

# Hope

Jesus called himself the Light of the World, and at Advent, we light candles to remind ourselves of the light of hope he brought into a world filled with the darkness of sin.

What is hope?

Hope is looking forward to something wonderful. It's expecting something good to happen. It's light in the darkness.

When we light the first candle of your wreath, this candle represents hope. When Jesus came, he brought hope for people lost in sin.

READ Isaiah 9:2 and Matthew 1:18-25

*The people walking in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of deep darkness  
a light has dawned.*

<sup>18</sup> *This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about<sup>[a]</sup>: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet<sup>[b]</sup> did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.*

<sup>20</sup> *But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,<sup>[c]</sup> because he will save his people from their sins."*

<sup>22</sup> *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"<sup>[d]</sup> (which means "God with us").*

<sup>24</sup> *When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. <sup>25</sup> But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.*

O Lord, our God, thank you for not leaving us in darkness but for sending your light into the world instead. Help us to shine your light in the dark and dreary corners of the world. May your light and love radiate from us and give hope where it seems that all hope is lost. Help us to be yours as we wait for you to come again. We love you. Amen.

What are some things you hope for? What are some ways you can give hope to others? What's so hopeful about Jesus coming into the world?

# Peace

Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and at Advent, we light candles to remind ourselves of the light of hope and promise of peace he brought to a world ravaged by sin.

What is peace?

Peace is the end of hostility and fighting. It's when all is as it should be. It's harmony. It's rightness and wholeness. When we light the first and second candles of the wreath, these candles represent hope and peace. When Jesus came, he brought peace between God and humanity.

Isaiah 9:6-7 and Luke 2:1-7

*For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.*

*And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

*<sup>7</sup>Of the greatness of his government and peace  
there will be no end.*

*He will reign on David's throne  
and over his kingdom,  
establishing and upholding it  
with justice and righteousness  
from that time on and forever.*

*The zeal of the Lord Almighty  
will accomplish this.*

*In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. <sup>2</sup> (This was the first census that took place while <sup>[a]</sup> Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup> And everyone went to their own town to register.*

*<sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup> 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.*

O Lord, our God, thank you for sending Jesus to make everything right between us. We're grateful for the peace that comes through knowing Him. Help us to be champions of your peace. May we be peacemakers in a world torn by sin and strife. Help us to be yours as we wait for you to come again. We love you. Amen.

Why is it so hard to "keep the peace?" How does knowing that Jesus came to bring peace between us and God make you feel? What are some ways that we can be peacemakers?

# Love

Jesus is the demonstration of God's love, and at Advent, we light candles to remind ourselves of the light of hope, promise of peace, and overwhelming love he brought to us.

What is love?

Love is when you care more about others than yourself. It's sacrifice. The Bible tells us that God is love. When we light the first, second, and third candles of the wreath, these candles represent hope, peace, and love. When Jesus came, he showed us how much God loves us.

John 3:16-17 and Romans 5:8

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

*<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

O Lord, our God, thank you for your unfailing, steadfast love. Thank you for loving us enough to die for us. Help us to love you with our whole hearts. Enable us to love our neighbors with your great love. Help us to be yours as we wait for you to come again. We love you. Amen.

Do you love anyone enough to die for them?

What are some ways we can show God's love to one another? To our neighbors? To our friends?

# Joy

Jesus is the Joy of our Salvation, and at Advent, we light candles to remind ourselves of the light of hope, promise of peace, overwhelming love and joy of salvation he brought to a lost and broken world.

What is joy?

Joy is a feeling of great happiness. It's pure bliss. It's overwhelming gladness bubbling up in your soul. When we light the fourth candle on the wreath, this candle represent joy. When Jesus came, he brought joy to our hearts.

Isaiah 9:3-4 and Luke 2:8-14

*You have enlarged the nation  
and increased their joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as people rejoice at the harvest,  
as warriors rejoice  
when dividing the plunder.*

*<sup>4</sup>For as in the day of Midian's defeat,  
you have shattered  
the yoke that burdens them,  
the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor.*

*And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup>An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup>Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."*

*<sup>13</sup>Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,*

*<sup>14</sup>"Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."*

O Lord, our God, thank you for sending Jesus to bring us salvation and restore our joy. We rejoice because he came to live with us and in us and through us. May the good news of great joy of Jesus' coming be ever on our lips. Help us to be yours as we wait for you to come again. We love you. Amen.

What brings you joy? What part of the Christmas story makes you most glad? What are some ways you can bring joy to others this Christmas?

# Christ

Jesus is the Light of the World, the Prince of Peace, the Joy of our Salvation, and the demonstration of God's love. That is why we celebrate his coming on Christmas day and offer him our deepest adoration.

What does it mean to adore something?

To adore is to give honor and worship. It's to love deeply. It's to cherish above all else. When we light all five candles of our wreath, these candles represent hope, peace, joy, love, and the birth of Jesus. As we light them, we thank God for these great gifts.

Luke 2:1-20

## The Birth of Jesus

**2** In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. <sup>2</sup> (This was the first census that took place while <sup>[a]</sup> Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup> And everyone went to their own town to register.

<sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

<sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

<sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

O Lord, our God, thank you for sending Jesus. He is a gift beyond our wildest imagination. Through him we have light and life, hope and peace, joy and love. We're so grateful, Lord, for your great love. May we carry your hope, peace, joy, and love with us as we work and wait for you to come again. We love you. Amen.

How can we show Jesus how much we adore Him? What are some ways we can share the "Christmas spirit" all year long?