

# H O P E

***If you have an Advent wreath, go ahead and light one of the purple candles. Otherwise, find any candle and light it before reading this devotion.***

This first week of Advent traditionally begins with hope.

Thank goodness.

It's always good to remember our hope... but this year we want to lap it up like water from a garden hose. 2020 has been riddled with fear and division, loss and uncertainty. We could use some hope.

Advent gives us the opportunity to anticipate Christmas - not just in the shopping, hot cocoa, and yet another viewing of *Christmas Vacation* (though that's all great). Advent invites us to anticipate Christmas in the way it was that first Christmas.

The Jewish people desperately needed hope. God had promised a Messiah and then gone silent *for 400 years*. They were being ruled by the Romans, a harsh government that cared little for their traditions and religion. God had stopped sending signs or prophets for multiple generations. They were dealing with both political and spiritual unrest and uncertainty.

Can you imagine how they felt?

And then, at just the right time... *Hope* entered the world.

Not in a grand display. Not with a charismatic leader or a plan to overthrow the government.

(Actually, there *was* a grand display. Angels, a heavenly song, the whole shebang. But the only ones who got to see it were a few shepherds.)

Hope entered the world with a baby. In a manger. In a small, unimportant village. With a mom who'd had a *very* questionable pregnancy situation, if you ask the town gossip.

Hope is rarely grand and impressive. It lives deep in our souls and invites us to look forward. It holds us steady when we're faced with unrest and uncertainty. It quietly reminds us of enduring truths and promises. It often really is the "light at the end of the tunnel."

As we head into the first week of Advent, let's remember our Hope. Let's remember that God never leaves us. He is our anchor, our light, our steady invitation to look up and look forward. The light of this candle is the sign of our Hope that God came to us through the birth of Jesus - the same hope we get to cling to today.

### **READ:**

Luke 1:26-38

Psalm 33:20-22

Romans 15:13

### **DISCUSS/REFLECT:**

What are the hopeful parts for the people in this story?

What are the hopeful parts for you in this story?