





# Week One

## HOPE

by: Debrianna DeBolt

~~14~~ ~~THE~~ ~~DAYS~~ ~~ARE~~ ~~COMING,~~ ~~'~~ ~~DECLARES~~ ~~THE~~ ~~LORD,~~ ~~'~~ ~~WHEN~~ ~~I~~ ~~WILL~~ ~~FULFILL~~ ~~THE~~ ~~GOOD~~

~~15~~ ~~IN~~ ~~THOSE~~ ~~DAYS~~ ~~AND~~ ~~AT~~ ~~THAT~~ ~~TIME~~ ~~I~~ ~~WILL~~ ~~MAKE~~ ~~A~~ ~~RIGHTEOUS~~ ~~BRANCH~~ ~~SPROUT~~ ~~FROM~~ ~~DAVID'S~~ ~~LINE;~~

14 "THE DAYS ARE COMING,' DECLARES THE LORD, 'WHEN I WILL FULFILL THE GOOD PROMISE I MADE TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH.

15 "IN THOSE DAYS AND AT THAT TIME I WILL MAKE A RIGHTEOUS BRANCH SPROUT FROM DAVID'S LINE; HE WILL DO WHAT IS JUST AND RIGHT IN THE LAND.

16 IN THOSE DAYS JUDAH THEY AHO

# *Week One*

HOPE, cont.



# *Week One*

HOPE, cont.

Reflective Questions

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Contemplative Practice



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A stroll through our beautiful campus provides me copious opportunities to envisage the beauty of God's creation. The sights, sounds and smells ground me in this moment, and I experience a peace of knowing that God is at work.

And then, suddenly, I am jolted back to reality by the incessant pounding, beeping, and sawing of others who are also at work - in this case, the men and women building our new chapel.

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How wonderful it will be, when this sacred space is complete! It ill pll t

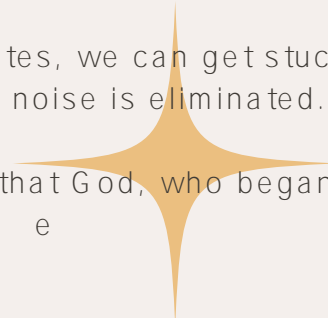
# Wee T

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It is sometimes found in the conflicts happening in our lives, our communities, and around the world; sometimes incessant thoughts or worries that repeat ad nauseam in our conscious minds; sometimes our dependence on our phones or computers; sometimes religious narratives meant to shame or guilt us into a fake obedience.

Whatever it is, and from whatever source it emanates, we can get stuck thinking that our spiritual growth will only happen when the noise is eliminated.

But then I read Philippians 1:6: "And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until -p hp e



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Our chapel will, at some point, be finished, and stand as a beautiful indicator that the noise was, in fact, producing something of value to our community. And the noise of our lives, the work that is being done by God, will one day be finished, and **we will stand** as a beautiful marker of God's faithfulness to complete the work He started to those with whom we have journeyed.

Until then, though, we look for God in the noise, knowing that He is at work and will continue to work until we are with him, living in true peace, for eternity.

During this week of Advent, I invite you to consider how God is at work in your life, and where, in the noise, you have seen God moving, working, building. There, in the noise, I think you'll find peace, among other things. I think you'll find God. And what He is building is beautiful.

## Reflection Questions

What noise have you been experiencing lately, and how might God be at work in it?

What might the Lord be building in your life, or in the lives of those you love? Do you have faith that God is going to complete the work begun in you?

## Contemplative Practice

Find a piece of paper or the notes app on your phone

- The "noise" that fills your life
- The things you have seen God building in your life or in the lives of others
- Pray through all of these things, seeking God's assurance that He will be faithful to complete the work begun in you
- Thank God for what He is building in your life



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"Buddy, look down! Look down! Here?! I know him! I know him!"

Name that quote.

That's right. It's Buddy B.

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discourse of biblical interpretation

So, I'm hoping now it's just obvious how Buddy the Elf has so much in common with our sacred readings for this week of Advent!

~ not only in common with God's people joyfully awaiting restoration amidst so much devastation (in Zephaniah 3:14-20),

~ not only in common with the sing-song joy of God's people still seeking the salvation they have yet to experience (in Isaiah 12:2-6),

~ not only in common with the perpetually-imprisoned apostle Paul, demanding the new Christian community to "Rejoice" even when in shackles (in Philippians 4:4-7),

~ but also just as much in common with Elizabeth (in Luke 1:39-56) whose pregnant joy, leaps in her (formerly ) womb at just the mere sound of her cousin Mary's voice accompanying her brand-new conceived joy in her own womb.

Now, admittedly: I have never been pregnant. I gotten the gift though of being able to accompany my beloved wife who has gone through it 3 times; I've observed my 3 sisters go through it multiple times; and 3 of my pastor colleagues & supervisors have gone through it, as well. One of my conclusions from their experience is this:

It doesn't look that comfortable (to unders mrJ x ea



All these God-gifted women have been able to somehow channel their attention, not solely onto their own uncomfortable situation going on constantly in their own pregnant bodies, but onto that which God is doing all around them and especially in others as well!

That's one of the parts that astounds and inspires me the most: when pregnant women minister, inspire, lead and serve to meet others' needs simultaneously while their God-given bodies are growing another life inside!

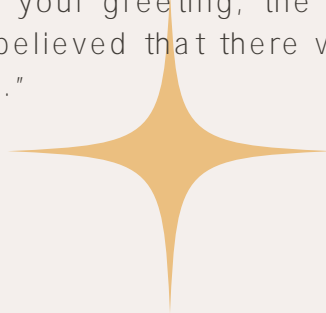
Focus our attention on bringing God's reality to our reality... and Advent Joy-energy follows! Joy in the face of uncomfortable waiting and longing. Joy in the face of pregnant, growing pains.

Joy is the energy-result of their gift and choice to focus their attention on God's promises, God's gifts, and the potential of God's reality being born and birthed into our human reality.

It's the kind of Joy-energy that emerges from a very pregnant woman suddenly yelling for Joy (... who knows, maybe even with the force of a Buddy the Elf character):

"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

(Luke 1:42-45)





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When I think about Jesus, it's much easier for me to envision Him as an adult and reflect on His miracles and His death on the cross. However, it is much more difficult for me to imagine Jesus as a baby. The idea of my Savior, the one I pray to, as a vulnerable, tender little infant is difficult to grasp. It's hard to visualize Him being dependent on others to love Him and take care of Him. Perhaps it's because I am pregnant during this Advent season and preparing for my own baby that this idea of Jesus as an infant is on my mind.

I also think about His mother Mary, and that adds a whole other layer of depth to the story for me. I think about her, who prepared physically, emotionally, and spiritually for Jesus' arrival, and I think about how much joy and relief she must have felt at the moment of His birth.

While she knew that Jesus was sent to fulfill God's divine plan for the salvation of the world, in that fleeting moment of His arrival, the whole world must have stood still as she cradled Him in her arms, overwhelmed by an indescribable love for her baby boy—the child for whom she had sacrificed, labored, and fervently prayed. I can imagine love was so thick in the air.

