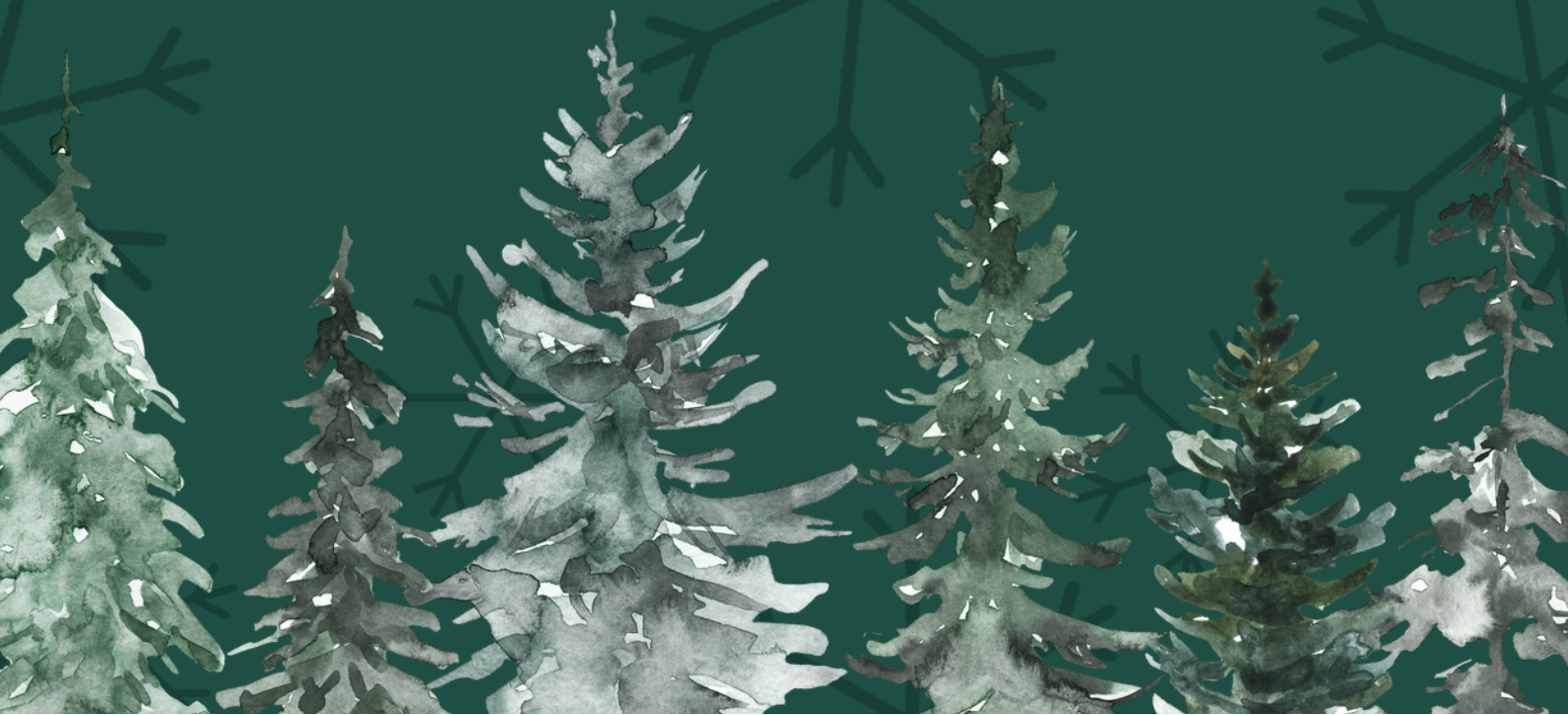




*Waiting Here
For You*

21 DAILY ADVENT MEDITATIONS

Susan Narjala





*Week 1:
A Thrill of
Hope*

Day 1 of Advent Hope

"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." 2 Corinthians 4:18

If you approach the Christmas season with the hope that you'll lose five pounds, you'll likely be disappointed. With the honey-baked ham dinners, cookie exchanges, and cheese-and-cracker laden charcuterie boards lined up in the coming weeks, the chances of losing weight during the holidays range from slim to abysmal.

But what if you're one of those with the willpower of a toddler who refuses to eat broccoli? Then perhaps the "hope" that you'll lose weight grows increasingly plausible. But it's not 100 percent guaranteed, is it?

Human hope is fairly subjective and unreliable. It is blown about by a host of factors—often factors that we have little control over.

But Biblical hope is based on *certainty*. Advent hope is secured in the person and work of Christ. It is an immovable, unshakeable hope that is based on what Christ has *already* accomplished on the cross for us and the anticipation that He *will* come again and He *will* make all things new.

Friend, if you're going through a season where you're desperately seeking hope, I get it. I'm walking through a period of stress and anxiety as I write this devotional. But know that we can always cling to Christ who will hold tight to us through it all.

The eternal hope that Christ has secured for us will not change. It is part of His unwavering character and His unchanging promises.

As we enter this season of Christmas, "may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." (Romans 15:13)

May we not just be timidly hopeful people but may we *abound* in hope because we trust the God of hope.

Lean In

Lord, I pray that I would abound in hope, not the flimsy hope that the world offers but a *secure* hope in You. I trust that You will make all things new. I trust that You will not give up on me and will one day present me blameless before the Father. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 2 of Advent Hope

If you happen to be part of a church that follows the Advent themes of hope, peace, joy, and love over the four Sundays leading up to Christmas, then you may be hearing a lot about hope this week.

But here's the thing: we can hear about hope from pulpits and stages, but truly we need to *preach* hope to ourselves.

Our natural selves tend to get despondent. We allow the weight of our circumstances to plunge us into anxiety and stress. But, here's the thing friend, we need to be on the offensive because the enemy prowls around like a lion looking for someone to devour. So stand firm in the truth by rehearsing the truth of who God is.

He is a God who is able to rescue and redeem you no matter what the situation.

He is a God who works all things out for the good of those who love Him, and who have been called according to His purpose.

He is a God whose love is unfailing, whose mercies are new every morning.

Friend, if your circumstances dictate hopelessness and despair, remember and rehearse the truth of hopefulness and joy in the Lord. Drown out the lies of the enemy with wave upon wave of gospel truth.

May we live in the in the Advent hope—in the joyful anticipation—that Christ will come again and will usher in a new kingdom and reign.

And while we wait, may we dig deep into the Word of God and fill our hearts with the truth that our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

Lean In

Father God, You know my thoughts from afar. You see that I often slip into despondency because my circumstances dictate my emotions. But, today, Lord, I want the truth to lead my emotions. I long to declare gospel truth over my emotions and my circumstances. I put my trust in Your unfailing love. In Jesus' name. Amen

Day 3 of Advent Hope

Every week or so, I volunteer to teach a group of little kids at a women's shelter. Well, "teach" may be a misnomer—we hang out, sing songs, read stories, eat snacks, and somewhere in there, we learn some numbers and letters.

But here's what gets me.

Every single time, I walk into the class, I am met by delighted squeals. Six pairs of little arms wrap around my jeans as they welcome me into their world. They have been looking forward to our time together—yes, the snacks could have something to do with their excitement, but they also love the stories and songs and just my being there.

As we look forward to Christmas, I wonder what's become of our anticipation of welcoming Jesus. Have we become accustomed to the routine of celebrating a holiday year after year that we no longer wait in anticipation for the arrival of the King?

Like the pre-schoolers in the shelter home, do we drop everything else to excitedly run into the arms of the One who gave it all up so He could identify with our humanity?

If this Advent, you feel like you're going through the motions of trimming the tree and hanging up the lights, and of getting things checked off your to-do, then perhaps stop for a moment.

Look to the manger where the King of Kings was born in the lowliest of circumstances with the mission of rescuing and redeeming us from our fallenness.

Marvel at the wonder of His grace and love. And wait in excited anticipation, in hushed awe, for the coming of the King.

Lean In

Father God, In the routine and rush of the season, I confess that I have not waited for Your presence with joy and anticipation. In Your mercy and grace, renew in me a sense of awe and joy, not just for the festivities of Christmas but for the King of Kings who chose to give up everything so I could have life eternal and abundant. In Jesus' name. Amen

Day 4 of Advent Hope

Advent, meaning "arrival" is the in-between season. We celebrate the arrival of Jesus as a newborn baby who came as the light into the darkness of the world. And we look forward to the arrival of King Jesus when He comes again

So what do we do in this in-between time of waiting?

We wait as *people with hope*.

Romans 8:24 reminds us that "in this hope we were saved," speaking of the sure and certain hope that we were set free by Christ from our bondage to sin. We now wait for the *glorious* hope of Christ's return. Paul says in Romans 8 "if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."

Friends, this Advent season, are we waiting with patience? Or have we given up all hope that Christ will come again and usher in a new kingdom where He will reign?

Waiting with patience doesn't mean we wait passively. As we look forward with hope to His Second Coming, let's wait with diligence, fulfilling the good works that He has prepared for us to do.

Let's invest our time, talents, and treasures in the kingdom, waiting for the King's return so He can welcome us with the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Lean In

Father God, As I look forward to the Christmas season when we celebrate Your arrival in Bethlehem, I pray that I will wait for Your return. May I wait with both patience and diligence, fulfilling the good works that You have called me to. In Jesus' name. Amen

Day 5 of Advent Hope

When Jesus came into the world as a baby in Bethlehem, He fulfilled dozens of prophecies that were made in the Old Testament. When Jesus comes again as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, He will, once again, fulfill prophecies from Scripture.

You know what those two truths about his first and second coming mean? It means that we can completely trust our God because He is faithful, true, all-powerful, and sovereign over the past, present, and future. It means we can bank on the promises of God.

What a wonderfully freeing truth!

You and I don't need to stress about our present circumstances or our future plans because God has revealed Himself to be faithful in the past.

God tells us in Scripture that He is Emmanuel, God with us. If you and I are worried and stressed right now, we can bank on His promise that He will never leave us.

God tells us in Scripture that He is the One who sees. If we feel unseen and exhausted because we feel like no one cares about our journey, we can bank on His character that He is El Roi, the God who sees.

God tells us in Scripture that He has plans to prosper us and not to harm us, plans to give us hope and a future.

If we are anxious about what lies ahead, we can bank on the sovereignty of God who takes care of the details of our lives, past, present, and future.

Scripture is packed with promises. Not empty, feel-good words, but words from a God who does not lie or change His mind.

We can experience Advent Hope when we place our faith in His promises.

Lean In

Father God, All your promises in Christ are 'yes' and 'amen.' I'm so grateful that I get to trust a God who is sovereign and almighty but also so mindful of my needs. Because of your great faithfulness in the past, I can trust your promises now and always. In Jesus' name, Amen

Day 6 of Advent Hope

Where have you placed your hope?

That's a question we need to ask ourselves.

To answer that question, perhaps it would be helpful to ask ourselves another, more concrete question: What is the one thing that you believe will satisfy you and that you absolutely need to be fulfilled in life?

Take a moment and answer that for yourself.

The thing you thought about? That's likely where your "hope" lies.

Maybe you've placed all your hope in getting into the right school, getting that dream job at the tech start-up, finding a good Christian husband who will be your spiritual leader, having kids and raising them right, or reaching a certain goal weight, or... the list goes on. We all have our "idols"—things, people, or circumstances that we think we absolutely need and can't do without.

But, truly, if our hope is in anything or anyone else but Jesus, then we will at some point feel let down. Our hope will crumble unless it is rooted in Christ.

The hymn writer Edward Mote penned these words back in 1834: On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand; all other ground is sinking sand.

Do we recognize that everything else, even good things, won't stand the test of time, of our emotions, of our human vagaries? We were made to depend on Him and Him alone. He is our solid Rock, our Sure Foundation.

Lean In

Father God, As I understand that I shouldn't place my hope in lesser things, help me to truly put my hope in You and You alone. As the hymn goes, I too declare, "On Christ the Solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand." Lord, You alone are my hope and stay when everything else around me gives way. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 7 of Advent Hope

How do you spend your time on infinitely long car rides? I'm old enough to remember road trips without devices! Yes, like my kids say, I'm from the "olden days."

But what made the time pass by on those boring rides? We chatted, we sang, we played games like, "I spy" or "I went to the market," we ate junk food... We had our ways of filling the time before we got to our destination.

As we look to our Lord's return through the season of Advent, how do we fill our time? Do we wait in anticipation while fulfilling the good works He can prepared in advance to do? Do we wait with joy and worship as we welcome His presence here and now?

And, today, we consider the question: Do we wait with praise on our lips? Scripture says that one day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. While that is a magnificent promise, we have the privilege of praising God right now. We have the privilege of bowing our knee before Him and confessing that He is Lord right now!

In the waiting, we get to declare His praises.

When Jesus came into the world as a baby, His own people rejected Him. They were waiting for an earthly king who would overthrow the Romans and set them free from their status of slavery. But Jesus came to set them (and us) free from sin forever. Unfortunately, the Israelites didn't recognize that.

Today, may we recognize the presence and power of our Lord in our midst. And as we wait for Him to come again in all His glory and splendor, may we praise Him for who He is right here and now!

Lean In

Father God, What a privilege to praise You as my Lord and King. I don't need to wait for "one day" to worship. I can commune with You and bow before Your throne even this moment. What a privilege. May I never take it for granted. May I recognize Your kindness, Your mercy, and Your goodness right through all my ordinary days. And may I declare Your praise through all eternity. In Jesus' name. Amen