

## Hope – the First Candle in the Advent Wreath

Two decades ago, Kathy and I traveled to a remote village in Brazil. As we approached the village by boat, we observed the children playing in the trees, playfully dropping into the river. Even though they had few earthly possessions and had to hunt for food each day, they were happy. How could a community destined to remain poor be content with their lives? They had Hope. Missionaries had brought the Good News of Jesus Christ to their little outpost. They knew the best was yet to come, and they were content to wait. Hope sustained them as they knew that their faith was their ticket to the richness of Jesus Christ.



Jesus Christ is the Hope that we all have despite our circumstances. No matter what happens, you have the Hope for eternal life. But there is more. You have the assurance that Jesus is with you now, even during times of trouble. Jesus will be with you always, to the end of the age. (read Matthew 28:20).



As a follower of Jesus, you are chosen by God. God knew you even before you were born, and He chose you. (read Jeremiah 1:5 and Psalm 139:13-18). That knowledge gives you comfort for today and Hope for the future. We need both.

God's heavenly world is far different than the earthly world in which we live today. We can manage today's world as we anticipate the heavens of our future.

Take comfort:

- Jesus died and was resurrected for you and me – the Bible tells us so. *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... (1 Peter 1:3).*
- Christ's resurrection is a gift for us. *... and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in Heaven for you (verse 4).*
- You have a joy that can't be taken away. *... who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time (verse 5).*

We are now in the season of Advent, with the anticipation of the birth of Christ. Last Sunday, we lit the first candle on the Advent wreath – the candle of Hope. While some view Christmas as a birthday celebration, it is an anticipation for the second coming of Jesus Christ – when He will take us home. Hope for what is to come. *For here, we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come (Hebrews 13:14).*

He promises to come back for you and me. That will be Hope fulfilled that will unveil the riches of Heaven for believers. No matter what you are going through at this time, the best is yet to come.

This is the first of four Advent devotionals, symbolized on the Advent wreath in many churches. Some churches may utilize different themes for the Advent candles. I am utilizing the Advent themes of my own church.