



THE LIGHT OF  
*grace*

Welcoming  
God's Amazing  
Gift of Christ

DEVOTIONS FOR ADVENT

MICHAEL HOY

## INTRODUCTION

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Advent is about amazing grace coming in the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Ponder more deeply the four enlightening words of grace found in these Advent devotions:

*hope · peace · joy · love*

Christ's light of grace offers *hope*. Christ's grace means that there is a future for all who have dwelt far too long in the shadows of sorrow and suffering, of sin and forsakenness. May Christ's gracious light of hope shine upon them.

Christ's light of grace brings *peace* to the world. His peace speaks volumes to a world so overcome with division, violence and conflict. May Christ's light of peace shine over all discord and enmity.

Christ's light of grace opens up room for *joy*. Christ has graced us to be glad in him. Our lamentations of the past can now give way to songs and carols of good cheer. May Jesus' light of joy brighten our lives this season and throughout the year.

Christ's light of grace is grounded in *love*. We who should have received judgment for our sins garner instead the blessing of Christ's love. Jesus' love is unbounded and overcomes all hatred and lovelessness. May Christ's light of love be shown to others.

Woven in these devotions are the lyrics of John Newton's famous hymn, "Amazing Grace." May we hold firmly to Christ's amazing grace through faith, and may that grace light the way for our Advent and Christmas.

**MICHAEL HOY**

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found;  
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares,  
I have already come;  
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,  
His Word my hope secures;  
He will my Shield and Portion be,  
As long as life endures.

Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,  
And mortal life shall cease,  
I shall possess, within the veil,  
A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,  
The sun forbear to shine;  
But God, who called me here below,  
Will be forever mine.

When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we'd first begun.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT  
LIGHTEN OUR *darkness*

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The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.

**ISAIAH 9:2**

**T**he people of Israel suffered in the darkness of exile. They experienced the anguish of judgment and abandonment. But to those who walked in deep darkness, God now brings a new message, a message of promise and hope—a great light has shined upon them.

Much of the darkness of worldly events can overshadow us, leading us down a path of our own dark places. Fear, sorrow and despair can overwhelm us, leaving us wanting for some new message to lighten our darkness. There are many bright lights in our world with their own message of hope, but these so often disappoint. We need the promise of hope beyond all darkness.

On this first day of Advent, we look to Christ's light of hope. Our Lord came to take his place in our darkness, on the night of his birth as also on the night of his death on the cross. He did so not only to share in all our dark places but to shine his light of grace upon us. His mercy lightens our darkness. His hope overcomes our despair. On us, his light has shined. And so we sing in great hope: "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound!"

Lord, as we light our first candle this Advent, may its glimmering light shine in our darkness. Grace us with the light of hope. Amen.

**WEEK 1**

THE LIGHT OF *hope*

MONDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT  
WAITING ON GOD'S *hope*

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And now, O Lord, what do I wait for? My *hope* is in you.

**PSALM 39:7**

Sometimes the darkness that begs the light of grace is quite personal. In the final days before his death, David shares the darkness of his own transgressions and his sufferings at the hands of his enemies. His troubles are too much for him to bear. Yet he puts his trust in God and declares God as the source of his hope.

We cannot put our trust in our own strength and resources, for they always come up lacking. Our own times of waiting are filled with many an anxious thought. But God in Christ is the bedrock of all our hope. We wait upon the merciful hand of our Lord and grasp this gracious hope by faith, even in the hour of death.

In the midst of our struggles, we trust that Christ is the one who delivers us. Our sufferings are carried by Christ to the cross and then taken away through his resurrection. Christ gives us the hope we need to see beyond our sufferings to the light of glory in heaven. Jesus never leaves us mired in personal darkness. The light of Christ takes us to where he is, where there is suffering no more. It is in this hope we sing these glorious words of “Amazing Grace”: “Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail, / And mortal life shall cease, / I shall possess, within the veil, / A life of joy and peace.”

**Lord, when our sins and sorrows overwhelm us, and when the shadows of death encroach upon us, fill us with the strong assurance of your hope that will never fade. Amen.**



TUESDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT  
*hope* FOR ALL GOD'S CHILDREN

There is *hope* for your future, says the LORD: your children shall come back to their own country.

**JEREMIAH 31:17**

**T**hese words of hope are directed to Rachel, who weeps for her children—the chosen people—now being taken away into captivity in exile. They are seemingly rejected. But this expression of hope declares that these beloved will not be abandoned. In spite of their many transgressions that have brought about this time of loss, God promises that these children will be brought home. And that promise and its fulfillment would, indeed, come to pass!

When Herod the tyrant ordered the murderous deaths of the children of Bethlehem, Rachel would again weep for her children (Matthew 2:16-18). But these children, these holy innocents, are never forgotten. Nor is their suffering. Nor is the suffering of countless others who have been subjected to the tragedy of negligence, abandonment, violence and death. Why? Because our Lord Jesus takes his place in their midst. Christ shares in our sufferings and takes away the power of sin, death and every evil.

The light of Christ's grace shines in our darkness. And his grace promises hope for a future we could not otherwise envision.

Lord, our future as your children rests in you. In the midst of all sufferings and loss, keep us always in the tender mercies of your love. Amen.

WEEK 1

THE LIGHT OF *hope*

WEDNESDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

## THE PASSION OF *hope*

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But if we *hope* for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

**ROMANS 8:25**

**T**he light of hope is like a flame. The very flickering of this gracious light of Christ denotes that hope is active and that hope is passionate. It never loses that ardent glow, even in the midst of suffering. The flame of hope lights our course as a path of grace and promise. Even where there is oppression that seeks to control or hold captive all that is living, our ever vigilant and passionate hope will burst those bonds.

We are set free in hope. For our hope is deeply grounded, rooted and re-sourced in Jesus Christ. Our Lord is already with us in the sufferings of our present time, and his resurrecting promise brings us to that which we eagerly await—our final liberation. Hope inspires us, burns brightly within us and lights a flame within our spirits. Such hope is too good to be kept to ourselves. Indeed, it is to be shared with all creatures and all creation.

In hope, we press on. We wait on the Lord, who graces us each day and holds us dearly in his promise. We never give up on hope because Christ's hope never gives up on us.

**Lord, do not let us lose sight of your passionate love for us all and the hope that dares to press on in the grace of your freedom. Amen.**



## THURSDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

# FAR-REACHING *hope*

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And in his name the gentiles will *hope*.

**MATTHEW 12:21**

**T**he light that shines in the darkness is, indeed, a light that can be seen from a very long distance. More importantly, the light that is Christ already enfolds us. It reaches to all on the margins of society and this world. And there is no one who is an outsider to the glow of Christ's light of hope. His light is that universal. It lightens the face of all peoples everywhere and lightens their heavy burdens.

In the verse just prior to this text, we hear Jesus quoting Isaiah's comforting promise: "He will not break a bruised reed or quench a smoldering wick until he brings justice to victory" (v. 20). Jesus holds dear the bruised or those whose light is about to be extinguished by the darkness of this world. The "justice" that Jesus brings to fruition is his righteousness for all who would otherwise be without hope. There are no exceptions to how far Christ's grace extends. Through his humble birth to his death on the cross and his rising from the grave, Christ wins the victory of righteousness for all those rejected by the world.

My mother, even in the midst of despair and depression, used to sing the spiritual "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands." The depth and length and breadth of God's plan holds us with mercy and grace. Jesus is the Servant of God appointed precisely to embrace the whole wide world with his loving embrace.

The light of hope reaches far, indeed!

Lord, comfort all in the grace and hope of Christ, that none may be left on the margins of this world without hope. Amen.

**WEEK 1**

THE LIGHT OF *hope*



FRIDAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT  
REDEMPTION AND *adoption*

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But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.

**GALATIANS 4:4-5**

**T**he light of Christ engages in the conflict with the darkness. This is for our sake, for our redemption, for our adoption as children of God. So in the “fullness of time,” this grace-filled event came in the birth of a child, Jesus, to a woman, Mary. God sent his Son, Jesus Christ. Christ came for us—born for us as a human being, taking his place with us under the law, then dying and rising, so that he would complete the promise of saving us.

There is a battle raging between the light and the darkness—between the God of grace and the evil of sin. When we are caught in the evil of sin, Christ is our hope. The light of God in Christ shines upon us and rejects the darkness on our behalf. We are God’s own children in the Gospel through Christ’s grace, and the darkness does not overtake us. Let us then with confidence proclaim today these sure words of “Amazing Grace”: “The Lord has promised good to me, / His Word my hope secures!”

**Father, thank you for sending your Son, and through him, giving us the hope of redemption and adoption as the children of God. Amen.**



# THE LIGHT OF *grace*

The light of grace is coming to greet us in this Advent season as we ponder the free gift of God's Son, Jesus, born on Christmas. In honor of the 250th anniversary of the hymn "Amazing Grace," these devotions enlighten the heart, mind and soul with the good news that the Light of the World graces us with his presence every day of our lives.



Lyrics of "Amazing Grace" as they appear in this text are from the public domain, as cited in [hymnary.com](http://hymnary.com).

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