

Advent Devotional



Hope

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Colossians 1:18-20

Advent is my favorite time in the church year; the four weeks of anticipatory preparation have formed my faith for many years. Even though my understanding of the gospel is much more expansive than in my early days of faith, Jesus and the body of Christ are my firm foundation. And hope has been a driving, centering force in my life. Hope centers me in the present moment and moves me forward with purpose.

We cannot see hope, but hope is developed deeply within us through our formation as disciples of Jesus called to live the way of love each and every day. This Advent, we wait again in the practices that prepare us to celebrate the incarnate coming of God's healing love into a beautiful and broken world.

I love the image Richard Rohr uses when describing hope. He describes hope as sonar for the body of Christ. Just as sonar is a system for detecting objects when underwater, hope is how we detect God in a world of greed, violence, injustice, fear, and hatred. Hope enables us to experience God's way of life and love along life's journey.

Our hope is grounded in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and the promise that this way of life is God's way and will last forever. In our waiting and preparation this Advent Season, our hearts tune into God's heart. We listen for the

sonar of the gospel in a beautiful and terrifying world—that God continues to bring forth life from the barren places of our lives.

Part of my discipline in Advent is to encounter hope through scripture. Colossians 1:18-20 is a passage I repeatedly read during Advent because of its clear reminder of the life I am called to live no matter how I am feeling or doing at the moment. In times of doubt, loss, and pain, I turn to this scripture when I cannot see the next step in front of me or hear much of any good news. And I love how it reads in Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of scripture:

He was supreme in the beginning and—leading the resurrection parade—he is supreme in the end. From beginning to end he's there, towering far above everything, everyone. So spacious is he, so expansive, that everything of God finds its proper place in him without crowding. Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe—people and things, animals and atoms—get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the cross.

(Colossians 1:18-20, *The Message*)

The preparation of Advent always leads to light and love on Christmas Eve. The sonar of hope "repeats the sounding joy."

