

The image features a deep purple background speckled with numerous small white dots, resembling a starry night sky. A single, larger, golden-yellow dot is positioned in the upper-middle section. At the bottom, there is a horizontal band of a darker, textured purple, which appears to be a torn paper edge. Centered in the middle of the image is the text "THIS HOPE IS FOR YOU" in a bold, golden-yellow, sans-serif font.

**THIS HOPE  
IS FOR YOU**

This story is for you.

This is the story of how  
hope was born and came to  
earth as a person.

This is a story of how,  
amidst the beauty and  
brokenness of life, we can  
have hope.

This is the story of how one  
man changed the whole world.  
It's the story of the first  
Christmas, and the story  
of this Christmas. It is a  
story of hope.

This hope is for you.

Scriptures taken from the Holy Bible, New  
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# HOPING FOR TRUTH

Luke 1:1-4

Many people have attempted to write about the things that have taken place among us. Reports of these things were handed down to us. There were people who saw these things for themselves from the beginning. They saw them and then passed the word on. With this in mind, I myself have carefully looked into everything from the beginning. So I also decided to write down an orderly report of exactly what happened. I am doing this for you, most excellent Theophilus. I want you to know that the things you have been taught are true.

In a world with so much disinformation, how can we know what is true? Luke begins his account of the life of Jesus by saying we can rely on what he tells us. Luke highlights the eyewitnesses. There were many of them. The accounts are consistent, faithfully handed down. Then there is his own careful investigation, his orderly report of “everything from the beginning ... exactly what happened”.

Luke’s words come down through the centuries. This Advent his words ring out again, “I am doing this for you ... I want you to know that the things you have been taught are true”.

Hope on your journey.

Subscribe to our Advent podcast,  
offering daily reflections and space  
to pause during the rush of Christmas.

Search: *This Hope is For You* wherever  
you listen to podcasts.



# LOSING HOPE

Luke 1:5-7

Herod was king of Judea. During the time he was ruling, there was a priest named Zechariah. He belonged to a group of priests named after Abijah. His wife Elizabeth also came from the family line of Aaron. Both of them did what was right in the sight of God. They obeyed all the Lord's commands and rules faithfully. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was not able to have any. And they were both very old.

This Christmas, do you have hope? The Advent story begins with Zechariah and Elizabeth. Good, godly, faithful people. But there was an aching wound at the heart of their lives: they had no children and Elizabeth was not able to have any. Their old age meant their hope of children was now gone. Yet, Zechariah's name means, "the Lord remembered".

The Christmas story is full of difficult circumstances. But it is also the story of God working miracles for people who had lost hope. God loves us and sees our circumstances. Everyone else might forget, but God remembers.

# HOPE REBORN

Luke 1:8-13

One day Zechariah's group was on duty. He was serving as a priest in God's temple. He happened to be chosen, in the usual way, to go into the temple of the Lord. There he was supposed to burn incense. The time came for this to be done. All who had gathered to worship were praying outside.

Then an angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah. The angel was standing at the right side of the incense altar. When Zechariah saw him, he was amazed and terrified. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah. Your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will have a child. It will be a boy, and you must call him John."

Where does hope come from? Into the most painful part of Zechariah and Elizabeth's life, God speaks. An angel, a messenger of God, meets Zechariah in the temple. Zechariah is amazed, terrified and afraid. But the angel speaks words of peace, "Do not be afraid". Then hope is reborn, as God promises the miraculous: Zechariah and Elizabeth will have a son. The name John means, "God is gracious".

Hope comes unexpectedly amidst the ordinary circumstances of life. Hope does not come from inside us but from outside. Hope comes from God, who is always gracious.

# HOPE FOR OTHERS

Luke 1:14-17

He will be a joy and delight to you. His birth will make many people very glad. He will be important in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or other such drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will prepare the way for the Lord. He will have the same spirit and power that Elijah had. He will bring peace between parents and their children. He will teach people who don't obey to be wise and do what is right. In this way, he will prepare a people who are ready for the Lord.

Are we ready for hope? The angel gives Zechariah extraordinary details about his as yet unborn son John. It turns out that while John's birth is clearly a gift for Zechariah and Elizabeth, God is planning something much bigger.

Hope spills out from the circumstances of this couple, and Zechariah is told that John will impact a whole nation. A nation that had lost sight of God and had lost hope. God was on his way, and his people needed to be prepared for his coming.

Are we ready for God this Christmas? Are we ready for hope?

# HOPE FOR OTHERS

Luke 1:18-22

Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man, and my wife is old too."

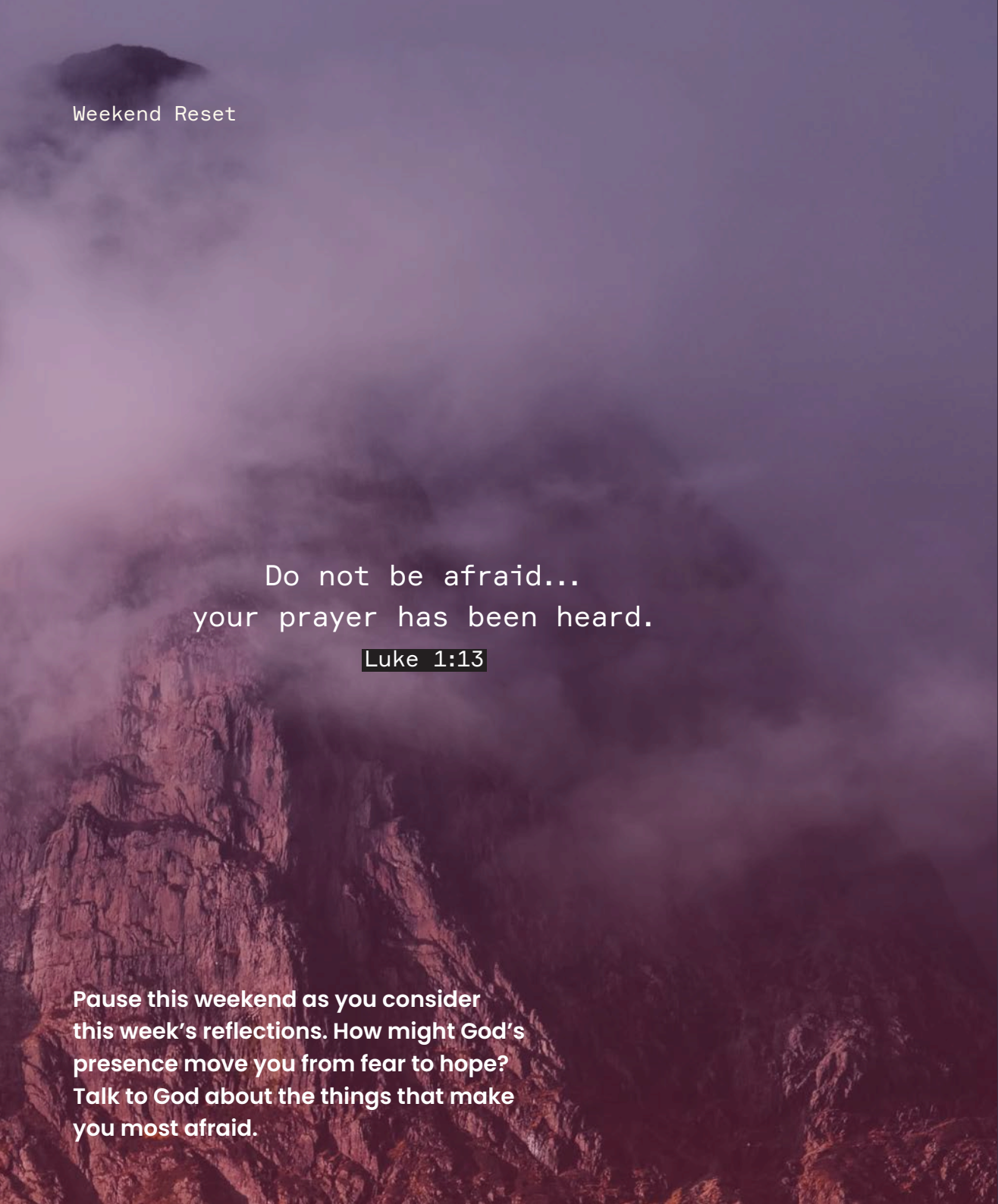
The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I serve God. I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will have to be silent. You will not be able to speak until after John is born. That's because you did not believe my words. They will come true at the time God has chosen."

During that time, the people were waiting for Zechariah to come out of the temple. They wondered why he stayed there so long. When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple. They knew this because he kept gesturing to them. He still could not speak.

Are we open to what God wants to say into our lives this Christmas? Despite receiving good news direct from God, Zechariah doubts. His uncertainty comes from his circumstances. He and Elizabeth are old. Having children is an impossibility for them. Zechariah will have plenty of time to ponder what he has heard, as he will be unable to speak until after what God has promised comes about.

Are we in danger of allowing our circumstances to drown out and doubt the voice of God speaking good news into our lives?





Weekend Reset

Do not be afraid...  
your prayer has been heard.

Luke 1:13

Pause this weekend as you consider this week's reflections. How might God's presence move you from fear to hope? Talk to God about the things that make you most afraid.

Week Two | Reflection Six

## HOPE IN GOD

Luke 1:23-25

When his time of service was over, he returned home. After that, his wife Elizabeth became pregnant. She stayed at home for five months. "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days, he has been kind to me. He has taken away my shame among the people."

Where is our hope this Christmas? Elizabeth comes across as someone who is very clear and confident about where hope comes from. The source of her miraculous pregnancy is undoubted, "The Lord has done this for me". Her words also give us a glimpse of who God is, from the perspective of someone who knew him well, God "has been kind to me". We then read that line which speaks of the pain she and Zechariah had endured. God "has taken away my shame among the people".

Can we see evidence of God's work in our lives? Do we believe God sees our pain and that he can remove our shame?

