

## Small group Advent session

**'Advent Hope'** - Isaiah 61:1-4,8-11 **'Advent Strength'** - Romans 16:25-27

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Our hope ultimately falls back onto the one in whom we have hope. It is God who is our hope, the very ground of that hope, and the end of it.

Here's a variety of suggestions So please only choose what works for you and your group

### Welcome

Waiting is complicated... Excitement and fear....

Can you think of something that you have waited for both with pleasure and trepidation?

Or: What are you most looking forward to / dreading this Christmas?

### Worship

If you want to go for a contemplative worship vibe, here are 2 worship songs:

[Isaiah 61 - YouTube](#) (Stick with it, even if you think the intro is a bit weird!)

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me  
Because the Lord has anointed me  
He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor,  
To heal the broken hearted  
To proclaim liberty to the captives  
And release to the prisoners  
To announce a year of favour from the Lord  
And a day of vindication by our God  
So will the Lord God let justice and praise,  
Spring up before the nations  
I rejoice solemnly in the Lord  
In the Lord is the joy of my soul  
For he has clothed me with the robe of salvation  
And wrapped me in a mantle of justice  
Like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem  
Like a bride bedecked with her jewels  
As the earth springs forth its plants  
And the garden makes its growth spring up  
So will the Lord God let justice and praise,  
Spring up before the nations

Adonai elohenu, melech

[Matt Maher - Lord, I Need You \(Official Lyric Video\) - YouTube](#)

(A lovely confession by the same songwriter)

**Word** Isaiah 61 – The lyrics to our worship song

Ask folk just to choose their favourite phrase and, if they want, to say why.

Here are some thoughts for whoever is leading :

- This is a poem about the hope for God's justice
- The ones to whom justice is brought turn out to be the oppressed, the broken-hearted, captives, prisoners, mourners, the faint in spirit
- Luke associates these verses with the beginning of Jesus' ministry (Luke 4:16-20). They also remind us of the beatitudes in terms of the blessings on the poor etc. (Luke 6:20-23; Matt 5:2-11).
- It is those who have been healed and the liberated who will then be in the position to have the strength to hope and encourage others.
- (vv. 5-7). The people of exile, who slaved and worked for strangers, who struggled to make a crust, and who felt abandoned by their God, now will receive that of which they could have only dreamt.
- The basis of this reversal is outlined in vv. 8-11 Real hope is founded on the Lord's love of justice (v. 8). It is that which overturns the harshest oppression, the darkest dungeon, and the pain of mourning. That justice is seen in action first and foremost in the relation of God to his own people. These are the ones whom he raises from the deepest despair. And all who see them will recognise that 'they are a people whom the Lord has blessed' (v. 9). This blessing is the outworking of the Lord's justice, and the restoration of relationship is its result.

If your group is into mulling over the outworking of this passage for our context, then here are some further thoughts and questions:

There are so many people who are not looking forward to tomorrow, next week or next year. Life has placed them in an awful space and it is difficult to see beyond where they are right now. Part of the hope of Advent is embracing the future even when it is uncertain.

"Hope: An Advent Journey" by Olu Brown

1. How can we maintain hope during a prolonged season where a promise has been made, but has yet to be fulfilled?
2. How does the potential to emerge from dismal circumstances affect the mindset of those who have been experiencing difficulty?
3. Why is waiting for a promise to be fulfilled difficult for many?
4. What should we do during a season of waiting and anticipation?
5. How should we respond when we begin to grow tired of waiting for our promise to be fulfilled?

#### DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

*“Look up, you whose gaze is fixed on this earth, who are spellbound by the little events and changes on the face of the earth. Look up to these words, you who have turned away from heaven disappointed. Look up, you whose eyes are heavy with tears and who are heavy and who are crying over the fact that the earth has gracelessly torn us away. Look up, you who, burdened with guilt, cannot lift your eyes. Look up, your redemption is drawing near. Something different from what you see daily will happen. Just be aware, be watchful, wait just another short moment. Wait and something quite new will break over you: God will come.”*

Romans 16.<sup>25</sup> “Now to him who is able to **establish** you .....<sup>27</sup>to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen”

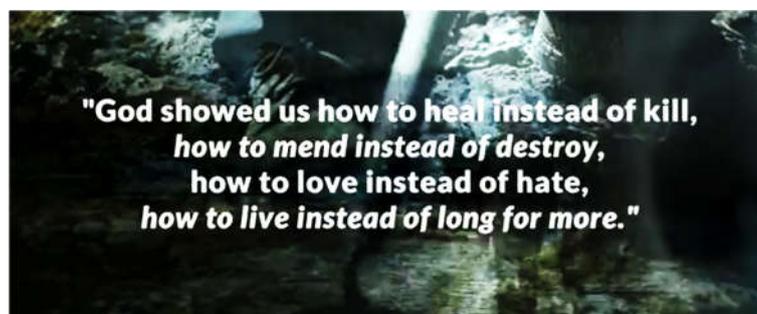
#### **Witness**

Celebrate the Waiting!

Watch this video

<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/celebrate-the-waiting>

Use the time to pray for issues sparked from the words of the video:



Spend time praying for our Christmas outreach:

“Carol-vanning”- Carols coming to a street near you 4:00- 6:00pm 20<sup>th</sup> Dec.

Hamper deliveries on Christmas eve morning

Christmas tree and Christingle nativity trail Christmas eve

Hers’s another possibility too ...Wait for it <https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/at-last>