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Hope Is Coming

Ashram Community · 29 November 2026

KEY VERSE

Luke 21:28 — "Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

READINGS

Isaiah 9:1–7; Psalm 80; Romans 13:1-12; Luke 21:20-28

Sunday – 29 November 2026 (Advent I)

Context: Waiting, hope in dark times.

Central Message: Even when darkness, suffering and uncertainty surround us, God has not abandoned His people. We are called to wait with hope, live faithfully in the present and trust that God's saving light will overcome the darkness.

Today is the First Sunday of Advent, marking the beginning of a new year in the Christian liturgical calendar. The word Advent comes from the Latin word adventus, meaning "coming" or "arrival." During these four weeks before Christmas, the Church invites us to prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ and to renew our hope in His promised return.

Advent is a season of hope, expectation, preparation, and spiritual renewal. It reminds us that God entered human history through Jesus Christ, bringing light into darkness, peace amid conflict, and hope to a broken world. As we remember Christ's first coming in Bethlehem, we also look forward to His second coming in glory. Therefore, Advent is not merely a time of remembering the past; it is also a call to live faithfully in the present and prepare for the future.

On this First Sunday of Advent, the theme of hope calls us to remain watchful and steadfast, even when the world around us is filled with uncertainty, suffering, and fear. The lighting of the first Advent candle, traditionally called the Candle of Hope, symbolises our confidence in God's promises. As we begin this sacred season, let us prepare not only our homes for Christmas but also our hearts for Christ, allowing His light to guide our lives and His love to transform our communities.

There are times in life when everything seems dark. We may face illness, financial difficulties, broken relationships, disappointment, loneliness or uncertainty about the future. Sometimes we look at the world around us and see wars, violence, injustice, hatred and the suffering of innocent people. We may wonder whether things will ever change or whether there is any reason to hope. It is precisely in such moments that the message of today's theme speaks to our hearts: "Hope Is Coming." Christian hope is not a denial of suffering, nor is it an empty promise that everything will immediately become easy. It is the deep conviction that God remains faithful even when circumstances appear hopeless. Darkness may surround us, but it does not have the final word. Suffering may be real, but it cannot destroy God's promises. The future may be uncertain to us, but it remains in God's hands. In Isaiah 9, the prophet speaks to people who have experienced distress and darkness, promising them the light of God's salvation. Psalm 80 expresses the desperate prayer of a people longing for restoration. Paul, in Romans 13, calls believers to awaken from spiritual sleep

and live as children of the coming day. In Luke 21, Jesus speaks about frightening events and uncertainty, yet He tells His disciples to lift up their heads because their redemption is drawing near. These passages remind us that waiting is not the same as giving up. When we wait for God, we wait with expectation, faith and perseverance. Let us reflect on three important truths.

1. God's Light Shines in Our Darkest Moments

Isaiah 9:2 declares, “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.” These words were spoken to people living through difficult circumstances. The nation faced political threats, fear and uncertainty. Darkness was not merely a poetic expression; it represented the real experience of people who felt trapped by oppression and the consequences of human failure. Yet Isaiah announced that darkness would not have the final word. God would bring light, joy and deliverance. The prophet continues by announcing the birth of a child who will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. Christians understand this promise as pointing ultimately to Jesus Christ, through whom God's light entered the world. The coming of Jesus did not mean that suffering immediately disappeared from the earth. He was born into a world under imperial rule, grew up among ordinary people and experienced rejection, injustice and suffering Himself. Yet through His life, death and resurrection, He revealed that God's saving purpose was at work even in a broken world. This is the foundation of our hope. We do not hope because everything around us is good; we hope because God is good and remains faithful. Psalm 80 gives voice to people who desperately need that hope. The psalmist repeatedly cries, “Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.” It is the prayer of a community that knows its need and longs for God's intervention. Sometimes our own prayers sound the same. We pray for healing, but the illness continues. We pray for peace, but conflict persists. We pray for our children, but they face difficulties we cannot resolve. We pray for our Church and society, but we still see division and injustice. In such moments, we must remember that God's apparent silence does not necessarily mean His absence. We may not understand His timing, but we can continue to trust His character. A small lamp does not remove the darkness of an entire room at once, but it gives us light enough to see and take the next step. In the same way, God often gives us the grace we need for today before revealing what tomorrow will bring. Perhaps someone listening today is walking through a season of darkness. You may be tired of waiting, discouraged by repeated disappointments or anxious about what lies ahead. The message of Isaiah is for you: the darkness is real, but God's light is greater. We must not mistake our present circumstances for the final chapter of our lives. God is still at work, even when we cannot see the full picture. Christian hope begins when we trust that God's light is greater than the darkness we are experiencing.

2. Wait for God's Deliverance with Faith and Perseverance

Waiting is one of the most difficult experiences in the Christian life. We want immediate answers, quick solutions and visible results. When we pray, we often hope that God will respond according to our timetable. But Scripture teaches us that waiting is an important part of faith. In Luke 21:20–28, Jesus speaks about distressing events, suffering and signs that will cause people to be afraid. His words are serious. He does not pretend that His followers will be free from hardship. He acknowledges that there will be times when the world appears shaken and people are overwhelmed by fear. Yet in the middle of this troubling teaching, Jesus gives a remarkable command: “Stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” Why should His disciples lift their

heads when the world is filled with distress? Because their hope rests not in the stability of earthly circumstances but in the faithfulness of God. Jesus is teaching His followers to interpret difficult times through the promise of God's coming redemption. Fear may be understandable, but fear must not become our master. The troubles of the present must not cause us to abandon our trust in the Lord. The second coming of Christ is central to this hope. Christians believe that history is moving towards God's promised fulfilment, when Christ will come again and God's purposes will be brought to completion. We do not know the precise timing of that day, and we should not attempt to predict it. Our calling is to remain faithful and hopeful as we wait. Waiting for Christ does not mean passively watching the world deteriorate. It means trusting God while continuing to pray, love, serve and bear witness to the Gospel. It means refusing to surrender to despair when circumstances become difficult. Psalm 80 teaches us how to wait through prayer. The psalmist brings the community's pain honestly before God and repeatedly asks Him to restore His people. This reminds us that faith does not require us to hide our sorrow. We can bring our questions, fears and disappointments to God, knowing that He invites us into a relationship of trust. There is also a difference between waiting in hopelessness and waiting in hope. Hopelessness says, “Nothing will ever change.” Christian hope says, “I do not know when or how God will act, but I will continue to trust Him.” Think of a farmer who plants a seed. After planting, the farmer cannot force the seed to grow by digging it up every day. The farmer must wait, provide the necessary care and trust the process of growth. In the same way, we must continue to pray, obey and serve while trusting God's timing. We should also be careful not to interpret every disaster or international crisis as a specific sign that we can use to calculate the time of Christ's return. Jesus' teaching is intended to prepare His disciples for faithful endurance, not to encourage speculation or panic. When the future seems uncertain, remember the promise of Christ: redemption is drawing near. Our hope is not that we can control every event, but that our Lord will remain faithful to His promise. Those who wait for God do not wait without hope; they wait with their eyes fixed on the One who has promised redemption.

3. Live as Children of the Coming Day

In Romans 13:11–12, Paul writes, “The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here.” Paul uses the contrast between night and day to describe the Christian life. The night represents the old ways of sin, selfishness and spiritual darkness. The coming day points to the fulfilment of God's salvation. Because that day is approaching, believers must awaken and live differently. This is an essential part of the message “Hope Is Coming.” Christian hope is not merely about what God will do in the future; it transforms how we live today. If we truly believe that Christ is coming and that God's kingdom will ultimately prevail, our lives should reflect the values of that kingdom now. We should not allow hatred, dishonesty, greed, bitterness or indifference to control us. Instead, we must put on the armour of light and live with integrity, compassion and love. Paul specifically calls believers to put aside the works of darkness and to live in ways that honour Christ. This includes treating others with respect, refusing to exploit the vulnerable, speaking truthfully, seeking reconciliation and using our resources responsibly. Hope must become visible through our actions. When people around us are discouraged, we can offer encouragement. When communities are divided, we can become peacemakers. When the poor and vulnerable are neglected, we can stand beside them. When people lose confidence in the future, we can testify to the faithfulness of God. We must also resist the temptation to use Christian hope as an excuse to neglect present responsibilities. Waiting for Christ does not mean abandoning our work, ignoring social problems or refusing to care for the earth and its people. Rather, the promise of Christ's return gives greater

meaning to our present service. A Church that believes hope is coming must become a community that brings hope to others. Our worship should strengthen the discouraged. Our preaching should point people towards God's promises. Our ministries should demonstrate Christ's compassion. Our homes should be places where forgiveness and peace are practised. Consider how a person behaves when expecting an honoured guest. The expectation influences the way the person prepares the home and welcomes the visitor. Similarly, our expectation of Christ's return should shape our hearts, relationships and priorities. We cannot bring God's kingdom to its final fulfilment through our own efforts, but we can bear witness to it. Every act of justice, every word of encouragement, every expression of mercy and every faithful act of service can become a sign of the hope we have in Christ. Because we believe God's promised day is coming, we must live today as people who belong to His light.

Conclusion

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, the message of today’s Scriptures is both honest and encouraging. Darkness exists, suffering is real, and the future may sometimes appear uncertain. Yet God’s promises remain firm. Isaiah assures us that light shines in darkness. Psalm 80 teaches us to cry out to God and seek His restoration. Jesus calls us to lift our heads because our redemption is drawing near. Paul reminds us to wake from spiritual sleep and live as children of the coming day. Let us therefore hold firmly to our theme: “Hope Is Coming.” When you face illness, do not surrender to despair. When your prayers seem unanswered, continue to trust God. When you see injustice and suffering, do not become indifferent. When the world seems overwhelmed by fear, remember that Christ has promised to return. As we begin this sacred season of Advent, let us remember that it is a time of hope, expectation, and preparation. We prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, who came into our world as the Light of the world, and we look forward with faith to His glorious return. Advent reminds us that even when darkness surrounds us, God is still at work, fulfilling His promises and preparing His people for the coming of His Kingdom. We do not know exactly when every difficulty will end, nor can we explain every experience of suffering. But we know the One in whom our hope rests. Jesus Christ came into the world, died for our sins, rose again, and promised to come again. His resurrection assures us that sin and death will not have the final word. Therefore, let this Advent season be more than a preparation for Christmas celebrations. Let it be a time to renew our faith, restore our hope, deepen our prayer life, and prepare our hearts for Christ. Until He comes again, let us wait faithfully, serve courageously, and love generously. Let our lives become testimonies that the light of Christ continues to shine even in the darkest places. May we hear the words of Jesus in our hearts today: “Stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” The darkness may be present, but it is not permanent. The night may be long, but God has promised a new day. As we journey through Advent, let us walk with hope, for the Christ who came in humility will come again in glory, and the light of Christ will never be overcome. Amen.