



Week 1: Hope

As we embark into an Advent series, we're attempting to touch on the main topic for each week's sermon in these guides. This week, it's *hope*. You can expect the main Scripture passages to vary across our two campuses, but we will do our best to overlap with the sermon you heard on Sunday regardless of whether you're at the Boulder or Erie campus.

Connect

1. What's your favorite memory related to the Christmas Season?
2. What are your plans for this Christmas?
3. What did you find most significant from last Sunday's sermon?

Understand

1. Read Isaiah 1:1-4 and 9:1-7. Injustice, self-reliance, and other forms of rebellion against God had left Israel in darkness. What is the hope—or "great light" (see v. 1)—the passage indicates in verses 6-7?
2. How do these passages from Isaiah point to both the divine and human nature of the child referred to in Isaiah 9:6?
3. Read Matthew 4:12-17. In what way(s) were the people of Galilee (i.e., northern region of Israel) in darkness, and how does Jesus serve as their "light"? Note how verses 12 and 17 provide insight into the question.
4. Read Luke 1:26-38. Which promises stand out most to you about what God is going to do? How are these promises of hope to both Mary and all of Israel?
5. Read Luke 1:67-80. What symbols or descriptions of hope do you see in these verses?

Apply

1. Do you think people who live in our community are living with hope? Where do people in our day look to for hope? Do you feel as though you have been looking for hope apart from Jesus?
2. *Christian hope* is sometimes misconstrued as *wishful thinking*—a desired future, but with no sound reason to believe it will happen. How does Jesus' birth offer more than mere wishful thinking for our lives?
3. Pastor Tim Keller has said that passages like Isaiah 9 demonstrate how "the world is a dark place that needs salvation to come from outside of it."¹ Why is it important for us to remember that our hope for salvation came from "outside" our world rather than looking for it inside?²
4. 1 Peter 1:13 says we are to "set [our] hope fully on the grace that will be brought to [us] at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Pray together that your hope would be fully set on Christ rather than any other thing.

Notes:

1. From a Dec 5, 2016 article on *The Gospel Coalition* website entitled, "Tim Keller Wants You to Stop Underestimating Christmas. See www.thegospelcoalition.org.
2. Note how "internal" solutions (e.g., wealth, health, political systems, education, amusement, etc.) both underestimate the "darkness" of our world and overestimate their ability to offer true, lasting "light."