

PROMISES

KEPT

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO HIS PEOPLE



We wait in HOPE for God's Promises

• Isaiah 9 : 2, 6-7 •

Advent Week 1 : HOPE

DEVOTION

Throughout this Advent season we, at Valley Church, are reflecting on the theme of Promises Kept. We will explore God's faithfulness to his people as they lived in hope, peace, joy, and love.

Christmas is filled with hope, anticipation, and waiting. We wait in hope for the beautifully wrapped present under the tree. We wait in hope for our Christmas vacation, a well-deserved break from work or school. We wait in hope for time spent with family and friends.

Most of all, Christmas is about waiting in hope for Jesus. We celebrate that Jesus has come and is coming again.

From the beginning of history, God had a plan to rescue and redeem His people (Genesis 3:15) The Israelites held onto this promise the hope of a coming rescuer and throughout the Old Testament. Isaiah a prophet, spoke of a sign that a virgin would give birth to a child and that the child would be called Immanuel "God with us" (Isaiah 7:14), He said that this rescuer would shine like a light in the darkness (Isaiah 9:2) and he said the child would be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6).

Years passed (approximately 700), and the hope of rescue was passed from generation to generation. Until it was time. On a dark night in the small village of Bethlehem, Jesus was born. The angels, shepherds and Wisemen celebrated. Yet, one character really stands out in the Christmas story as being faithful in hope: Simeon. We find his story in Luke 2: 22-35. Scripture says that "the Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ". So he came to the temple and waited in hope. Then Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple for the ritual purification, likely Jesus was eight days old. Simeon, prompted by the Spirit, takes Jesus up in his arms and blesses him.

I always think of the story of Simeon as a picture of expectation fulfilled, and hope realized. Though our perspective differs from Simeon's, we too, see Jesus as the fulfillment of all that the Old Testament anticipates. Scripture is the backdrop against which God reveals the glory of Jesus' birth, and of his life, death, and resurrection. The rescuer, the Lord's Messiah, has come to comfort and save his people. Like Simeon, we rejoice in his coming, during Advent season and all throughout the year. And like Simeon, we long for the day when He will come again.

Monday

What is Biblical hope? Read: Hebrews 11:1 Romans 8:24-25, Hebrews 10:23, Psalm 130

Having read some verses on Biblical hope, list some of its characteristics. How is it different from optimism or hope that we might experience as we wait for a present under the Christmas tree?

Read Psalm 130 again. What specific things about God bring the psalmist Hope? What does he hope to receive from God?

Tuesday

Hope grows in promises kept. Read: Luke 2:22-35

What did Simeon hope for? Take a moment to consider what it would have been like for Simeon to meet Jesus. He had dedicated his life to waiting in hope and now the promise was fulfilled. Consider what emotions Simeon may have experienced? How do you think the process of waiting and the promise fulfilled would have shaped Simeon's faith?

Wednesday

Hope Grows in Knowing Jesus. Read: Isaiah 9:6-7

With your Bible Open to Isaiah 9:6-7 select a version Unto Us from Handel's Messiah. You can find the London Symphony Orchestra's version here [youtube.com/watch?v=MS3vpAWW2Zc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MS3vpAWW2Zc).

As you reflect on these words of promise, consider the hope that rests in the knowledge of the character of Jesus. Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would be a "Wonderful counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace". Reflect on these names given in Isaiah 9:6-7 what do they tell us to expect from Jesus? What aspects of Christ's character feel particularly relevant to your life or the life of our church right now? If there are aspects of His character that you need or you haven't seen revealed in your life, pray and ask God to reveal Himself to you today.

Thursday

Jesus is the hope for the world. Read: Isaiah 9:2, John 1:1-18, John 8:12

Throughout the Christmas season, we see bright lights on the Christmas trees and decorating houses. Perhaps they stand out because Christmas is one of the shortest days of the year. Isaiah 9:2 says that "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness on them has light shone." We learn in the New Testament that Jesus is that light!

Are there places in your life that you need to surrender to the light of Jesus? Can you think of friends or family that need to know Jesus' light this Christmas? Take some time now to pray that Jesus' light would shine.

Friday

We all need hope: God's promise to you. Read: Deuteronomy 31:8, Jeremiah 33:3, Philippians 4:19, 2 Thessalonians 3:3, Romans 8:38-39, John 3:16-17

There are many scriptures that reveal God's promises to us. I have selected a few for you to read today, but this is certainly not a comprehensive list. Feel free to do a quick google of "verses about God's promises" to add to this list. Take some time to write down one promise or more that you feel you need to put your hope in this season. Stick these promises in places you can see them as you are going about your day. Speak these promises over your life and watch hope grow.