




A WEEKLY ADVENT DEVOTIONAL
FROM EEN

CHRIST

in creation



In the upper room, the resurrected Jesus tells his disciples that “Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” (Luke 24:44, NIV)

This Advent season, EEN invites you to journey through a weekly devotional as we discover the Hope, Faith, Joy, and Peace that God fulfills himself by becoming the Christ in creation.

Marqus A. Cole, Esq.

DIRECTOR OF CHURCH & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

WEEK 1

HOPE

TORI GOEBEL

YECA NATIONAL ORGANIZER &
SPOKESPERSON

SCRIPTURE

So the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

(Genesis 3:14-15)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

(John 1:1-5, 9, 14)

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

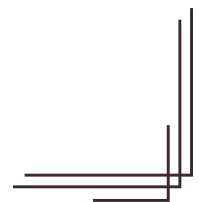
"The celebration of Advent is possible only to those who are troubled in soul, who know themselves to be poor and imperfect, and who look forward to something greater to come."

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Hopefulness is a beautiful part of following Christ, and yet it can be challenging to find and maintain a sense of hope in the face of so much darkness around us. We don't have to look far to see injustice, to see creation groaning under the weight of the climate crisis and environmental destruction, and to see people turning away from seeing and addressing these realities.

This week, and every week, I am challenging myself to see hope as an action, as something that requires commitment and re-commitment. This Advent season serves as the perfect time to reflect on God's promise of deliverance and restoration in Genesis 3:15, and to lean into that truth while facing the darkness all around us. After all, John 1:9 tells us that Jesus is the true light, and we can rest assured knowing darkness will never prevail. I think the first step on this constant journey of living into the hope of redemption is to turn our attention and expectation to the One promised to crush the head of the serpent and who came to give abundant life. Over the next four weeks, let's remember God's promise of redemption and restoration and consider how we can live that out here and now.

As the EEN community journeys through this Advent season, we invite you to embrace a sense of hopefulness as we sit in the now but not yet. In the coming days, meditate on what it means to find hope in this season of anticipation.



PRAYER

Oh God, creator of life, I thank you and praise you for the gift of your Son during this Advent season.

Open my eyes that I may see not only the suffering and darkness, but the hope of your deliverance and restoration. Renew in me a sense of hope so that I might joyfully join you in the work of redemption. Help me to lean on your promises and remember that the victory is yours, and guide me as I seek to care for your creation.

Amen.



WEEK 2

FAITH

REV. KYLE MEYAARD-SCHAAP

EEN VICE PRESIDENT

SCRIPTURE

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

(Isaiah 11:1)

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

(Luke 1:51-53)

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

It took a lot of faith for Isaiah to say what he said. Caught in the middle of a high stakes geo-political crisis, Isaiah instructs King Ahaz of Judah to trust that the Lord is more powerful than the political facts on the ground.

If he did, said Isaiah, God would fell the forest of their enemies and cause to grow in its place a new forest of righteousness in the line of David himself. It wasn't what King Ahaz wanted to hear.

It took a lot of faith for Mary to say what she said too.

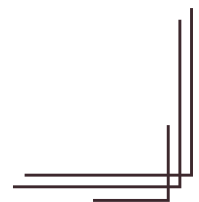
Mary's Magnificat is no timid prayer. Like Isaiah's prophecy to Ahaz, it is a prophetic song of fierce faith and stubborn hope in the face of overwhelming odds. Yet rather than from the mouth of a court prophet, it comes from a nobody girl from the backwater town of Nazareth in a forgotten corner of Palestine.

And it is filled with the promises that have reverberated down through Israel's history for centuries.

Promises to right wrongs. Promises to untangle intractable systems of abuse and oppression. Promises to bring down rulers and lift up the humble, to honor the poor and to humble the rich. Promises of redemption, of reconciliation, of resurrection.

They feel like important promises to remember right now. After all, we all read the headlines about the state of God's creation. The world remains in desperate need of redemption, reconciliation, and resurrection.

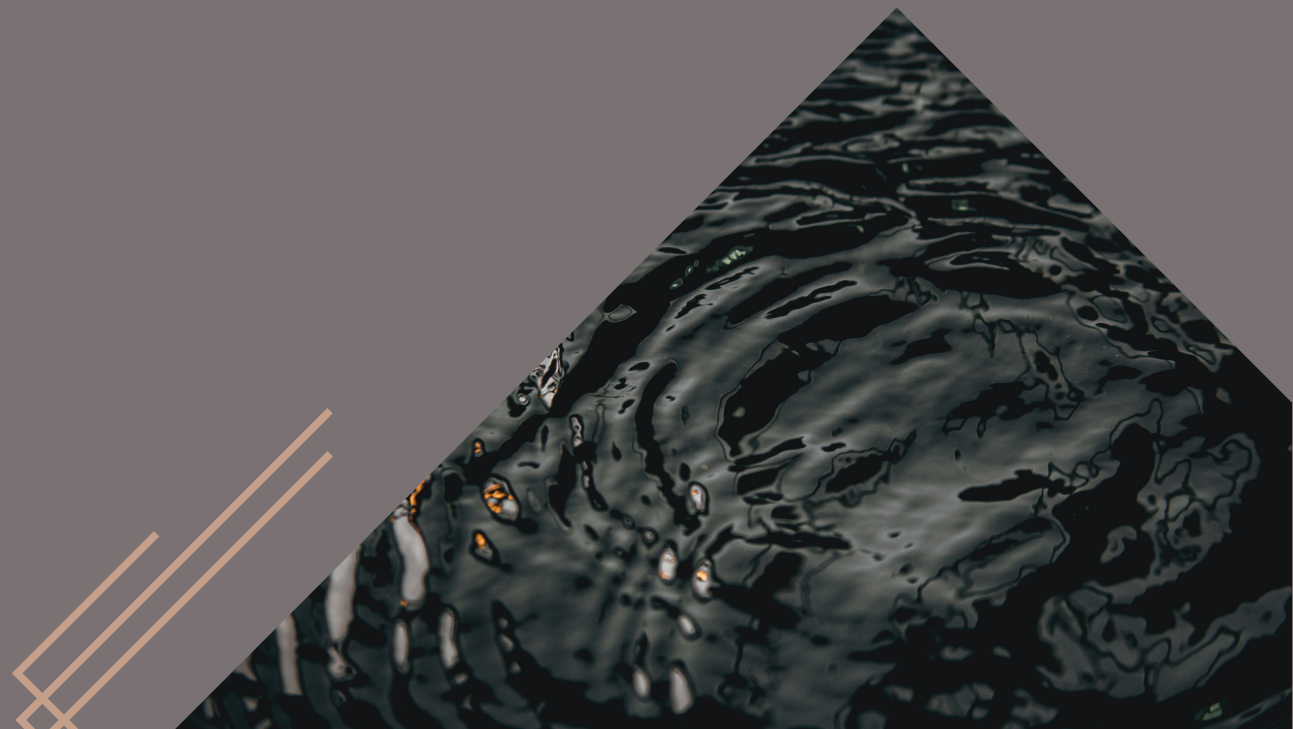
And so we wait this Advent season with the weight of creation's scars in our hearts and the songs of Mary and Isaiah in our mouths. We wait with faith that there is something coming worth waiting for. We wait in the truth that Christmas makes plain: that God always makes good on his promises, and that it looks nothing like we would expect.



PRAYER

God of redemption, your promises are sure, even and especially when all the evidence points to the contrary. May we have the faith of Isaiah, who saw promise where others only saw hopelessness. May we have the same faith as Mary, who saw possibility where others only saw insignificance. May the incarnation remind us that, in Christ, you have made good on your promises, and that your purposes for your world continue to ripple out from Bethlehem into all the earth.

Amen.



WEEK 3

JOY

REV. DR. JESSICA MOERMAN

**EEN VICE PRESIDENT FOR
SCIENCE & POLICY**

SCRIPTURE

May the mountains bring prosperity to the people, the hills the fruit of righteousness. May he defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; may he crush the oppressor... For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death.

(Psalm 72 3-4, 12-13)

Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

(Nehemiah 8:10)

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

It can often be hard to find joy today, especially when we allow the reality of the role our actions play in our changing climate to truly sink in. This realization can fill us with the opposite of joy: grief.

The Israelites in Nehemiah's age experienced something similar.

With the favor of King Cyrus of Persia, a remnant of the exiled Israelites returned to rebuild the Temple and a ruined Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-5). To provide safety for the returning exiles, Nehemiah rallied the Israelites to restore the city walls in a miraculous 52 days (Nehemiah 6). With the walls rebuilt, the first order of business was to celebrate and gather the people to hear the Law together so they could truly understand what God desired of them.

As the people listened, the scales fell off their eyes. They began to understand – to truly understand – how their failure to keep God's covenant, how their rejection of the Lord their God who loved them and saved them time and time again, had led to their own exile and destruction of their holy city. With this realization, they wept bitterly. In seeing the grief and distress of the people, Nehemiah comforted the crowd saying, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Today, as we realize our role in climate change, it can bring up feelings of great grief, remorse, and lament. And rightly so. But God doesn't want us to stay stuck in our grief. As Nehemiah encourages the returned Israelites – don't remain in your grief but be strengthened by the joy of the Lord. Be strengthened by the joy of a good Father who says "I love and delight in you no matter what." "I will do anything to bring you back to me and restore what is broken."

The rebuilding of Jerusalem and the return of the exiles in Nehemiah is a prophetic picture of the restoration work of Jesus – a work that is cosmic in scale, that is for all of God's creation, and that Jesus invites us to partner with him in accomplishing.

As we turn our hearts and minds toward Jesus in this third week of Advent, I am filled with joy as I imagine the joy it gives God to see his people rediscovering and reclaiming His mandate and commission us to care for all he has created. I imagine the joy He has as others see us operating in joy – in spite of the circumstances – and see the face of Jesus shining through us. This is a joy that gives me strength to keep going.



PRAYER

Jesus Emmanuel, thank you for coming to rescue us. Thank you for your reconciling work on the cross and that you invite us to partner with you in your mission to restore and renew all things. Help us to not remain stuck in on our own failures, but to lift our eyes to you, to receive your mercy and grace and rejoice in your goodness. Fill us and strengthen us with your never-ending wellspring of joy, so that we may never grow weary in doing the good works that you have set before for us and that we may share your life-restoring joy with those around us.

Amen.



WEEK 4

PEACE

REV. MITCH HESCOX

EEN PRESIDENT & CEO

SCRIPTURE

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

(Luke 2:4-12)

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

What were the shepherds thinking as they watched over their charge on that first Christmas? Some, perhaps, were simply thinking about a warm fire or a cup of hot broth. Others might have been thinking about how they ended up in a dead-end job watching someone else's flock. Still others may have been wondering what it would take to make ends meet in their lowly economy.

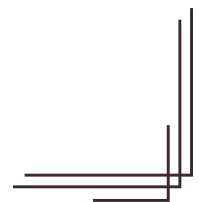
Times were tough in this Judean province. Judea's massive public works project – the building of Herod's Great Temple – was nearing completion. Jobs were in short supply, and double taxation to pay both Rome and Herod for his temple stifled already meager incomes. To make matters worse, these shepherds lived at the bottom of the social ladder and were considered outcasts to most. They became victims of cruel stereotypes, and religious leaders even banned pasturing throughout Israel, except in the most rugged and unfriendly places.

Probably cold, lonely, and hungry, many shepherds may have wondered: where was God? As they gazed upon the barren and rocky hills, some might have thought in irony of verses they memorized as children:

*I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;
indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord watches over you—
the Lord is your shade at your right hand;
the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;
the Lord will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore. (Psalm 121)*

As they scratched out an existence in the Judean wilderness, these socially “undesirable” folks were offered an extraordinary gift: the opportunity to experience the gift of Jesus, the Emmanuel God with us. They saw in the Christ child a God just like them – God living their existence. This was a God who knew and cared for them just as they were, a God who suffered with them and for them, all in pursuit of his peace. Not the peace of at once making all things right, but the peace that God would be with them through all their pain, suffering, and challenging times. A peace given through God’s love in simply becoming human.

As we consider our world, our lives, and everything from triple epidemics to high inflation, I pray you might know the peace that God is still with us. Please take the time this Advent to gaze upon God’s creation. Look upon the majesty of all that God has made and remember that Jesus is still with us – the God who is just like us, who came to offer us his peace. He gave not as the world gives, but instead gave the lasting peace in knowing that God is with us.



PRAYER

Holy God, as we prepare for Christmas and the celebration of your coming to be with us, help us to see you with us and for us even before we recognize your presence. Open our eyes and minds to experience your peace and know your love that comes with your amazing grace.

Help us to remember that you are Emmanuel, always with us. Guide us to accepting your amazing love, your walk with us, and the gift of peace, shalom.

Jesus, please be with us.

Amen



EENEVANGELICAL
ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK

CREATION CARE IS A MATTER OF LIFE

Learn more at CreationCare.org