

SHARING SCRIPTURE

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Living the Advent Hope

For use: Sept. 8 - 14

Texts: Luke 18:1-8; Matthew 24-25; 1 Corinthians 15:12-19; Ecclesiastes 8:14; 12:13, 14; Revelation 21:1-5; 22:1-5

Renowned chef José Andrés and his non-profit World Central Kitchen is helping with relief efforts in the northern Bahamas after the quake of Hurricane Dorian. The chef and his team of about a dozen helpers are in Nassau serving up to 30,000 meals a day. "We're an NGO, trying to save as many lives as we can, one meal at a time," he said.

To carry out the massive operation, the chef chartered two seaplanes and an amphibious vehicle. He's also rented helicopters to ferry food from a boat he hired in Florida. "We need to crank out as many meals as we can from this kitchen," he said in the makeshift war room where he planned the mass feeding operation. Andrés told his team during the planning session, "In disaster zones, you need empathy, and a will to just get it done." [1]

To people who are desperate to stay alive, Andrés and his team must appear as saviors, bringing the hope of life in practical ways among such death and desolation. As God's people, we have both the blessing of our own hope of a better world to come, and the blessing of opportunities to help others find that same hope. This week's lesson looks at what it means to live our hope amidst the harsh realities of life today. Living the advent hope means that we exist in both worlds of the now and the not yet.

One of the great challenges we face is in addressing the growing problem of injustice in the world. In a sense, it seems easier to meet practical needs like feeding the hungry than to combat the attitudes of entitlement that lead to injustice. Throughout Scripture, in the parable of the persistent widow and the cries of the prophets and the martyrs, we hear the plea "How long, O Lord?" How long will poverty and oppression prevail? The question implies that we expect God's miraculous intervention to put an end to these conditions—and we do know that Christ's return will provide this social reset in the earth made new. We don't always like God's immediate answer, though: injustice will prevail in this present world as long as we allow it to.

The beauty of living the advent hope is the realization that God wants to partner with us to make a difference in people's lives both for now and for eternity. Sure, God can turn

stones to bread, but we get the privilege—like chef Andrés and his team—of seeing hungry frowns turn to grateful smiles. God can send an angel to wipe out an oppressive army, but we get the joy of seeing expressions of hopelessness turn to relief as we assist the disenfranchised with a leg up in life. Truly believing in the advent hope means that we will live as if we believe that hope.

~Chuck Burkeen

[1] <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/hurricane-dorian-chef-jose-andres-in-the-bahamas-helping-save-lives-one-meal-at-a-time/>

For Reflection

Connecting: Have you ever left a job you didn't like for your dream job? Act out (without words) your response to the news that you were making this move. Show your group your most enthusiastic fist pump, happy dance, or other physical response to this transition. Now share one word that describes your emotions or mood at that time.

Sharing: Revelation 21:1-5 and 22:1-5 describes our transition from this world to the next. Which emotion do you believe will be the most prevalent among God's people at that time?

1. Pure ecstasy that we are finally getting off this barren rock
2. Sadness that some people we dearly love are not there with us
3. Without words to describe the overwhelming sights and sounds of heaven
4. Personal disappointment that we did not do more to reach our communities
5. Deep love as we look into the magnificent face of Jesus
6. Other:

Applying: When you think about the end of this world's history and the beginning of the next, what is one thing that you wish your local church would accomplish in your community in preparation for Christ's coming? What can your group do to help fulfill that mission?

Valuing: Pair up and tell your prayer partner two things: what you are most looking forward to about heaven, and who you are desperately praying for to be there. Each one pray that the other person's loved one is saved.

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Three decades ago, we created this resource for small groups and Sabbath school classes, and it continues to bless so many people worldwide. Thank you for your continued interest in these biblical themes and what they mean to your life and those people with whom you share it.

Paul Richardson
Executive Director

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