?

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus,

As the first candle burns, teach us to wait with hope.

When darkness feels near, remind us that You are nearer still.

In the stillness of the barn, in the rhythm of creation's breath,
let our hearts rest in Your promise—

that the dawn is coming, and with it, Your light.

Amen.

*“The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.”*
— Numbers 6:24–26 (ESV)